

The Cultures of New Media (DGM 715)

Prepared by

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Lecture No.4



The Cultures of New Media
(DGM 715)

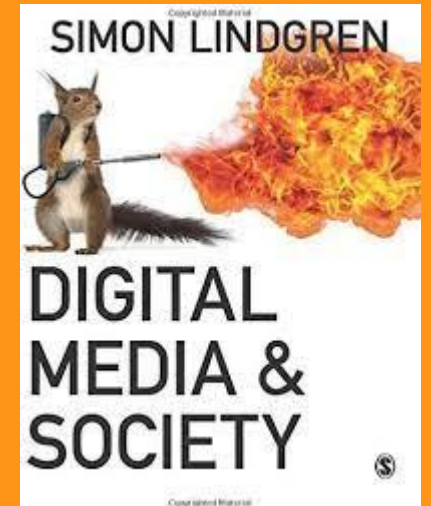


Lecture 4

The content of Lecture 4

The lecture 4 sheds light on a number of important topics, including the following:

1. Out of Sight
2. Social Presence Theory
3. Key Concepts and Dimensions Social Presence Theory
4. Privacy and computer-mediated communication
5. Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media
6. Hyperpersonal Interaction
7. Writing Ourselves Into Being



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Out of Sight

Idiosyncrasy of digital sociality, especially when communication is text-based, is that it makes us largely invisible.

When we use services such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, we often cannot be seen by others, nor can we see who else is there at the same time.

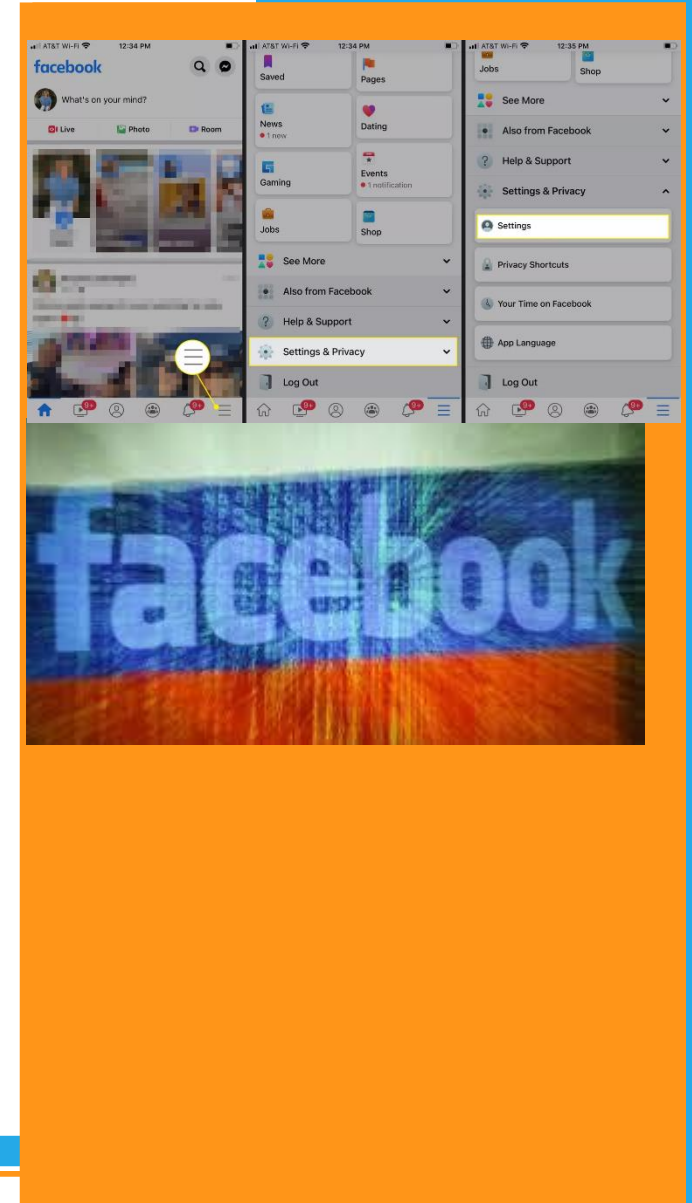
Similarly, people who happen to be reading the same blog or looking at the same Instagram photo at the same time are also largely invisible to one another.



