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09/07/2018

ETHICS AND SOCIETY NEWSFEED – SEPTEMBER 7, 2018

The Ethics and Society Blog



Credit: Emma Wonsil via Canva

Politics

[I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration](#)

“The root of the problem is the president’s amorality. Anyone who works with him knows he is not moored to any discernible first principles that guide his decision making.”

[Anonymous White House Writer Isn’t A Patriot. They’re Betraying The Constitution.](#)

“I can appreciate the official’s stated patriotic intentions, and his or her call for Americans to reach out to each other and repair our national divisions. That does not alter the fact that his or her actions are wrong. They are undemocratic and unconstitutional. The Constitution does not empower unelected staff — no matter how much they are “adults” and no matter how well-meaning — to decide that they will govern in this manner. If the president is not competent to do his job, do not improvise. Follow the Constitution and remove him from office.”

[What Brett Kavanaugh Must Be Asked About Torture, Guantanamo, and Mass Surveillance](#)

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“What did Kavanaugh himself mean, for that matter, when, as a judge and not a staff lawyer, he wrote that he regarded the N.S.A.’s bulk collection of the telephone metadata of almost every American as “entirely consistent” with the Constitution? He added that, even if the bulk collection counted as a search limited by the Fourth Amendment—and he felt that it didn’t—it would be allowed because of the “special need” that the government has to prevent terrorism.”

[Kamala Harris and Cory Booker Have Upended the Kavanaugh Hearings](#)

“As the hearing entered its 12th hour, Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA), who on Tuesday attempted to delay the hearing, asked Kavanaugh if he discussed Special Counsel Robert Mueller or his Russia investigation with anyone from Kasowitz Benson Torres, the law firm founded by Trump’s personal attorney, Marc Kasowitz. Kavanaugh was at a loss for words...Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), who joined Harris on Tuesday in calling for the hearing to be delayed, also appears to have some non-public information that could be damaging to Kavanaugh’s chances. On Thursday morning, he announced that he plans to release it, even if it means losing his Senate seat.”

Bioethics/Medical Ethics

[For Athletes, Tracking Tech and DNA Tests Might Be Double-Edged Swords](#)

“The benefits for leagues and team owners might outweigh the benefits for the majority of athletes. Technology companies and the teams and leagues that support their creations often tout the Orwellian positives of their innovations while sidestepping the potential bioethical implications for the very humans whose careers and data are at stake.”

[Officials Remove Special Rules for Gene Therapy Experiments](#)

“A special National Institutes of Health oversight panel will no longer review all gene therapy applications and will instead take on a broader advisory role, according to changes proposed Wednesday. The Food and Drug Administration will vet gene therapy experiments and products as it does with other treatments and drugs. It’s an extraordinary milestone for a field that has produced only a few approved treatments so far, and not all experts agree that it doesn’t still need special precautions.”

[At “Crisis Pregnancy Centers,” Critics Say, Ideology Trumps Evidence](#)

“Medical ethics demand that a provider not withhold information and offer unbiased care to the best of their ability,” said Jen Villavicencio, MD, an abortion provider in the US Midwest. “Crisis pregnancy centers, however, fail to meet these standards. If there is anything that could be considered more dangerous than not offering comprehensive, medically necessary care, it would be offering only the aspects of that care that fit within the agenda of the provider of that care.”

[Bioethics professor calls on Senate to reject assisted dying bill](#)

“Professor Somerville said that in many cases, pain and suffering were not the primary motivator for an assisted dying request, with a fear of being a burden on relatives a more common reason in patient surveys. And, she argued, in most cases pain or discomfort could be remedied through proper palliative care, including treatment for depression, which was a factor for many terminal cancer patients.”

Technology Ethics

[The AI Economy Needs Ethics to Succeed](#)

“Sharma said that ethical AI implementation has gained new urgency as global consumer concerns have peaked regarding the transparency of data collection and usage. According to Sharma, industry’s next challenge will be to move the global conversation away from AI as a threat — or replacement — for humans and towards encouraging organisations to approach AI as a complement to human ingenuity.”

[How Omidyar Network Is Building A Digital Code Of Ethics](#)

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“Kumra explained what the Ethical OS idea is all about. “In partnership with the Institute for the Future, we developed the Ethical Operating System, #EthicalOS for short...It’s a three-part toolkit to help team leaders and other technologists anticipate how tech might be compromised down the road, and build safeguards against future risks, to the best of our abilities.”

[Computer Programmers Get New Tech Ethics Code](#)

“ACM [Association for Computing Machinery]’s last code of ethics was adopted in 1992, when many people saw computing work as purely technical. The internet was in its infancy and people were just beginning to understand the value of being able to aggregate and distribute information widely. It would still be years before artificial intelligence and machine learning had applications outside research labs. Today, technologists’ work can affect the lives and livelihoods of people in ways that may be unintended, even unpredictable. I’m not an ethicist by training, but it’s clear to me that anyone in today’s computing field can benefit from guidance on ethical thinking and behavior.”

[It’s Time to Address Artificial Intelligence’s Ethical Problems](#)

“Another issue is the potential for AI to unfairly discriminate. One example of this, says Tadeo, was Compas, a risk-assessment tool developed by a privately held company and used by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections. According to Taddeo, the system was used to decide whether to grant people parole and ended up discriminating against African-American and Hispanic men.”

Business Ethics

[Trump: Nike ‘getting absolutely killed’ with boycotts over Colin Kaepernick’s ‘Just Do It’ campaign](#)

“Joe Holt, an expert on business ethics at the University of Notre Dame, said there is an important moral difference to companies promoting their views “because you have to” versus “because you want to.” He said one true test of a company’s values is if that company is willing to stick to them even at a financial cost. Nike’s use of Kaepernick in the “Just Do It” ad seems to affirm that dedication, Holt said, because it will inevitably alienate some customers.”

