

DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS

DGM 723

Prepared by:

Dr. Sherihan Mohamed

Lecture 3



DMG 723

DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS

Chapter 2

Privacy in the (Post-)Digital Era

Prepared by:
Dr. Sherihan Mohamed

Lecture
2

Remember:

- ** **Digital Media Ethics:** How to proceed?
- ** **Is Digital Media Ethics Possible?** Grounds for hope
- ** How to do ethics in the new mediascape: Dialogical approaches, difference, and Pluralism.
- ** Further considerations: Ethical judgments.

Lecture
3

Outlines:

- ** **Information** and **privacy** in the global digital Age.
- ** **“Privacy”** and **private life**: Changing attitudes in the age of social media and mobile devices
- ** **“Privacy”** and **private life**: Cultural and philosophical considerations
- ** **“Privacy”** and **private life**: Cultural differences and ethical pluralism

Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age



Privacy in the
(Post-) Digital Era



Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age

“Privacy” and **anonymity online** – is there any?

These days, most of us are so **accustomed** to being **TRACKED** one way or another – including by **our smartphones, health-tracking devices, GPS-equipped**, digital cameras, etc. – that we may not give any of this a second thought.

Whether for **managing our health**, finding our way in a new place via **Google maps**, or keeping track of our children or partners having our rather precise physical location constantly monitored and known to at least selected apps makes contemporary life more convenient, healthier, and safer.

Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age

Many of these apps can also be used for **DARKER PURPOSES**, starting with various forms of **stalking, harassment**, and worse. And there are times and circumstances in which we very much want to protect our identity and locational privacy.



The dark side of using Digital Apps, especially in today's Digital Age, revolves around significant threats to Privacy, Security, and overall well-being.

While Apps offer many benefits, they also come with Several Risks that can harm users in various ways, such as:



Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age

Data Collection and Exploitation:

Most apps collect a **vast amount** of **DATA** about their **users**, from basic information like **name** and **location** to More Sensitive Data like browsing **habits**, **health information**, and even **personal preferences**. This data is often used for **targeted advertising** or Sold to **third-party companies**, sometimes without the user's full awareness or consent. **Over time**, this data can accumulate, creating a detailed profile of the user that could be exploited.

Invasive Tracking:

Many apps, particularly those in **social media**, **advertising**, and even seemingly **harmless utility apps**, **Track User Behavior** across different platforms.

Even if you aren't using a particular app, it might track you through cookies, location tracking, or other means. This practice compromises privacy by continuously monitoring your actions and making it possible to **link personal behaviors to a specific identity**.

Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age

Lack of Transparency and Control:

Some apps **DO NOT** clearly explain **how they collect, store, and share data**, leaving users in the dark about how their information is being used. Even when apps do offer privacy settings, they may be confusing, misleading, or buried deep within the app, making it difficult for users to control the extent of their data sharing.





Security Vulnerabilities:

Apps, particularly those that aren't regularly updated or well-maintained, can have security flaws that expose user data to hackers. Even large, **reputable companies** have been the **victims** of **data breaches** that affect **millions of users**. Insecure apps can expose sensitive information like **personal details**, **financial data**, or **login credentials**, putting users at risk of identity theft or fraud.

Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age

Surveillance and Government Overreach:

Some apps, **particularly** messaging or social media platforms, are used by governments or organizations to spy on users.

Governments may **request** ACCESS to **private data** from **app developers**, or hackers may exploit app vulnerabilities to gain access to sensitive information. This can lead to violations of personal privacy, particularly in countries with oppressive regimes that use digital surveillance to track and control citizens.





Psychological Manipulation:

Certain apps, especially **social media platforms** and **games**, are designed to **manipulate users' emotions** and **behaviors**. Through algorithms that exploit personal data, apps may encourage addiction, increase anxiety, or promote unhealthy comparison to others. This psychological manipulation may not only affect privacy but also mental health, especially among vulnerable users.

Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age

Lack of Accountability:

Many apps are created by private companies that might not have the best interests of users in mind. **IF privacy violations occur, these companies Might Not Be Held Accountable.** Moreover, legal frameworks to protect privacy can be weak or outdated, leaving users with little recourse if their information is misused.





