"Making Sense of Privacy and Publicity"

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[This is a rough unedited crib of the actual talk]

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Good afternoon!

Let me begin by saying that I'm tremendously honored to be here doing the welcoming keynote at SXSW. I have a huge feeling of warmth whenever I think about SXSW. Part of this is deeply personal - I met my soulmate here. I have met countless friends here. And made more professional connections than I can possibly enumerate. Walking down Red River fills me with a flash of fun memories.

What's powerful about SXSW is first and foremost the people. From there, the content spills out beautifully. But as we think of the power of this conference to bring people together, I want to expressly call out the amazing work of Hugh Forrest, your fearless organizer. Hugh has done a phenomenal job of bringing diverse groups here to Austin to engage with one another. And for that, I'm eternally grateful.

For those of you who are old-timers, you know how special this conference is. For those of you who are new here, you're going to have a fantastic time! Just one bit of advice: beware of the tequila and, especially, of any future colleagues who may offer you tequila.

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I was asked to give this talk to invite you to think deeply. For those who don't know me… I'm an ethnographer. I study how social media has become a part of daily life. In recent years, I've been focused on teen engagement with social media. But I'm also an activist, driven to making the world a better place through the production and dissemination of knowledge. And I'm also a geek and a blogger. I've been blogging for 13 years, determined to communicate to the world what I've had the privilege of witnessing. I love technology but I also love to be critical of technology.

What keeps me up at night is trying to make sense of how social media transforms society and, more importantly, what it helps make visible about humanity. Technophobes love to talk about how technology is ruining everything and technophiles obsess over how everything is radically different. I like to wade through the extremes to see the subtle inflection points. Reality is always in the details.

My goal today is to invite you to step back and ask: what hath we wrought? We've all been involved in social media from at least one perspective. Some of you are creators, developers, designers; others of you are business folks, marketers, analysts. Some of you use social media in your jobs and some of you live it as part of your daily practice. We are all collectively creating culture through our engagement with social media. So what I'd like to do is offer some insights that allow you to think critically about our collective project so that we can all find ways to do better.

To give you something to munch on, I've decided to focus my talk on two interwoven concepts that keep coming up whenever we think about social media: privacy and publicity. I'm highlighting these issues because I think that they're going to play a crucial role in the evolution of social media. I think that we're going to have to work them out and I need your help in doing so.

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DEAR ERIC SCHMIDT, PRIVACY IS NOT DEAD. KTXBY.

No matter how many times a privileged straight white male technology executive pronounces the death of privacy, Privacy Is Not Dead. People of all ages care deeply about privacy. And they care just as much about privacy online as they do offline. But what privacy means may not be what you think.

Fundamentally, privacy is about having control over how information flows. It's about being able to understand the social setting in order to behave appropriately. To do so, people must trust their interpretation of the context, including the people in the room and the architecture that defines the setting. When they feel as though control has been taken away from them or when they lack the control they need to do the right thing, they scream privacy foul.

To get at the challenges around privacy, let's consider a recent privacy FAIL: Google Buzz. What the outrage around Google Buzz showed us is that people care deeply about privacy and control. Don't get me wrong - plenty of people will use the service and it will be extremely popular, but this doesn't mean Google didn't screw up. They're taking a hit in terms of trust, because not everyone benefited from what they did.

For the uninitiated, Google introduced a new service called Buzz that is basically a stream (ala Twitter or Facebook's Feed) with content populated by the people that an individual chooses to follow. The service is situated within Gmail, requiring users to access it via the Gmail interface. When first launched, new users were invited to check out Buzz on the way into Gmail. If they agreed, they were prompted to give information that would result in the creation of a publicly accessible profile, if they didn't already have one. And they were given a popup of users that Buzz calculated that they'd most like to follow. While any user could be unclicked, the default was that they were clicked and clicking through would result in users automatically accepting these people. The default also meant that a users' list of followees would be listed on their publicly accessible profile, even though there was an option to uncheck this. Likewise, if the user used other public features of other Google products - such as Reader - these too would be all integrated into a user's public profile, even though there was always a way to disconnect these sites.

Nothing that the Buzz team did was technologically wrong. There were all sorts of opt-outs available - opt out of Buzz, opt out of the default lists, opt out of displaying the lists, etc. Yet, the service resulted in a PR disaster. Why? I'd argue that Google made a series of non-technical mistakes that resulted in a disruption of social expectations. While it's easy to blame the users since the technology was fine, I think it's important to deconstruct cases like this to understand what went wrong and what it tells us about privacy.

