

Private Bits: Privacy, Intimacy, and Consent

Workshop Lesson Plan



Hartman-Caverly, S. & Chisholm, A. (2023). Private bits: Privacy, intimacy, and consent.

<https://guides.libraries.psu.edu/berks/privatebits>

- Workshop guide: <https://guides.libraries.psu.edu/berks/privatebits>
- Workshop slides: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1iPWxor1eRFmwj28oBH_dqrV7e18jLSaal-P7dAXSTXo/edit?usp=sharing

This workshop is designed for a 60-minute session as indicated by activity time stamps, but can be extended to fill the time available.

Learning Objectives

Facilitator learning objectives

- Identify artificial intimacies in order to assess real-world examples and their impact upon intimate privacy.
- Evaluate the privacy of digital bodies under conditions of data promiscuity using a consentful tech framework.
- Understand intimate privacy and the impact of technology on intimate relationships and wellbeing.

Participant learning outcomes

During this workshop, participants will

- Meet algorithmic matchmakers, digital lovers, and virtual friends - as well as bots, ghosts, catfish, and butchers.
- Explore how consent applies to our digital (data) bodies.
- Discuss the impact of technology - positive and negative - on relationships and wellbeing.

Learning Activities

Welcome (3 mins.)

Participant learning outcomes

Inclusion statement and teaching philosophy

- The workshop is sex positive by design - it regards consensual intimacy and sexual activity (including aromanticism and asexuality) as healthy and intrinsic aspects of the human experience, and celebrates the full diversity of gender and sexual expression ([ISSM, n.d.](#)).

- Consider sharing your positionality with respect to workshop content. For example, the workshop was designed by two white, cis-gendered, heterosexual women who are in long-term monogamous relationships.
- [in-person workshops] Introduce the “ASK ME” conversation heart signs placed around the room. Explain that facilitators have made every effort to learn about sex and gender diversity and to use inclusive terminology, but recognize there is always more to learn. Invite participants to raise an “ASK ME” sign to teach everyone more inclusive terminology or other considerations for a topic under discussion.
- [virtual workshops] Explain that facilitators have made every effort to learn about sex and gender diversity and to use inclusive terminology, but recognize there is always more to learn. Invite participants to chat or privately message facilitators to teach everyone more inclusive terminology or other considerations for a topic under discussion.

[Activity] Warm-up reflections: Healthy relationships (10 mins.)

Provide an online posting board (ex. [Padlet](#)) to preserve participant anonymity.

- What are the characteristics of a *healthy* relationship?
- What are the characteristics of an *unhealthy* relationship?
- How do you meet / seek out potential romantic partners?
- What does consent mean to you?

Facilitate a large-group discussion based on participant responses.

Review the Six Private I’s Privacy Conceptual Framework ([Hartman-Caverly & Chisholm, 2019](#)) with a particular focus on the Intimacy frame ([Citron, 2019](#)).

Transition: Explain that technology can both enhance and threaten intimate relationships.

[Activity] Could you fall in love with a bot? (10 mins.)

Direct participants to visit

- [This Person Does Not Exist](#)
- [BOT OR NOT](#)
- [36 Questions](#)

Ask participants to respond to the prompts:

- How can dating apps and sites, or malicious users, use techniques like these to increase engagement on their platforms?
- How do these techniques impact intimacy and privacy?
- ...Could you fall in love with a bot?

Provide an anonymous online posting wall (ex. [Padlet](#)) to preserve participant anonymity.

Facilitate a large-group discussion based on participant responses. Invite participants to voluntarily share their observations. Refer back to relevant student responses to the warm-up reflection prompts.



Transition: Explain that students have just experienced “artificial intimacies.”

[Lecture] Artificial intimacies (5 mins.)

Define artificial intimacies ([Brooks, 2021, p. 2](#)).

Present the artificial intimacies taxonomy ([Brooks, 2021, p. 14](#)):

- Algorithmic matchmakers
- Digital lovers
- Virtual friends

Introduce algorithmic matchmakers by explaining algorithms used by dating apps.

Explain how artificial intimacies can make us vulnerable and introduce malicious artificial intimacies ([Devlin, 2018, p. 66](#); [Hoffman, 2018, pp. 12, 141](#)):

- Catfish
- Bots
- Romance scams / [‘butchers’](#)
- Ghosting

Refer back to relevant student responses to the warm-up reflection prompts or artificial intimacies activity.

Transition: We all participate in artificial intimacies – even if we’re not aware of it!

[Activity] How many digital partners do you have? Mapping our digital bodies (10 mins.)

Direct participants to select a product from the following [*Privacy not Included \(Mozilla\)](#) guides, and use the guided “Mapping Our Digital Bodies” worksheet to evaluate how personal data is collected, shared, and interpreted:

- [Dating apps](#)
- [Reproductive health](#)
- [Sex toys](#) (archived page)
- [Health & exercise](#)
- [Mental health apps](#)

Facilitate a large-group discussion and invite participants to voluntarily share their observations.

[Lecture] Digital Bodies (5 mins.)

Define digital bodies with examples ([The Consentful Tech Project](#)).

Define data promiscuity with examples ([Hoeyer, 2020](#); [Maris et al., 2020](#); [Our Data Our Selves, 2018](#)).



Introduce additional malicious artificial intimacies ([Citron, 2022, pp. 22-48](#)):

- Cyberflashing
- Cyberstalking / intimate partner violence
- Sextortion
- Nonconsensual pornography
- Digital sexual identity fraud

Refer back to relevant student responses to the warm-up reflection prompts or digital bodies mapping activity.

Transition: Many of the ways that technology harms intimacy and intimate relationships stem from a lack of meaningful consent.

[Activity] Have FRIES with that: Consentful tech (10 mins.)

Introduce the FRIES framework for consent ([The Consentful Tech Project](#)).

Invite participants to select a case study on intimate privacy and sex tech from a curated list and conduct a consentful tech analysis using the guided “FRIES Framework for Consentful Tech Analysis” worksheet. Depending on the comfort level of participants, they can work independently or in small groups.

Facilitate a large group discussion and invite participants to voluntarily share their observations.

Transition: Despite its problems, can sex tech also enhance intimacy?

[Lecture] Consentful tech and intimacy (4 mins.)

Define consentful technologies with examples ([The Consentful Tech Project](#)).

Review the positive ways in which sex tech enhances intimacy and sex and gender inclusivity.

Define intimate associations: relationships of mutual care in which we are able and willing to relinquish privacy and share in decision-making such that we include another in our sense of self (Hartman-Caverly & Chisholm, 2023 based on [Aron et al., 1991](#); [Altman & Taylor, 1973](#); [Fried, 1984](#); [Karst, 1980](#); [Reiman, 1976](#)).

Define intimate privacy ([Citron, 2022, p. xii](#)).

Refer back to relevant student responses to the warm-up reflection prompts or consentful tech analysis activity.



Workshop review and closing (3 mins.)

Assessment

1. This workshop taught me something new about **artificial intimacies**, such as algorithmic matchmakers, digital lovers, and virtual friends. [Likert scale 1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree]
2. This workshop gave me a new way to think about **consent**, including how it applies to digital (data) bodies. [Likert scale 1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree]
3. This workshop gave me a new way to think about **intimate privacy**, including the impact of technology on relationships and well-being. [Likert scale 1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree]
4. My **top takeaway or suggestion** for improvement is: [free-text response]