Long-Term Consequences of Data Storage:

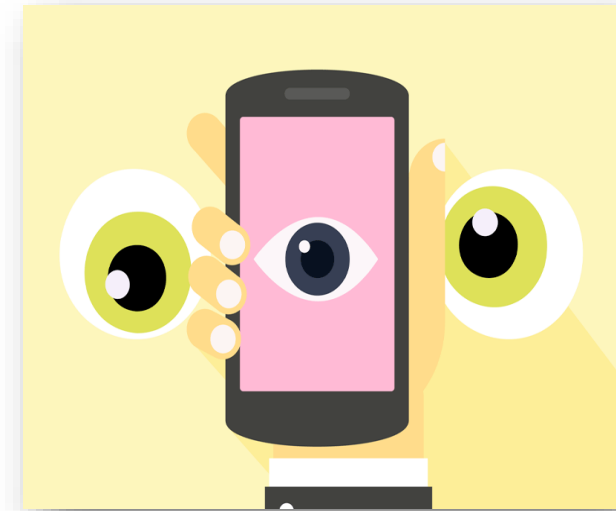
Data collected by apps doesn't just disappear when you stop using them. In many cases, this data is stored indefinitely, creating a digital footprint that could follow you for years, affecting your reputation, security, and even employment prospects.

Lecture
3

Information and privacy in the global digital Age

Manipulation of Consent:

Often, apps ask for "consent" to access personal information, BUT the consent is not always fully informed. Users may feel pressured to grant access to data in order to use the app or continue enjoying its features, which can result in a false sense of consent that doesn't fully protect their privacy.



Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Changing attitudes in the age of social media and mobile devices



These manifest threats to personal privacy and private life are further accompanied by changing attitudes toward privacy in both “Western” and “Eastern” societies – perhaps as an artifact of our growing use of digital media.



Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Changing attitudes in the age of social media and mobile devices

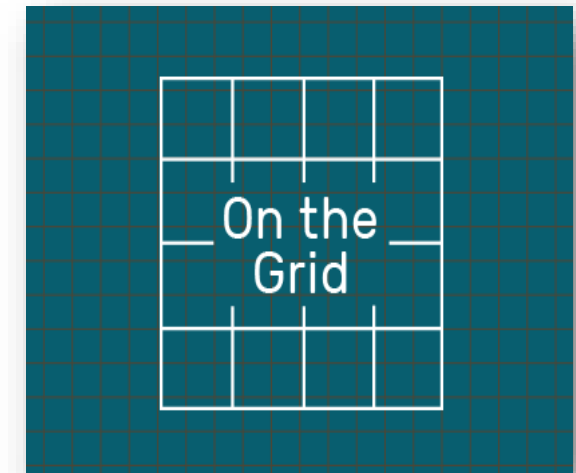
For example, in sharp tension with worries about hierarchical forms of surveillance by states and corporations, the terms first introduced by Albrechtslund (2008) – “voluntary” and “participatory surveillance” – are now commonplace understandings of our always-on behaviors. Lateral surveillance of one another is apparent on any given social media site (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) as well as on video sharing sites such as YouTube.

Still more recently, our efforts to sustain some version of privacy are increasingly shared: we want to share what was once seen as primarily individually private information – but now within specific groups. “Group privacy” or “collective privacy” are terms that further refine and describe these changing privacy sensibilities – especially in an era increasingly dominated by “Big Data” approaches.

Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Changing attitudes in the age of social media and mobile devices

The mobile phone and then tablets invert our earlier contexts as well: being “On The Grid” is now the norm – and so these devices have turned traditional notions of “public” and “private” upside down. Earlier, privacy in the form of being “off the grid” of a public communications network was commonplace.



Being “**always on**” inverts or **turns** upside down earlier understandings of who we are and of our relationships with others. We will now see how this inversion and transformation means.

First of all, that we have to **rethink** our **conceptions** of **privacy** in dramatic ways. It may also well mean that we will likewise need to revisit and perhaps revise our **earlier ethical** and **political philosophies**.

Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural and philosophical considerations



Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural and philosophical considerations

What do we mean by “privacy?”

Privacy enables us to create barriers and manage boundaries to protect ourselves from unwarranted interference in our lives, which allows us to negotiate who we are and how we want to interact with the world around us.

Privacy helps us establish boundaries to limit who has access to our bodies, places and things, as well as our communications and our information.

In the **US context** and **tradition**, the conception of **privacy** begins with primarily physical notions, what we initially wanted to protect was the privacy of spaces, first of all our homes.



Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural and philosophical considerations

“Privacy” is not simply a matter of protecting specific spaces. what we want protected in an information age is precisely our information – information that, in digital form, is that much easier to access, copy, and distribute.