First, Google got themselves into trouble by launching a public-facing service inside a service that people understand as extremely private. Gmail seems like a logical integration point because people visit there regularly, but juxtaposing the two services created a cognitive disconnect in users' minds. The result? Confused users believed that their emails were being made publicly accessible. While this was never the case, the integration confused people and gave them the wrong impression about the service. This created unnecessary panic amongst users, resulting in bad PR for Google that was technologically inaccurate.

Second, Google assumed that people would opt-out of Buzz if they didn't want to participate. I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt on this one because a more insidious framing would be to say that they wanted to force people into opting-in because this makes the service more viral and more monetizable. While I'm trying not to let conspiracy theories cloud my analysis, I can't help but notice that more and more companies are opting people in and waiting until they flip out to adjust privacy settings.

Many users jumped into Buzz to check it out, clicking through the various pages just to see what it was all about. They didn't realize they made their content public; they didn't realize who they connected to. They didn't yet know the service. We know that most users accept the defaults, especially when they're trying to login to see

what something new is all about. And we know that the defaults matter. When a user doesn't know the value proposition, they're going to just say yes.

But once you understand something, having to undo the setup is tricky. It's easier to flip out. Many users were extremely confused, uncertain of what opting out would mean, especially since it was located in Gmail. I spoke with a few who were afraid that opting out would mean canceling their Gmail account. That, needless to say, made them even more worried.

While you want your services to go viral, help users walk through the value proposition first. Not through a video, but through an experience. Walk them through the steps to build out their network, inviting them to join you on this journey and helping them understand what they'll get by doing it. Often, it's easier to start with a blank page that shows an artificial experience and then invite them to replace the artificial content with content from people they know.

Another issue is that Google foolishly told users what they wanted rather than asking them. As technologists, it's easy to assume that optimizing a situation is always best. Yet, this tends to break necessary social rituals that help acquaint people with a particular social setting. We don't go through the niceties of "Hi, How are you?" because it's optimal for communication; we do it because to do otherwise is rude. In digital worlds, people need to be eased into a situation, to understand how to make sense of the setting.

Years ago, a group of engineers realized that people frequently posted "A/S/L?" in chatrooms to elicit age, sex, and location. They noticed that most people responded to this query with information like 32/F/Austin. They thought they'd make people's lives easier by inviting them to fill out a profile that included age, sex, and location. What they failed to realize was that A/S/L? wasn't simply about information solicitation; it was an icebreaker. When I respond with 32/F/Austin, it's entirely appropriate for you to ask, "Oh, do you happen to be at SXSW?" But there's a big difference between this line of inquiry and you looking at my profile and saying, "So, I noticed you're in Austin; do you happen to be at SXSW?" The latter feels really sketchy and my immediate thought is: "what are you doing looking at my profile?"

The norm on many sites at this point is to invite users to share their Twitter or Facebook account or to upload their contacts so as to populate their network. There is no doubt that Google has tremendous information about its users' networks. But instead of asking new Buzz users if they wanted to see who else that they know on Google services might be using Buzz, they pre-populated a list and provided it to them as their default list of friends. This made people feel downright creeped out.

This dynamic connects to my fourth issue: Google found the social equivalent of the uncanny valley. Graphics and AI folks know how eerie it is when an artificial human looks almost right but not quite. When Google gave people a list of the people they expected them to know, they were VERY close. This makes sense - they have lots of data about many users. But it wasn't quite perfect.

To understand this, you need to know that there's a difference between what sociologists understand as "personal social networks" and the two kinds of networks known by technologies: "behavioral social networks" and "articulated social networks." [See more info]

Articulated social networks are the lists of people that you indicate that you know, either privately (like in your addressbook) or publicly (like on Facebook). Behavioral social networks are the networks of people that you regularly communicate with or share space with, the kinds of networks that you can discern from email exchanges or mobile phone records. All of our theories about social networks - weak and strong ties, homophily, etc. - stem from studies of personal networks. While there's a lot we don't know about behavioral and articulated networks, we do know that they are NOT the same as personal networks. Google collapsed behavioral and articulated social networks and presented them in a way that indicated that they might be one's personal network. And for many users, this wasn't quite right. You may talk to your ex-husband frequently via email, but that doesn't mean that you want to follow him on Buzz.

