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Mind the Five Card Game: Participatory Games to Strengthen Information Practices and Privacy Protections of Migrants

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Abstract

The authors discuss Mind the Five, a participatory card game to help increase awareness of privacy protections of undocumented migrants and other vulnerable populations. Mind the Five and other participatory games can be used in public libraries and small humanitarian organizations to promote safe and engaging information spaces for migrants and refugees. Participatory games provide a supportive and unique approach to building safe spaces that allow participants to discuss and engage with issues on a personal level in a fun and creative way. Combined with other active learning experiences, such as participatory photography and co-design activities, Mind the Five is an educational tool to help bring stronger awareness of the vulnerabilities of undocumented migrants, and to encourage information practices that better protect the privacy of migrants and other vulnerable populations.

Keywords: active learning; migration; participatory games; serious play

Publication Type: special section publication

Introduction: The Privacy Limits of Humanitarian Information Activities

Migration and information privacy are both crucially important issues of our time. We bring them together to explore the enhanced need for privacy by undocumented migrants, whose vulnerability is only exacerbated by privacy leaks or disclosures. There are an estimated 11 million undocumented migrants in the United States today, most of which have well-established ties and deep roots in their communities, including families, homes, and jobs. They pay taxes and participate in community life. Thousands more continue to overstay their visas or cross the border without authorization every year, fleeing from violence, climate change, or lack of opportunity, and seeking to live a better life in the United States. Under President Trump their lives have been upended. Border enforcement under President Obama had already greatly increased the number of deportations of migrants caught at the US-Mexico border and of immigrants with criminal records, but the Trump administration has extended the reach of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to prey on anyone they can trace, including the most vulnerable: detaining families with children, and arresting and deporting established, law-abiding undocumented migrants (Funk, 2019).

Undocumented migrants are in an extremely precarious situation and need to take extra steps to protect their privacy online. The most vulnerable are migrants who have just recently arrived

and are seeking the help of humanitarian organizations, churches, and other social institutions that offer services to all, regardless of immigration status: public libraries, schools, health centers, and similar institutions. Organizations working with undocumented migrants need to be aware of the additional privacy risks experienced by undocumented migrants, and adjust their practices to collect, retain, use, and disseminate information without putting them at risk.

Information technologies can help organizations by making their work effective and efficient, and can assist them with better serving vulnerable populations by giving them access to relevant information and services. However, information technologies also increase security risks through breach, hacks, leaks, or other inadvertent disclosures, in addition to forced disclosure through legal processes such as court orders. In the case of undocumented migrants and other extremely vulnerable populations, the disclosure of sensitive and personal information can lead them to detention and deportation, with life-changing and potentially life-threatening consequences.

In our work with humanitarian organizations serving undocumented migrants, we noticed that some of these organizations are trying hard to protect migrants' privacy, but we also noticed a worrying trend. The lack of means or proper training has caused some of these organizations to engage in information practices that do not adequately protect the privacy and security of migrants' personal information. These information practices include storing personal information collected through online intake forms on services like Google Docs or other insecure cloud storage sites, using a single Google account and password for all or many of the organization's documents, and using Facebook groups to discuss issues related to migratory status. Other researchers have identified similar behaviors (Guberek et al., 2018; Shoemaker et al., 2019; Vannini et al., 2019).

We identify three main trends in the literature on humanitarian information activities:

1. Risks are caused by both people and technology, and solutions need to take care of both human and technical interfaces;
2. There are no clear guidelines to deal with data protection in humanitarian contexts, and no clear mechanisms to enforce the few and incomplete guidelines that exist; and
3. Organizations need to adopt safer practices, going beyond the logic of privacy self-management.

Currently, self-management and informed consent are invoked as the best way to guarantee people's privacy. However, subjects, and vulnerable populations in particular, are not always able to make decisions about giving or withholding consent to the collection and use of personal data, and may not be aware of the long-term consequences of such consent (Vannini et al., 2019).

These three trends in the humanitarian information literature led us to develop a set of Privacy Guidelines in Humanitarian Information Activities (HIA) that humanitarian organizations can use to assess and guide their data privacy and security practices:

1. Prudence: Collect as little information as possible
2. Protection: Secure the information you do need to collect and store

3. Training: Make sure volunteers and staff are aware and trained on privacy protection; help your users be more privacy aware
4. Share Alike: Work with collaborators and partners who share your concern
5. Non-Discrimination: Offer services to all, including those who do not want to share their personal information

These guidelines serve to strengthen privacy protections in the context of irregular migration.