[Nike, Kaepernick and Jordan a Long Way from Michael Vick, Tyson and Sweatshops](#)

“Nike, of course, was the original sweatshop scandal, accused of allowing child labour and worker exploitation in Asia. Nike happily featured convicted rapist and ear-biter Mike Tyson in a 2013 ad. Nike re-signed football player Michael Vick after he got out of jail for his part in an illegal dog fighting ring. Nike’s uniform contract with Penn State University survived the Jerry Sandusky scandal, where coaches had hushed up his sexual abuse of boys. But who can cast the first shoe?”

[Big Brands And Political Activism: What Do Marketers Think?](#)

“The day of the announcement, Nike stock fell 3.17%. Irate customers also posted videos of themselves burning Nike products with the hashtag #JustBurnIt (a play on the Nike campaign’s famed hashtag #JustDolt). Pundits are divided on the Nike decision, with some seeing it as just the type of risky decision a big, but flagging, brand needs to make to regain cultural relevance, and others seeing nothing but pain ahead.”

[Doing It the Right Way: Managing Business Ethics](#)

“In order to build a grounded ethical organisation, two cornerstones must be put in place and these are transparency and respect. In an organisation where trust is prevalent, information is accurate, timely and complete and workers share their ideas and concerns without any fear. Employees at all levels accept suggestions for ways to improve the work across the organisation. In an organisation where respect is a demonstrated value, employees and managers treat each other with dignity and make it known that they care about the work they perform.”

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Climate Change Ethics

[Betting the Farm: Big Data in Agriculture](#)

“There are important considerations and obstacles to enabling the tools of Big Data for agricultural development. One is privacy and the protection of sensitive data. Prager currently chairs the Institutional Review Board, which ensures compliance with the ethics of human subjects research at CIAT. Beyond foresight, Prager sees the Big Data Platform as an integral tool for “managing and sharing potentially sensitive data in the most appropriate way, and in a way that is most consistent with our commitment to our various stakeholders”. When conducting research that involves human subjects, researchers must consider the implications of technology, confidentiality, consent, and more.”

[As Climate Scientists Speak Out, Sexist Attacks Are on the Rise](#)

“The verbal and written attacks derive mostly from men. That’s probably not a coincidence. Studies show that climate skepticism is a male-dominated perspective. Men are less likely than women to accept scientific conclusions about people being responsible for rising temperatures. And they’re more likely to overestimate their knowledge of the issue.”

[Cold Green Life: The Climate Scientist Balancing Antarctic Research and Sustainable Living](#)

“Everyone, she believes, has a role to play in mitigating climate change, including individuals. Her family try to live greenly; they have just moved into a new house where they plan to put up solar panels, and they chose the location so they could ride to work and school...She and her husband also grappled with the ethics of having three children. Nerilie knows that their choice contributes to the overall problem — and yet this knowledge drives her passion to do the best science she can, striving to make sure her kids have a livable future.”

Legal Ethics

[New Book Explores Multiracial Discrimination](#)

“For her book, Hernandez explored lawsuits that claimed discrimination against multiracial individuals in housing, employment, education, criminal justice, and public accommodations. Employment cases were most common, which she said wasn’t surprising. She was more surprised to learn that people who file claims against housing discrimination tend to win them much more often, and even more intrigued to learn that many of those cases were actually brought by white grandparents and parents of multiracial couples.”

[Lawyers May Use Facebook for Legal Questions, Bar Ethics Panel Says](#)

“An opinion from the State Bar of Texas’ Professional Ethics Committee essentially blessed lawyers’ use of attorney internet forums to get answers to tricky legal questions, as long as the query does not give up too much about their client’s identity.”

[Former White House Ethics Lawyer Joins Priebus Law Firm](#)

“Stefan Passantino, the former top ethics lawyer in the Trump White House, is joining Reince Priebus’ law firm in its government relations, public policy and compliance practice group.”

[Albany Is a Mess. Grab a Broom.](#)

“Mr. Cuomo created a Moreland Commission in 2013 to investigate public corruption — and then shut it down less than a year later. Another ethics body, the State Joint Commission on Public Ethics, known as Jcope, was set up in 2011 by Mr. Cuomo, Mr. Silver and Dean Skelos, then the majority leader of the State Senate. But it was provided a woeful level of funding. And more disturbingly, its members are chosen by the very politicians who most need an independent watchdog — the governor and

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legislative leaders.

Sexual Ethics

[As crisis envelops Catholic Church, is Pope Francis facing a 'watershed moment'?](#)

“Some Catholics have criticized him for what they describe as an insufficient response to the crisis. A few bishops have suggested that he call an extraordinary meeting to address sexual abuse in the church. And he faces pivotal decisions about whether to release abuse-related documents or green-light a who-knew-what investigation into McCarrick — with the possibility that such a probe could point fingers back to the Vatican.”

[Sex-abuse survivor: Catholic Church can't be trusted to fix crisis, N.J. lawmakers should step in](#)

“Our bishops have instinctively “protected the institution” in an effort to protect itself from scandal and harm to its reputation, even when that meant putting children at risk. Society must no longer accept the fact that our bishops can or will fix this clergy-abuse crisis.”

[Are casual hookups sexually empowering for college women?](#)

“From my own vantage point as professor and qualitative researcher, the prospect of women’s sexual empowerment through casual hookups is bleak—unless we have so regressed as a society that women’s empowerment has been rebranded as a “momentary boost” in self-esteem from performing sexual favors and receiving temporary male approval.”

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