Finally, Google assumed that people wanted different pieces of public content integrated together. This causes two problems. First, just because people talk to certain people in one context doesn't mean that they want to talk with them elsewhere. As Helen Nissenbaum has argued, "contextual integrity" is necessary for people to effectively manage privacy. Dismantling contextual integrity is experienced as a violation of privacy. And second, just because something is publicly accessible doesn't mean people want it to be publicized. We'll come back to this one in a second.

As usual, The Onion hit the nail on the head with its satirical article, "Google Responds to Privacy Concerns with Unsettlingly Specific Apology." Just because people trusted Google with information about themselves doesn't mean that they want it used in unexpected ways.

THE BINARIES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

It's easy to think that "public" and "private" are binaries. We certainly build a lot of technology with this assumption. At best, we break out of this with access-control lists where we list specific people who some piece of content should be available to. And at best, we expand our notion of "private" to include everything that is not "public." But this binary logic isn't good enough for understanding what people mean when they talk about privacy. What people experience when they talk about privacy is more complicated than what can be instantiated in a byte.

To get at this, let's talk about how people experience public and private in unmediated situations. Because it's not so binary there either.

First, think about a conversation that you may have with a close friend. You may think about that conversation as private, but there is nothing stopping your friend from telling someone else what was said, except for your trust in your friend. You actually learned to trust your friend, presumably through experience.

Learning who to trust is actually quite hard. Anyone who has middle school-aged kids knows that there's inevitably a point in time when someone says something that they shouldn't have and tears are shed. It's hard to learn to really know for sure that someone will keep their word. But we don't choose not to tell people things simply because they could spill the beans. We do our best to assess the situation and act accordingly.

We don't just hold people accountable for helping us maintain privacy; we also hold the architecture around us accountable. We look around a specific place and decide whether or not we trust the space to allow us to speak freely to the people there. That said, we've also had a notion that "these walls have ears" that dates back to at least Chaucer.

"*But sooth is seyd, go sithen many yeres, / That feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres*."
-- "Knight's Tale" by Chaucer (1387), lines 1521-1522

In highlighting the fact that the architecture might be untrustworthy, this idiom is really pointing out that there's always the possibility of eavesdroppers, of people listening in who we don't actually account for. This is unnerving, confusing, and frustrating to those who are trying to properly assess a situation.

Let's flip this around. Think about a cafe that you like to visit. This is fundamentally a public space. There's a possibility that you'll intersect with all sorts of different people, but there are some people who you believe you are more likely to interact with than others. You have learned that you're more likely to run into your neighbors and you'd be startled if your mother "popped in" since she lives 3000 miles away. You may have even chosen this particular cafe in the hopes of running into that hottie who you have a crush on or avoiding your ex who lives in a different part of town. You have also come to understand that physics means that there's a limit on how many people will be in the cafe. Plus, you'd go completely bonkers if, all of a sudden, everyone from your childhood magically appeared at the cafe simultaneously. One coincidence is destabilizing enough; we can't really handle a collapse in the time-space continuum.

When people assess a situation, they develop mental models based on probability calculations and the expectations they bring to the table. They make guesses about who is more or less likely to run across them. Their calculations are completely reasonable, as it's an efficient way of getting a decent handle on the social context, even if they are sometimes wrong. This is true both offline and online. People need to know how to behave so they use whatever information is available to them to make their best guess.

Unfortunately, online environments are not nearly as stabilized as offline ones. While the walls in the streets may have ears, digital walls almost always do. More problematically, online architectures have affordances that are quite different than offline ones - persistence, searchability, replicability, scalability. [More info: Chapter 1] Taking these into account is extremely challenging and many people are still working out what it means to engage online given these conditions.

But, practically speaking, security through obscurity is not as stupid as some folks think. Most people out there never get much attention, even when they are desperately seeking it. This is true offline and, for the most part, online. A few years back, Technorati pointed out that the average blog was read by six people. Just because something can be accessed, doesn't mean that it will be. And for that reason, people regularly calculate that there's not much to lose in making something public, just like they think that there's not much lost in going to a cafe.

But digital architecture doesn't just have ears; it also has a mouth. And one of the most destabilizing issues online is that people aren't good at managing how the system might change the rules on them. Early adopters are consistently surprised by how a community changes when it goes mainstream and adopters at all stages find themselves startled when the rules of a system change after they got comfortable. This is not to say that they can't learn to live with the changes, but the shift is still challenging.