Mind the Five Cards: Serious Play to Protect the Privacy of Vulnerable Populations

Building on the work to create Privacy Guidelines in Humanitarian Information Activities discussed above, we created different information artifacts to use with humanitarian organizations and service agencies in order to help strengthen their information practices for the protection of undocumented migrants and other vulnerable populations (Gomez et al., n.d.). One of the artifacts is a set of cards, the Mind the Five cards, which is a card game designed to build empathy with the vulnerabilities of undocumented migrants and to strengthen information practices to better protect the privacy and security of their information.

The Mind the Five card game is an example of serious play, a type of activity that is based on play in order to accomplish learning about serious topics (Hinthorne & Schneider, 2012; Wartenweiler, 2018). Serious play has been used in a variety of contexts from teaching social studies in the classroom (Baker & Hunter, 2013), to small group activities with health professionals to address bullying in the workplace (Ulrich et al., 2017). Serious play has been shown to be an excellent way to learn about social justice (Wartenweiler, 2018). It can strengthen empathy, which is critical to the task of protecting vulnerable populations, and particularly the privacy protections needed by undocumented migrants.

As an example of serious play, the Mind the Five card game has five advantages as a tool to build empathy with undocumented migrants (Chin et al., forthcoming):

1. It highlights lived experiences of vulnerable populations
2. It places players in the shoes (lived experiences) of the other
3. It centers the difficult conversation of vulnerability on the game
4. It builds empathy through identification and reflection in a low-risk situation
5. It offers concrete actions and ways to reach out

Mind the Five Card Game

The Mind the Five card game is free to download and is designed to be easy to print and ready to use. It is based on the Mind the Five Privacy Guidelines for Humanitarian Information Activities, with each guideline printed on an INFO (Information Behavior) card, plus one fill-in-the-blank card for additional guidelines. The game also focuses on three different types of organizations, each one printed on an ORG (Organization) card, plus one blank card for an additional type of organization, as scenarios for the deployment of different information behaviors. Finally, the

game draws from the idea of user reviews and ratings, as a playful way to imagine information behaviors in each type of organization, with three RATE (rating or review) cards containing smiley faces to indicate ratings (See Figure 1).

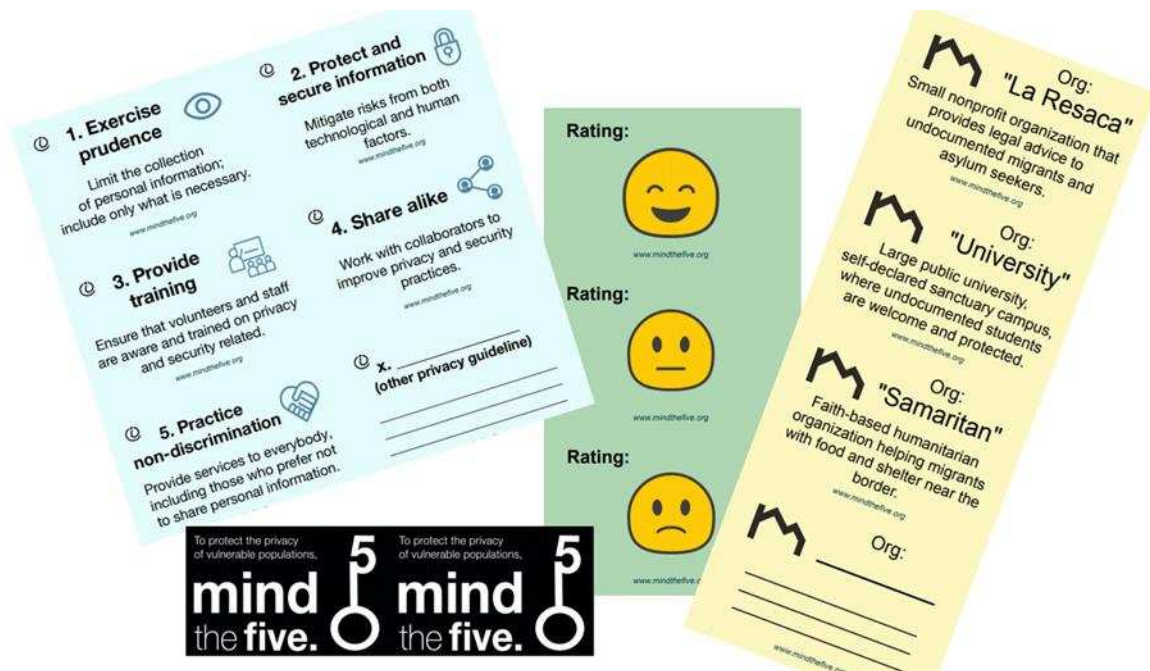


Figure 1. Mind the Five card game sample images (INFO, RATE, ORG cards).