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Out of Sight

Even though some sites, platforms, and services have indicators that display whether people are online or not, one is still physically invisible (even though sometimes represented by a profile photo or other avatar).



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Social Presence Theory

What is Social Presence Theory?

Social Presence Theory (SPT) was originally defined by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976) as, “the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships.” A more modern definition of social presence theory was refined by Gunawardena (1995) to state, “the degree to which a person is perceived as a ‘real person in mediated communication.”

Lowenthal (2010) feels that definitions of social presence tend to lie on a continuum where a focus on the interpersonal emotional connection between communicators is on one end and a focus on if someone is perceived as being ‘present’, ‘there’ or ‘real’ at the other end.

SOCIAL PRESENCE THEORY

- (Short, Williams and Christie- Communications Studies Group, 1970's)-
- “The degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience (and perceived intimacy and immediacy) of the interpersonal relationships”
- Communications media differ in their degree of social presence, and this is one factor that molds interaction

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Social Presence Theory

According to call 'social presence theory', the sense of awareness of an interaction partner is very important for the social effects of any communication medium.

The theory suggests that increased social presence leads to a better perception of the person with whom we are communicating (Short et al. 1976).

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Social Presence Theory

The lack of **non-verbal cues** and of other information about the **communication partner**, and the social context of interaction, has been thought by some to increase uninhibited communication, such as being **aggressive** or using **foul language** (Culnan & Markus 1987: 429).

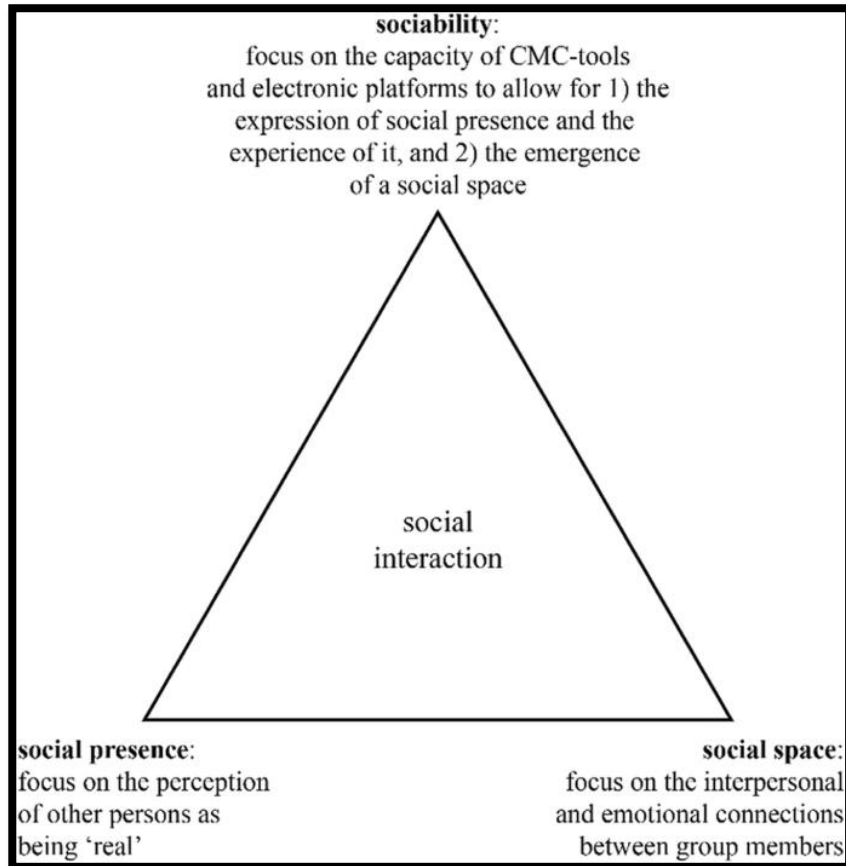
In an influential article (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997), social presence was found to be a significant predictor of audience satisfaction within a computer-mediated form of communication

Richardson and Swan (2003) also found that overall perceived learning was predicted by the perceived social presence in online course



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Social Presence Theory



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Key Concepts and Dimensions Social Presence Theory

Key Concepts and Dimensions

According to Short, Williams, and Christie (1976), social presence as a construct was primarily composed of two main concepts: intimacy (Argyle & Dean, 1965) and immediacy (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968).