CHANGING THE RULES

Let's think of this in terms of a second privacy FAIL: Facebook's changes in December. For those who missed it, Facebook asked users to reconsider their privacy settings. The first instantiation of the process asked users to consider various types of content and choose whether to make that content available to "Everyone" or to keep their old settings. The default new choice was "Everyone." Many users encountered this pop-up when they logged in and just clicked on through because they wanted to get to Facebook itself. In doing so, these users changed all of their settings to public, many without realizing it. When challenged by the Federal Trade Commission, Facebook proudly announced that 35% of users had altered their privacy settings when they had encountered this popup. They were proud of this because, as research has shown, very few people actually change the defaults. But this means that 65% of users changed their settings to public.

If one believes that no one cares about privacy, one might think that Facebook users consciously made their content public. But I've spent a lot of time browsing Facebook's "Everybody" feed since the privacy setting debacle in December and I don't think a lot of what I'm seeing is meant to be public. [Picture of some "public" status updates on Facebook.] So I started asking non-techy users about their privacy settings on Facebook. I ask them what they think their settings are and then ask them to look at their settings with me. I have yet to find someone whose belief matched up with their reality. That is not good news. Facebook built its name and reputation on being a closed network that enabled privacy in new ways, something that its users deeply value and STILL believe is the case. Are there Facebook users who want their content to be publicly accessible? Of course. But 65% of all Facebook users? No way.

Let me make this point clear with an example. I met a teen whose abusive father was recently released from jail. Recognizing that a restraining order would not be enough protection, the teen and her mother moved thousands of miles away. As the teen began making friends in her new school, she begged for a Facebook account. Her mother caved and both the daughter and mother worked to make the account as private as possible; neither of them wanted to face the consequences of being found. In December, when Facebook changed its privacy settings, this teen and her mother didn't realize what the change in privacy settings meant

until someone else pointed them out after the fact. Is putting her at-risk an acceptable bi-product of Facebook's changes?

By continuously arguing that Privacy is Dead, technologists justify their efforts to make publicly available data more public. But there's a big difference between something being publicly available and being publicized. I worry about how others are going to publicize this publicly available Facebook data and, more importantly, who will get hurt in the cross-fire.

PRIVACY DISCONNECTS

When thinking about privacy in a digital context, there are five main things you need to know.

First, you must differentiate between PII and PEI. If you've spent any time thinking about privacy, you've probably heard of PII - "Personally Identifiable Information." All too often, we assume that when people make PII available publicly that they don't care about privacy. While some folks are deeply concerned about PII, PII isn't the whole privacy story. What many people are concerned about is PEI - "Personally Embarrassing Information." This is what they're brokering, battling over, and trying to make sense of.

Because most people are interacting online with people that they know, they expect to make PII available. They do so because they want to be found by friends. But they also want to keep PEI hidden, at least to those that might go out of their way to use it maliciously. Unfortunately, it's hard to be visible to some and invisible to others. People develop elaborate schemes to try to do so. This is part of why people have used handles and nicks online for years, to blur who they are. Yet, as more things become connected and articulated networks bind people together, it's increasingly hard to walk the tightrope.

When people make information available, they make themselves vulnerable. We do this all the time in social settings. We make ourselves vulnerable because we believe that we might have something to gain from it. This is how we build friendships. We also make ourselves vulnerable to machines because we hope that we can gain something from it. Yet, just like we trust people to understand the context in which information is shared, so too do we trust machines. When either our friends or our technology fail to maintain the social context, it feels like a huge privacy FAIL.

Second, we're seeing an inversion of defaults when it comes to what's public and what's private. Historically, a conversation that you might have in the hallway is private by default, public through effort. It's private because no one bothers to share what's being said. The conversation may be made public if something worth spreading is said. Even though the conversation took place in a public setting, the conversation is private by default, public through effort. Conversely, when you engage online in equally public settings such as on someone's Facebook Wall, the conversation is public by default, private through effort. You actually have to think about making something private because, by default, it is going to be accessible to a much broader audience. Now, in both settings - the hallway and the Wall - you may have stayed in public because you invited the possibility that other people would join the conversation. But because of persistence in particular, the conversation on Facebook is accessible at an entirely different level. This requires a different set of calculations, a different set of choices. You have to choose to limit access rather than assuming that it won't spread very far. And, needless to say, people make a lot of mistakes learning this.