To play, a player draws one card of each type, and has one minute to describe an information behavior that corresponds to the INFO card, at the type of organization that corresponds to the ORG card, and that deserves the rating that corresponds to the RATE card. The next player draws cards and plays in the same way. After a few players have played, they can start to have a discussion of the types of information practices in their organization, how they impact the privacy of undocumented migrants or other vulnerable populations, and how they can improve these practices to offer stronger privacy protections in the future.

As with any serious play activity, the goal is not the game itself, but rather the discussion and the potential action that follow. The tool is designed to identify issues that the organizations might not have fully considered up to that moment and to brainstorm ideas on possible solutions to those problems.

Playing the Game

The authors have demonstrated the Mind the Five card game in a variety of educational settings and with different types of organizations (a total of 50 participants at an academic conference, an academic talk at a university, and two separate trial play opportunities in graduate courses). We have received encouraging and constructive feedback from these sources, both verbally on the spot and through an online anonymous survey. Our participants found that the game made it “easy, fun, [...] and memorable” (*Participant 1*) to talk about data privacy and security-related

issues. Ease, fun, and memorability are three important elements for working with practitioners who might be familiar with, but not experts on, the subject of data privacy and security. The ease of accessing the topic makes it effective for reaching staff members in charge of a wide range of tasks and who may not have a lot of time at their disposal to learn about the topic otherwise. The fun makes it memorable, so that practitioners can bring what they learned about the topic back into their work and service.

Our participant also found using the game to talk about the topic put them in a “*non-judgmental*” space (*Participant 1*), which is also conducive to have participants openly assessing their current practices and identifying possible associated risks. Finally, explaining the game and having practitioners play one card at a time can help them learn step-by-step:

...it might be overwhelming [otherwise] for practitioners to think about all these dimensions at once. Introducing one thing at a time, with good practices associated to it, might be helpful. (*Participant 2*)

During our trials, we found it necessary to have the presence of either explanatory instructions or a moderator to set the ground rules, explaining the privacy guidelines and giving examples of risky behaviors. This helps practitioners identify possible risks they are engaging in within a shorter amount of time and to be more comprehensive about them. In general, a longer time dedicated to set-up and debrief, in addition to play, was preferred.

Open Questions

When debriefing, practitioners reflected on a number of things related to their work, which the game helped them conceptualize. First, they mentioned that the game was effective because it included operational risk elements, such as the human risk and the infrastructural factors (e.g., court orders, subpoena, inadvertent disclosure etc.) in the discourse. Usually, in fact, data privacy and security issues are only considered technical issues, which should be solved exclusively by technologists with more technology, as illustrated by one of our participants:

There is a naivety among tech people: they often tend to think that to protect technology you only need new technology solutions. (*Participant 3*)

The game made participants understand that some data privacy issues can be prevented with more targeted educational activities for both staff members and clients/users. However, many among the practitioners recognized there is a tension between educating and allowing people to practice privacy self-management and protective practices that might result in paternalism—in the end, who is the right actor to decide how much data is safe to collect, store, or share?

Conclusion

At the crossroads of migration and privacy, we suggest five guidelines to protect the privacy of undocumented migrants, who are particularly vulnerable if their private information is disclosed, leaked, or hacked. Building on privacy guidelines developed through prior research, we suggest Mind the Five cards, a serious play game in which players can build empathy with migrants and other vulnerable populations and discuss ways to implement the proposed privacy guidelines in their organization or service agency. Serious play is a powerful way to engage with difficult conversations. The Mind the Five card game is a serious play activity that helps unpack the

privacy guidelines for humanitarian information activities, and to adapt them to different contexts and organizational settings including humanitarian organizations, schools, public libraries, and other service agencies that serve the needs of undocumented migrants and other vulnerable populations. The authors reckon that the power of the game resides in sparking discussions about privacy issues that might have remained unaddressed and unnoticed within these organizations, and to brainstorm and identify possible ways forward to ensure improved data privacy practices.

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