Intimacy

Argyle and Dean (1965) posited that intimacy in a communication medium is influenced by a number of factors, such as: physical distance, eye contact, smiling, and personal topics of conversation.

Immediacy

Immediacy was conceptualized by Wiener and Mehrabian (1968), as paraphrased by Cobb (2009), as a measure of psychological distance that a communicator puts between himself and the object of his communications.

SOCIAL PRESENCE THEORY

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Measurements Social Presence Theory

There is still little agreement on how to measure social presence (Lin, 2004; Stein & Wanstreet, 2003). Below we provide three examples of instruments:

The Social Presence Scale (SPRES) was developed by Gunawardena and Zittle (1997) to measure the “immediacy” concept. On this scale, the respondents were asked to complete fourteen Likert items to indicate their perceived social presence at an inter-university “GlobalEd” computer conference.

The Measurement of Social Presence in an Online Learning Environment

Gunawardena, T.

Recent studies have questioned the significance of measuring social presence. This paper examines the use of social presence in online learning environments. The paper reviews the literature on social presence and its measurement. The paper also discusses the importance of social presence in online learning environments. The paper concludes that social presence is an important factor in online learning environments and that it should be measured and used to improve the quality of online learning environments.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM
Social presence is a concept that refers to the sense of being with others in a computer-mediated environment. It is a feeling of being connected to others in a virtual space. Social presence is a key factor in the success of online learning environments. It is a feeling of being connected to others in a virtual space. Social presence is a key factor in the success of online learning environments. It is a feeling of being connected to others in a virtual space.

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Measurements Social Presence Theory

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Nr Item	Item	7 rating scale steps			5 rating scale steps			N*
		M	SD	item measure	M	SD	item measure	
	In this learning environment ...							
SP01	... it feels as if we are a face to face group	2.93	1.47	39.30	2.22	.86	31.59	304
SP02	... it feels as if I cannot escape from the eyes of my fellow students	2.08	1.18		1.75	.70		299
SP03	... it feels as if I deal with 'real' persons and not with abstract anonymous persons	4.12	1.70	33.37	2.91	1.00	26.38	304
SP04	... I feel to be together with my fellow group students	3.22	1.51		2.38	.85		304
SP05	... I can form distinct impressions of some of my fellow students	3.66	1.51	35.90	2.59	.86	28.99	298
SP06	... it feels as if all my fellow students are 'real' physical persons	4.42	1.69	31.76	3.07	1.03	25.14	302
SP07	... I imagine that I really can 'see' my fellow students to be in front of me	2.98	1.56	39.04	2.23	.91	31.56	304
SP08	... my fellow students feel so 'real' that I almost believe that we are not virtual at all	3.01	1.62	38.91	2.24	.95	31.46	304
SP09	... I have my fellow group members in my minds' eye	3.09	1.70		2.30	.99		302
SP10	... all of my fellow students imagine that they really can 'see' me to be in front of them	2.82	1.46		2.17	.86		301
SP11	... all of my fellow students feel that I am a 'real' physical person	3.60	1.70	35.94	2.62	1.00	28.54	300
SP12	... it feels as if all my fellow students and I are in the same room	2.77	1.55	40.11	2.11	.89	32.49	304
SP13	... it feels as if I can really 'touch' my fellow students	1.86	1.12		1.61	.71		304
SP14	... it feels as if all my fellow students and I are in close proximity	2.45	1.48	41.80	1.96	.88	33.64	304
SP15	... I strongly feel the presence of my fellow students	3.09	1.68	38.54	2.29	.95	31.16	301
SP16	... all of my fellow students feel my presence	2.78	1.53		2.15	.90		302

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The **Social Presence and Privacy Questionnaire (SPPQ)** was developed by Tu (2002), distinguishing three dimensions: social context, online communication, and interactivity. SPPQ was created based on two instruments: CMC attitude instrument (Steinfeld, 1986) and perceived privacy (Witmer, 1997). The content validity and the construct validity of SPPQ was tested with factor analysis.

The final version of SPPQ contains 17 social presence items and 13 privacy items, rated on a five-point rating scale.

A **self-reporting Social Presence Scale** was developed by Kreijns, Kirschner, Jochems, and Buuren (2011). The scale consisted of five items with an internal consistency of .81.