Third, people regularly calculate both what they have to lose and what they have to gain when entering public situations. Having control over a situation is extremely important, but it must be weighed against the opportunities that one might have to gain a friend or have a new experience by being public. The equations people use differ depending on where they are at in their life. Most generalizably, youth focus on all that they have to gain when entering into public spaces while adults are thinking about all that they have to lose. Part of the challenge in this is figuring out where someone's at and what their expectations are.

I've met plenty of teens who are growing up with Ivy League admissions hanging over their head. These kids are being trained to think about everything that they have to lose while their friends are pushing them to engage

more publicly. They're trying to balance between these two different worlds, trying to assess how to be cool amongst their peers while also not risking college.

On the flipside, I meet countless adults who are finding that blogging and tweeting open up powerful doors for them. They are struggling to handle their bosses and friends who don't see why someone should spend so much time engaging with strangers.

Now, there are also places where cultural values collide with a vengeance. I interviewed a young woman who was posting risque photos of herself on her MySpace. When I asked her why, she told me that she was hoping that she'd get picked up by a modeling agency. She pointed to other celebrities (like Tila Tequila) who had become famous because of what they did online. She was aware that her images might get her into trouble with adults, but she didn't care what college admissions officers had to say; she didn't see college as a viable option anyhow. In her mind, the only way to "get out" was to become famous and so she engaged in a set of practices that make most upper and middle class parents go berzerk.

Fourth concept. Keep in mind that people don't always make material publicly accessible because they want the world to see it. Consider this quote from 17-year-old Bly Lauritano-Warner:

"My mom always uses the excuse about the internet being "public" when she defends herself. It's not like I do anything to be ashamed of, but a girl needs her privacy. I do online journals so I can communicate with my friends. Not so my mother could catch up on the latest gossip of my life."

While it's easy to be private in public offline, doing so online can be quite difficult and frustrating. Teens, in particular, complain about those who hold power over them thinking that they have the right to look just because it is possible to be seen. By this logic, anyone who can get access to someone's diary has the right to look and anyone who has the ability to overhear something has the right to hear. Just because it's possible doesn't mean it's socially appropriate. What's at stake is often a question of trust. And all too often, parents erode their relationship with their children because they believe they have the right to snoop.

Finally, I want to come back to what I keep raising briefly but not properly addressing. Just because something is publicly accessible does not mean that people want it to be publicized. Making something that is public more public is a violation of privacy.

Consider the Facebook News Feed fiasco from a few years ago. What Facebook did was aggregate content in ways that made it more visible to users who could already access it. In essence, it made quasi-public data more public. Many users flipped. Why? There's a big difference from knowing that I just entered an "it's complicated" relationship by looking at my profile and getting that information in a stream of updates. In effect, Facebook publicized publicly available content, making it more public. Time and time again, this is what technology companies do. Can users adjust? Yes, and they do. But their behavior changes or they find themselves in a lot of trouble in ways that they weren't expecting.

What's at stake here is often not about whether or not something is public or private, but how public or private it is. People are not used to having the paparazzi trail after them every time they leave their house. Yet, when we argue that there's nothing wrong with making something that happens in public more public, we are basically arguing that we have the right to sick the paparazzi on everyone, to turn anyone into a public figure.

Let me make something clear: While plenty of teens want to be celebrities, few realize the costs associated with being that public. Sure, they've watched celebrities fall apart in the public eye, like Britney and Lindsey, but they're often unaware of how the paparazzi contributed to these public meltdowns.

And keep in mind that today's 12-year-olds weren't even alive when the paparazzi's obsessions drove Princess Di to the grave. There's a big difference between being the center of attention at school and being stalked and hounded by those who believe that the public has the right to know.

So for those of you out there who love to aggregate and remix public data, ask yourself a critical question: how will the people whose content you're remixing and aggregating feel when it's made more public than it already is? When it's made more public than people can handle? Sometimes, you're doing people a service. But if they have an expectation of obscurity, sicking the paparazzi on them may be costly.

Of course, there's something to be said for using this data to make a point. [Picture of PleaseRobMe.com] I'm intrigued by PleaseRobMe's desire to give up their site to a privacy advocate group.

LIVING IN A PUBLICITY WORLD

With celebrities in mind, let's talk explicitly about publicity. There's little doubt that the Internet supports new kinds of publicity, enabling average people to develop audiences and speak broadly while also giving those who know how to build an audience new tools in which to do so. This is part of what makes Twitter such a fascinating phenomenon. And Twitter has become a space for celebrities, micro-celebrities, wanna-be-celebrities, and all of their fans.

