The Peep Diaries
How We're Learning to Love Watching Ourselves and Our Neighbors
By Hal Niedzviecki
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Reading Group Guide

1) What do you think of Niedzviecki's thesis that we've gone from a pop culture—a society obsessed with celebrities—to a "Peep culture," turning, instead, to other people's private lives (friends, neighbors, strangers, celebrities) as our entertainment?

2) Does Peep culture eliminate the need for "real" celebrities? When an individual can rise to fame in a matter of hours on the Internet, what is lost? Is the democratization of celebrity a good thing, or do we still need cultural gate-keepers?

3) Were there any blogs or web sites that Niedzviecki writes about which you think an online community might benefit from? If so, why?

4) In the book, Niedzviecki discusses the rise of surveillance within Peep culture, such as Nanny cams and police surveillance cameras. Does technology make you feel safer? When do these techniques of surveillance cross the line and become invasive?

5) Niedzviecki says the central question we all struggle with in Peep culture is, "How much of yourself will you give away and what will you be left with?" How would you answer this question? Are there certain aspects of yourself or your family you would never reveal to the public eye, no matter the price?

6) What do you think about the examples of "shaming" websites and online videos Niedzviecki gives as examples in the book, such as WomanSavers.com, TheBadBoyfriendClub.ning.com and Dontdatehimgirl.com, where users post "lists of guys and girls accused of being psychopaths, liars, abusers, and cheats"? What are the ethics of Peep here? Do you think the Internet can be useful in encouraging people to behave better, for fear of public exposure and humiliation?

7) Did you feel that Niedzviecki experimented with enough online sites and various surveillance methods to prove his points? Had you hoped he'd try something else? If so, what?

8) Has the Internet made you feel more or less connected to people? Are some friendships or relationships better carried out online?

9) After reading Hal's book, are you more wary of divulging personal information online?

10) Are you comfortable having your own personal habits and interests (such as a list of the books you've read, websites you've visited, persons you've emailed

and subjects you've discussed in emails) available for sale to corporations for marketing purposes? Do you feel it's right or wrong for corporations to make that sort of information readily available to government agencies?

11) What is the future of Peep culture? Will we reach a tipping point where privacy has evaporated and nothing is sacred? Or is there something in human nature that will guard against this?