Objectives	Content Experts					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
1 Social Presence	6 (7.09)	9 (7.88)	6 (7.09)	7 (6.89)	10 (9.06)	38
2 Privacy	14 (12.31)	10 (13.68)	11 (12.31)	15 (11.97)	16 (15.73)	66
3 Utility	2 (2.42)	3 (2.69)	3 (2.42)	3 (2.36)	2 (3.10)	13
4 Ease of Use	2 (1.31)	2 (1.45)	0 (1.31)	1 (1.27)	2 (1.67)	7
5 Interactivity	3 (2.61)	4 (2.90)	4 (2.61)	1 (2.54)	2 (3.34)	14
6 Language	0 (2.24)	4 (2.49)	2 (2.24)	2 (2.18)	4 (2.86)	12
7 CMC exper. & comp.	7 (5.60)	5 (6.22)	7 (5.60)	4 (5.44)	7 (7.15)	30
8 Demographics	2 (2.42)	3 (2.69)	3 (2.42)	2 (2.36)	3 (3.10)	13
Total	36	40	36	35	46	193

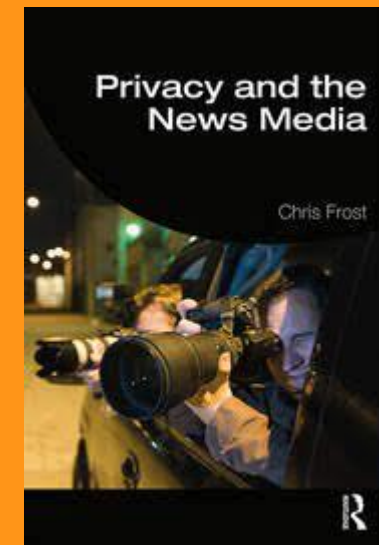
• Numbers in parentheses are expected frequencies.

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Privacy and computer-mediated communication

Still, it is a general insight from previous research on digital media that people often disclose more intimate and private things in computer-mediated communication when compared to face-to-face communication (Joinson 2001).

In contrast to how interaction happens in a classroom, for example, online invisibility means we don't have to worry about our physical appearance or the sound of our voice as we post a message. As McKenna and Bargh (2000: 64) put it: 'physical appearance does not stop potential relationships from getting off the ground'. In online interaction, other and less superficial aspects — such as similarity of values and interests, or conversational style — can determine attraction to a larger extent than in some cases of face-to-face interaction.



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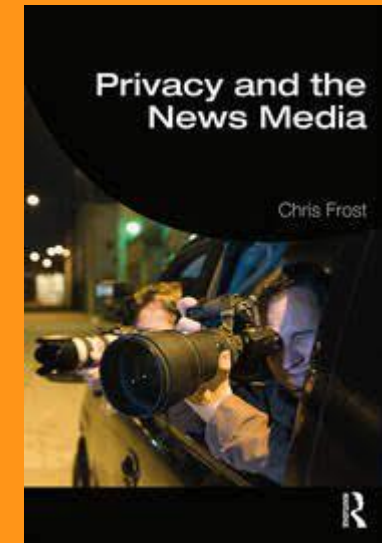
Privacy and computer-mediated communication

Likewise, we don't have to deal with verbal or non-verbal cues or reactions from our audience.

No frowns, no shaking heads, no sighs, but, on the other hand, no big smiles, oohs and aahs, or applause either.

As Suler (2004: 322) writes: 'Text communication offers a built-in opportunity to keep one's eyes averted.' In addition to the fact that digital interaction can enable invisibility — a form of visual anonymity — it can also warrant other forms of anonymity.

One such form is discursive anonymity, which is the situation when things that are written and posted can't be attributed to any specific and known source (Qian & Scott 2007).



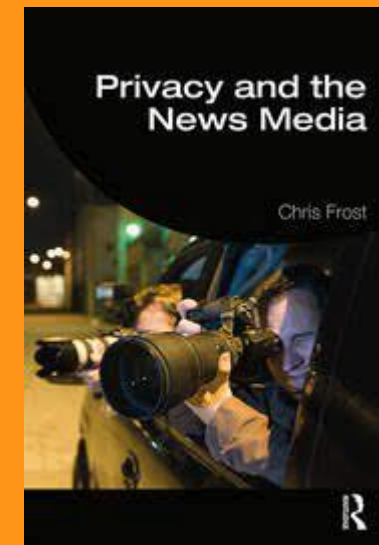
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Privacy and computer-mediated communication

Of course, digital interaction is not the only mode of communication where it is possible to avoid identification. But the multitude of communication channels on the internet, in combination with the separation of users in space and time, makes it relatively easy to evade identification.