Many people mistakenly assume that tweets and status updates are the same thing. They are not and the difference has to do with publicity. While many started using Twitter to communicate with friends, the site has evolved to be primarily about those seeking an audience and those seeking to follow or contribute to a public in some way. Facebook, on the other hand, is still fundamentally about communicating with a specific set of people who are, by and large, your friends. Facebook is clearly looking to change this but, as it stands, these two services are primarily used very differently by their core users.

For the true celebrities, Twitter, like MySpace before it, allows for a more intimate form of public-ness. At Le Web, Queen Rania of Jordan explained that she is no longer able to go into public settings without countless guards; her physical mobility is extremely limited because of her role. Yet, through Twitter, the Queen can directly communicate with people in ways that were previously unavailable. Is she talking to everyone? Certainly not. But the connections feel more real than the kind of fandom that she faces when she goes out to the street.

Issues of intimacy also cause tremendous challenges for celebrities - and their handlers. Disney was not-so-pleased when many of its starlets began exposing the ups and downs of their lives in such an uncontrolled manner. After acquiring more than 2 million followers and publicly engaging in a tweet-based brawl with fellow starlet Demi Lovato, Miley Cyrus quit Twitter, causing great consternation amongst her fans.

Unable to miss such a perfect opportunity to speak her mind, Miley and her friends created a rap video about why she quit Twitter. Her explanation?

"Everything that I type
And everything that I do
All those lame gossip sites
Take it and they make it news
I want my private life private
I'm done trying to please
I ain't living for tabloids, no
I'm living for me"

Of course, she did post the rap video about needing a private life on YouTube, an act that she knew would result in folks publicizing her desire to be private.

Twitter isn't just for celebrities and their followers. What makes it a fascinating phenomenon is the diversity of engagement on the site. That's also what makes it messy. Consider the role that Trending Topics play. Trending topics are where publicity gets played out most explicitly. It is both the aggregate of people's participation and a site of game play as people work to create and maintain trends.

There are two types of Trending Topics - exogenous and endogenous. In plain English: those that are started because of external factors and those that are generated on the site. Exogenous trends are typically those that reflect a news story - Michael Jackson or Haiti. Endogenous ones are often memes - #LetsBeReal or #MeWithoutYouIsLike. In both cases, they can be fed internally. IranElection may have started out because of external factors, but it quickly got perpetuated internally.

What fascinates me about Trending Topics is that they reveal different aspects of the site, populations that are often not discussed by the digerati or news media. According to "What the Trend", "Justin Bieber" has spent 18 of the last 30 days in the Top 10. Let me tell you: it's not the SXSW crowd that's obsessively tweeting about him. Many of you might not even know who he is. (Hint: 16-year-old Canadian teen pop singer/idol.) While the majority of teens and tweens may not be on Twitter, most of Justin's 1.3 million followers are quite young.

It's not just teens and tweens who are making their voices heard on Twitter through the Trending Topics. If you follow many of the memes that get traction, you will find that there are a lot of black voices out there speaking up loud and proud. As one black user explained to me, joking around on Twitter is a lot like an extension of "yo mamma" culture; it's a place to blow off steam with humor that is sometimes vulgar in nature. LilDuval's comedic #witmyrefundcheck, used to mock black stereotypes, is an example of this practice.

I highlight black participation because it has ruffled some feathers. I'm consistently horrified when I see racism and classism in social media, but it's presence should be a lesson to all of us. On the night of the BET Award Ceremonies last summer, all of the Trending Topics were icons of the black community. How did non-black users respond? Some, not so nicely.

"wow!! too many negros in the trending topics for me. I may be done with this whole twitter thing."
"Did anyone see the new trending topics? I dont think this is a very good neighborhood. Lock the car doors kids."
"Why are all these black people on trending topics? Neyo? Beyonce? Tyra? Jamie Foxx? Is it black history month again? LOL"
"So many black people!"

They used the N-word and made comments about how Twitter had become ghetto. In doing so, they reinforced the idea that not everyone is welcome to be a visible part of the publics online.

WHO'S VOICE COUNTS?

As we think about publicity, we need to think about who has the right and privilege to be a part of public life. Who is comfortable speaking in public? What are the costs people face when speaking out in public?