But why would we worry? “The expectation of privacy is grounded in the fear concerning how the information might be used or appropriated to pressure or embarrass one, to damage one’s credibility or economic status, and so on”.

There is a variation in the meaning of “privacy” that varies from culture to culture, and what is clear is that these concepts most closely associated with “privacy” are not only aligned with the emerging practices of collective and group privacy, in addition, they are expressed in the increasingly influential account of privacy as “context integration.”

Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural and philosophical considerations

Is privacy a right?

Privacy is a qualified, fundamental human right. The right to privacy is articulated in all of the major international and regional human rights instruments, including:



- * United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948, Article 12:
- * International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966, Article 17
- * Article 14 of the United Nations Convention on Migrant Workers;
- * Article 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- * Article 10 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;

Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural and philosophical considerations

What is the **relationship** between **information privacy** and **data security**?

Privacy and **security** are two interrelated but separate concepts.

Information security is concerned with unauthorized activity that causes a loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of information or systems (including systems that don't involve personal information).



Privacy concerns may arise from unauthorized access, but they can also arise from planned and permissible activity.

So, even if information is handled securely, privacy concerns may exist where the use or disclosure of that data impacts individuals.

Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural and philosophical considerations

For example, a **social website** may handle all information it collects securely, But then use that information to profile individuals, make decisions about the content users will see, and share their information (securely!) with advertising firms.



Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural differences and ethical pluralism





For the **ethical relativist**, these differences would be one more example arguing that there are **no universal values or norms**: the validity of ethical norms and values is solely relative to a given culture and time.



Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural differences and ethical pluralism

In this instance, **the US notion of individual privacy** as a positive good is legitimate – but only if you’re a member of the US culture; and **the Thai emphasis on familial privacy alone as ethically acceptable is also legitimate.** if you were born and raised in Thai culture in those days. This is fine – at least as long as people from both cultures have nothing to do with one another and thus require no shared norms or values.

For the **ethical monist**, we can establish a shared norm or value rather simply: one of these values or norms must be true – absolutely, finally, and universally – and hence any different value or norm can only be false.

Again, if we had nothing to do with one another, this might be a workable solution: but in **today's world**, it is more or less impossible to live in such splendid isolation.

Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural differences and ethical pluralism

And so, if **the ethical monist** has his way, we must choose which norm or value is right and which is thereby wrong.

This approach seems to condemn us to intolerance and conflict – not very useful either for genuine understanding of the Other as Other 5 or for efforts to avoid cultural imperialism, much less warfare.



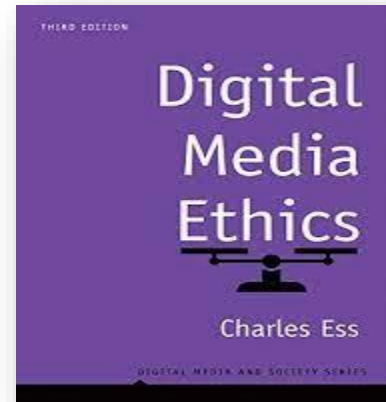
The **ethical pluralist**, finally, hopes to avoid such intolerance and conflict by way of arguing that both cultures share a notion of “privacy,” but this notion is understood and practiced in different ways – ways that are directly shaped by each culture’s distinctive traditions and assumptions. **Ethical pluralism** thus argues for a middle ground between relativism and monism.

Lecture
3

“Privacy” and private life: Cultural differences and ethical pluralism

Yes, **norms and values** vary from culture to culture – but, **contra monism**, this does not necessarily mean that only one cultural norm can be right and the other wrong: both can be correct as instances of different interpretations of a shared norm. **Contra relativism**, because varying cultural norms may thus instantiate a shared norm, cultural variations of this sort do not necessarily mean that there are no universally legitimate values or norms.

Digital Media
Ethics (Digital
Media and
Society Series),
3rd Edition, by
Charles Ess



Intro

Recommended Reference



Lecture
3

Outlines:

- ** **Information** and **privacy** in the global digital Age.
- ** **“Privacy”** and **private life**: Changing attitudes in the age of social media and mobile devices
- ** **“Privacy”** and **private life**: Cultural and philosophical considerations
- ** **“Privacy”** and **private life**: Cultural differences and ethical pluralism



Thank You

DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS

Lecture 3

DMG 723

Prepared by:
Dr. Sherihan Mohamed