With anonymity as a protective cloak, people tend to take more risks, and to express more directly what they truly think or feel. Once again, that online disinhibition.

With identities concealed, we may share more intimate confidences earlier in potential relationships, and develop closeness faster than we would in face-to-face offline relationships.

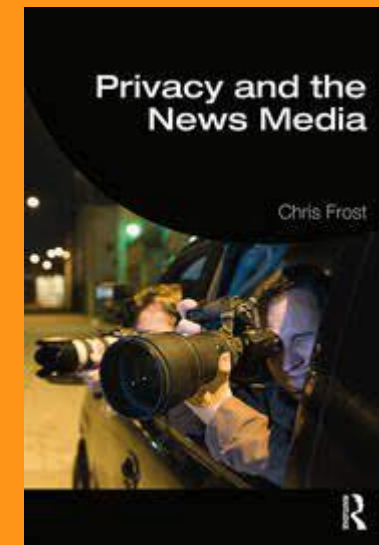


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Privacy and computer-mediated communication

In fact, a number of studies undertaken in the 1990s demonstrated that people tended to forge strong friendships based on high levels of self-disclosure on the internet (Henderson & Gilding 2004: 490).

Yet the same mechanism — the fact that we feel less restrained by social norms — might also lower the thresholds for expressing views and behaviors that are racist and so on.



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In the Dark

Anonymity can definitely be both good and bad for social interaction.

On the internet, the 'large numbers' might make us overestimate how many people share our views (McKenna & Bargh 2000: 64). We might see, for example, the number of views of a YouTube video or the number of times a tweet has been retweeted and make a rough translation between such numbers and the general legitimacy of the content.



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In the Dark

When anonymity removes personal responsibility and generates a perceived loss of individuality, it can also lead to people becoming more altruistic and more willing to help others. In a digital society, then, anonymity can be a force of unity and solidarity as well as fragmentation and nihilism. This is a longstanding debate.

Some claim that anonymous interaction in digital media is a major cause of hate speech, racism, etc



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In the Dark

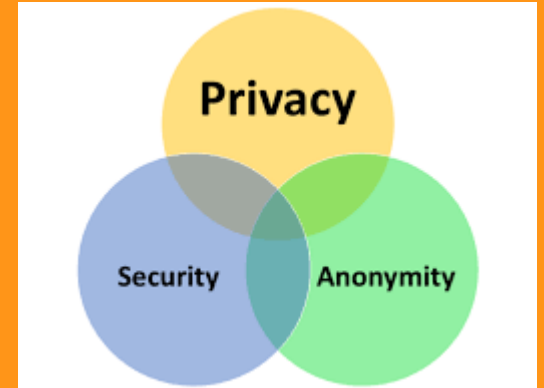
The researchers (Gergen et al. 1973: 38) found that these results challenged previous studies that had shown that anonymity fed aggression. They wrote: Both laboratory and field studies have demonstrated that when a person is without markers or personal identity when he or she becomes deindividuated in the researchers' terms, the stage is set for increased aggression. Faceless people are more likely to harm each other.



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In the Dark

On the internet, there are several possibilities to maintain anonymity at the technological level. Users might connect via servers that conceal their actual IP address, use anonymous email or messaging services, or use other forms of anonymity-enabling hardware and software. With some of these methods, it is next to impossible for anyone, even with the right expertise, to reveal the true identity of someone. With others, the protection might not be as secure as the user would hope.



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In the Dark

However, from a sociological perspective, the most interesting part of online anonymity is that even those who interact online with little to none of these protective layers tend to feel that they are quite anonymous as well. This is because when we post on a forum — even if it is easy to see the IP address behind our username — or when we upload a tweet — even if we have information about who we are on our Twitter profile .



Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

technology is evolving quicker than most peoples' ability to understand it; therefore it is increasingly critical to be safe online and to protect ones' personal privacy.