Many of us have benefited from speaking in public through social media. I certainly have. At this point, I live an extremely privileged life. With privilege, it's easy to take some things for granted. So let me call out some of the things that we take for granted. As a privileged person, I believe that I can challenge authority, that I have the right to be heard and the right to be seen. I believe that my voice matters and that I can tell my story. I believe that I can walk out into public without being afraid of losing my job, losing my partner, losing my rights. I can embrace a "public by default" setting without facing too many consequences. And I can even survive a situation where a technology company reveals things that I didn't want to be publicized. I can also seek publicity without any fear.

But... Imagine being an immigrant whose family came here illegally 30 years ago when you were six months old. You don't speak the native tongue of your ancestors, have never been back to the country in which you were born. You are petrified of being deported. Are you comfortable telling your story in public?

Or... Imagine that you left an abusive relationship (one of the hardest things to do). You're working two jobs to make ends meet for you and your kids. You're exhausted, but your biggest fear is that your ex will find out where you are and hurt you and/or your kids again. How public do you want to be?

These two character sketches aren't made-up people; they're people I met who are trying to make life work. And there are a lot of people like them out there, concerned about how these new technologies are reshaping their worlds. It's easy to point to traditionally marginalized populations and highlight how they might lose. Plenty of LGBT-identified individuals have gotten kicked out of the military because of information people found online about them. But what about groups we don't normally think of as marginalized?

Take, for example, your kid's teacher. How public is she allowed to be online? Is she allowed to be religious or secular depending on your community? Can she have an online dating profile? Can she post pictures of her drinking with her friends on a public website? Is she allowed to be a lover and a friend in a public setting where she's always The Teacher? Offline, she knows how to switch into being Teacher when she runs into you and your child on the streets; how does she do that switch online?

Sure, it's great to say that everyone SHOULD be comfortable being in public, but that's not the world in which we live. Many people are just trying to get by. We cannot expect marginalized folks to always be fighting for their right to speak and we shouldn't accept the marginalization of folks just because of the roles that they play. The "public by default" environment that we are so proudly creating isn't always the great democratizer; for many, it's exactly the opposite. Just because technology allows us to speak up in public doesn't mean that everyone is comfortable doing so or, for that matter, will be heard. Keep in mind: the technologies of publicity don't guarantee others' attention.

SEEING AND BEING SEEN

Of course, seeking attention and dealing with the new ways in which privacy and publicity come together is sometimes the point of engaging online. On the Internet, privacy and publicity continue to get mashed up in new ways. Over and over again, we see new tools emerge that are a beautiful remix of old tools. Or, as Jon Stewart explained, "the Internet's like Mexican food - every site's got the same ingredients, just in different combinations." Speaking of which, let me take a moment to talk about ChatRoulette, the latest craze that's generating curiosity and panic.

For those who have been hiding under a rock, ChatRoulette is a peer-to-peer webcam-based video chat site. Turn your webcam on and click "New Game" and you will find yourself randomly connected to a stranger who also has a webcam and has decided to play along. Don't like what you see? That's fine... click "Next." But realize that the person (or people) at the other end of the tube can also click "Next" on you. Alongside the video image is a chat interface that allows you to share text with the stranger you've encountered.

This site was built by a 17-year-old Russian high school student to connect with other teens, but it is currently the source of panic among adults. Why? Well, there's a decent probability that you'll run into a guy displaying his private parts. And make no mistake: this is definitely a problem. While there have always been men who got their jollies off by flashing strangers in public places, the lack of social or legal consequences on ChatRoulette means that men have gone wild. But I don’t want to focus on that here.

Why do people engage on this site? What you'll find on ChatRoulette is both heartwarming and heartbreaking. From kids playing Rock Band to people dressing up in costumes, there are plenty of folks who want to entertain or be entertained. It’s boredom relief. Others are looking to find more personal connections. I met teens who wanted to hear about college and people who wanted to practice English. There are also plenty of teens hoping that they'll meet a celebrity (or thinking that they did).

ChatRoulette is bringing back the randomness of early web culture in an era where everything has been focused on pre-existing social networks. The idea is not new, but its moment in the sun highlights that people are not yet over the random public-ness that the early web provided.

ChatRoulette is an odd combination of privacy and publicity. On one hand, participants are typically physically situated in spaces that they deem private - their bedrooms, their offices, etc. But by enabling random connections with strangers, ChatRoulette becomes a networked public space. Most users think that there's no

way to locate someone - either physically or digitally - unless they share information. This creates a sense of anonymity, a sense of disconnect that makes it feel safe. Of course, what they don't realize is that someone has started capturing IP addresses and connecting photos to geolocations. So we'll see how long average people who don't understand Tor think that they're anonymous.

ChatRoulette may be a fad, but the idea that publicity and privacy will get mashed up in new ways will not be. We will continue to see new tools emerge that complicate the boundaries between privacy and publicity, that challenge what we gain from privacy and offer new reasons to engage in public. Neither privacy nor publicity is dead, but technology will continue to make a mess of both.

GOODBYE, FAREWELL... AND A FEW MORE THOUGHTS ALONG THE WAY

Throughout this talk, I've been circling around different notions of privacy and publicity, weaving them through one another and using each to complicate the other. Before I conclude, I want to discuss what you should do with this information.

For starters, know that there's no magical formula for understanding privacy and publicity. There's no equation, no easy algorithm to implement. Privacy and publicity are living things, a stew of complexity that's at the crux of humanity. They are fundamentally processes, grounded in needs, desires, and goals, situated in contexts and transformed by technology. Regardless of how you're trying to engage in privacy and publicity, know that there's no answer. What you'll want today will be different than what you want tomorrow and what you want may be different than what your neighbor wants. This is what makes technological inflections so unbelievably messy.

For the technologists in the room... When you moved from Web1.0 to Web2.0, you moved from thinking about designing and deploying software to creating living code. You learned to dance with your users, to evolve with them. Those of you who were successful learned the most complicated tango moves out there. This is the mindset you need to address privacy and publicity. You need to have a grounded understanding of what your users are looking for and engage them on the topics. When it comes to publicity, designing a new system is going to be a lot easier than evolving one that is already deployed. If you make something clearly public, users will work around it, using it for what they think makes the most sense. But if you give users a sense of privacy, a sense of intimacy, exposing them can be quite costly, both to you and to them. You may lose your reputation, but remember, some people's lives are on the line.

For the parents and educators in the room... Many of you are struggling to help young people navigate this new world of privacy and publicity, but many of you are confused yourself. The worst thing you can do is start a sentence with "back in my day." Back in your day doesn't matter. What does matter is that you care and that you too are trying to figure out how to make sense of an ever-changing environment. Rather than approaching teens and telling them how things should be, why they shouldn't be putting material online, please consider the value of opening up a dialogue. You have a lot to learn from what teens are trying to do; you once had to make sense of public life too. The difference is that they are doing it in the new environment. Take what you know and then actively listen to teens. Through their struggles, you can see what is new and different.

The key to guiding teens - and for that matter, yourselves - is to start by asking questions. What are you trying to achieve? Who do you think you're talking to? How would you feel if someone else was looking? What if what you said could be misinterpreted? Start these conversations when your children are young and help them learn how to evolve. There’s no formula for them either.

For marketers and analysts... This is an exciting era of publicity, one in which you have more access to data than ever before, one in which you can see people who were previously invisible. But just because you are able to see people doesn't mean that they want to be seen by you. And just because you think you can interpret what you see doesn't mean you will do so accurately. We are becoming a data-driven society and, in some ways, this is a very good thing. Goddess knows, I'd love to see more policy grounded in data. But please realize that just

because you have access to numbers doesn't mean that the numbers tell the full picture. Or that people will be happy to hear that you have this information.

Just because a large percentage of people engage in public does not mean that they don't care about privacy. Pew found that 85% of adults want to control who has access to their personal information. You can read numbers in any which direction, but it's dangerous to assume that people who share PII don't care about privacy or people who make their data public don't care about privacy. Doing so erases the context in which people are operating and the expectations that they have.

Wanting privacy is not about needing something to hide. It's about wanting to maintain control. Often, privacy isn't about hiding; it's about creating space to open up. If you remember that privacy is about maintaining a sense of control, you can understand why Privacy is Not Dead. There are good reasons to engage in public; there always have been. But wanting to be in public doesn't mean wanting to lose control.

Ages ago, Angelina Jolie was interviewed and asked about why she felt comfortable exposing her whole life to the public. She smiled and said that the more she put out in public, the more people stayed out of the things that she wanted to keep truly private.

What we're seeing is extremely messy. Observing people's data traces gives no indication of whether or not they are trying to be public or private. You need to understand their intentions, how they're interpreting a technological system, and what they're trying to do to make it work for them. Each of you - as designers, as marketers, as parents, as users - needs to think through the implications and ethics of your decisions, of what it means to invade someone's privacy, or how your presumptions about someone's publicity may actually affect them. You are shaping the future. How you handle these challenging issues will affect a generation. Make sure you're creating the future you want to live in.

Thank you!