Privacy and Anonymity are not the same things. However, they do get confused with one another regularly so it is important to tell one from the other.

Terminology explained...



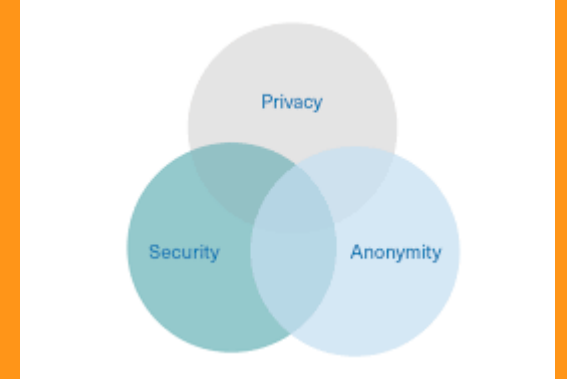
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Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

Privacy

Privacy is when nobody is aware of what you are doing but potentially they know your identity.

Privacy relates to the content. Refraining from the public eye and maintaining confidentiality. If you send an encrypted email to a friend so only the two of you can open it, this is private. It is not public.



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Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

Anonymity

Anonymity is when nobody knows who you are but potentially they know what you are doing.

When one keeps their actions and activities separate from their identity. Where, from a set of all possible number of people, there is an equal probability it could be anybody. This setting could serve for viewing content but not for producing it.

Anonymity is having nothing attributed to what you do. To be faceless and nameless.



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Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

Privacy and Anonymity often get substituted for one another and in the wrong context so it is easy to get confused. It is key to understand the difference as solutions will vary in how they provide privacy or anonymity.

What is Pseudonymity?

Say you choose to use an alias for social media or for a forum online to hide your identity, an adversary may not know who you are but can still attribute posts and activity to you.

This is an alias, a cover, a false identity. This is often referred to as 'pseudonymity'.

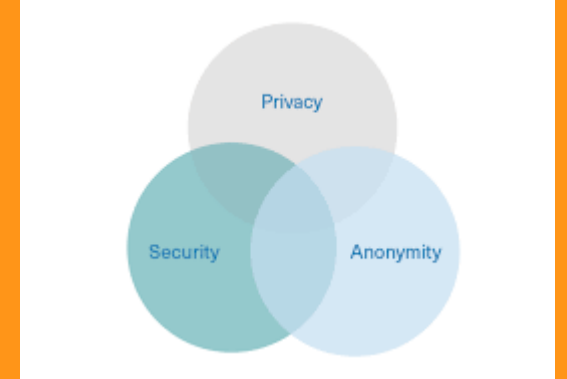


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Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

The amount of information shared via social media is rapidly increasing. All major websites and operating systems have adopted features to simplify and encourage information sharing on various social media platforms.

At the same time, there are growing concerns over online privacy and the handling of sensitive social media data. There exists a fundamental trade-off between the utility that can be derived from social media and individual privacy.



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Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

This “privacy dilemma” (Brandtzæg, Luders, and Skjetne 2010) has challenged researchers to develop interface designs that reconcile people’s desire to share information with concerns over privacy.

A substantial body of literature has shown how the state of anonymity impacts online behavior (e.g., Bernstein et al. 2011; Postmes et al. 1998). Since many social networking sites do not allow users to share information anonymously, it raises an important set of research questions around effects on information-sharing behavior in the presence of the option to share anonymously.

Privacy and Anonymity
On Social Media

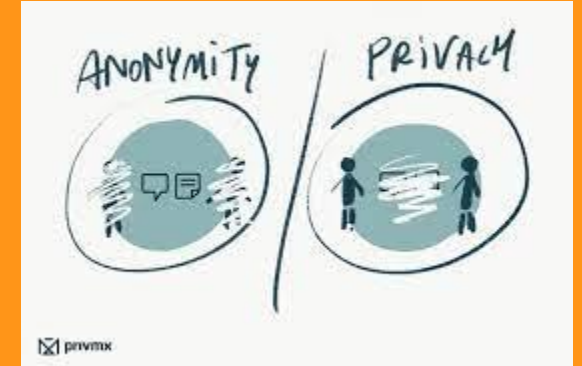
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Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

Prior research suggests that people share information to receive attention and enhance their reputation and popularity among an audience (Ames and Naaman 2007; Lee and Ma 2012).

A fundamental trade-off arises between the utility that can be derived from social media and the concern over privacy, which has led researchers to call for interface designs that “simultaneously ensure privacy and promote content sharing and sociability” (Brandtzæg, Luders, and Skjetne 2010, p. 1007).



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Anonymity and Privacy in Social Media

Anonymity and Social Norms

Social psychological research has long established that the state of anonymity strongly influences people's behavior. The most notable work has been carried out by Phillip Zimbardo (1969). In a series of experiments, he found a tendency toward greater aggression and violence when people were anonymous than when they were identifiable by name tags.



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Hyperpersonal Interaction

Anonymity as such is of course not new, but before digital society, people generally only had the opportunity to be anonymous in random, occasional, and impersonal forms of interaction.

On the internet and in social media, anonymity can be maintained in interaction that is not just brief and on a one-time-only basis. In some online environments, people can communicate over a period of time, get to know each other well, and share intimate things, while still keeping their true identities concealed.



Hyperpersonal Communication in CMC

- This allows communicators to carefully think about what to say, how to say it, and when to say it.
- It also allows individuals to use their imagination to “idealize” the person whom they are talking to.
- Thus, leading to intense social relationships beyond normal level (hyperpersonal).



Hyperpersonal Interaction

Another point to explore is, as discussed previously, that the rise of web 2.0 has arrived with a decrease in the importance of anonymity online. Social media, when compared to the earlier forms of internet sociality, are more based on users being visible to each other, where our identities tend to be grounded to a larger extent in relationships with the offline friends that we also have contact with online.



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Hyperpersonal Interaction

Walther also found that what he called hyperpersonal interaction could be developed online. This is a notion which may account for why some forms of interaction though digital media sometimes are marked by higher levels of emotional intensity and self-disclosure than face-to-face interaction.

He explained that people communicating digitally — with fewer cues than in face-to-face communication — might succumb to over-reliance on the information that they have.



Hyperpersonal Interaction

Walther writes that digital media alone do not decide which one of these forms of interaction are realised in any given situation. Rather, the internet and social media afford opportunities for people to communicate as they like.



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Writing Ourselves Into Being

The affordances of social media enable us to document, display, and share our lives, and to do this in more than one fixed and specific way. Identities are always open to negotiation and, a key element of being in society is the management of our identities in relation to others — showing some aspects, hiding others — depending on audience, context, and situation.



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Writing Ourselves Into Being

Of course, identities are always formed in relation to what position the individual has within the larger cultural and economic framework of society, and they are constrained by dominant sorting systems that might be rooted in class, gender, race, (dis)ability, and so on.

Still, with interaction on the internet being potentially disinhibited, anonymous, and thus free and open, there is considerable room for people in digital society to construct and perform different features (and even versions) of themselves.



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Writing Ourselves Into Being

This is due to the relative fluidity of the digital environment, because, as McKenna and Bargh (2000: 62) write:

it is quite difficult for a person to effect changes in his or her self-concept when the surrounding social environment (i.e., one's network of acquaintances, colleagues, family, and friends) remains static.



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Writing Ourselves Into Being

On the internet and in social media, people have the social opportunity and the technological tools for 'writing themselves into being' (Barton & Lee 2013: 84). By posting text, images, or video, by commenting on the posts of others, and when creating profiles, and so on, we are actively constructing who we are, or at least who we want to be seen as by others.

Managing and working with identity in such ways can be seen as 'a process of exploring and discovering new aspects of the self' (Barton & Lee 2013: 85). It is important to note, however, that our own self-presentations are not the only information that is available about us online.

PERSONAL IDENTITY

IT IS OUR MEMORIES
THAT MAKE US HUMAN



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Writing Ourselves Into Being

We may also be liked, tagged, mentioned, or discussed by others. This means that anyone looking someone up with a search engine will find 'a mix of what the person has put online and information placed there by others' (Baym 2010: 112).

These dynamics are further complicated by the interesting tension between what the 'old' internet was and is — largely an archive of traces — and new forms of ephemeral media, such as Snapchat snaps that only live for seconds, consisting not of traces, facelessness, or asynchronicity, but of pure erasure.

Personal Identity



Thank You