



Max-Planck-Institut  
für Menschheitsgeschichte  
Max Planck Institute  
for the Science of Human History

## Data privacy and research ethics

**The Color Game app stores smartphone identifiers securely and confidentially. It also records, in fully anonymised format, the players' actions within the game. This fully anonymised data will be shared with the scientific community, but no personal data will be. Participants are free to opt out of our research and ask for their data to be erased. This study has been approved by the ethical committee attached to the president of the Max Planck Society.**

The app identifies its players' phones (via UDID on iOS, UUID on Android) to make sure that players do not have to restart the game at the basic level every time they open the app. The app also checks its players' IP addresses (but does not record it). These data, along with all the data used by the Color Game app, are exclusively stored on the secure servers of the Max Planck Society. The app does **not** require or record the following information: names, email addresses, geolocalisation tags.

Inside the game, players identify their contacts by randomly generated aliases that change for every player pair (so that A is known to be by a certain name, but known to C by a different name), making it impossible for contacts to identify one another outside the game. In addition, players are identified on the scoreboard by a pseudonym that is randomly generated by the app (although players are free to reject pseudonyms that they dislike).

The researchers of the Max Planck Society access a fully anonymised subset of the data generated by the app, which they store and exploit for research purposes, and may share with other researchers. It is a record of the players' moves in the game in anonymised format. For instance, the colours picked by Receivers and the symbols sent by Senders are recorded for every puzzle. The time at which puzzles are played is also recorded. The IP addresses, UDID/UUID, aliases, and pseudonyms will **not** be part of that dataset kept for research purposes.

Players are asked to fill in a consent form allowing their player data, collected through the app and entirely anonymised, to be used by researchers for scientific purposes.

The data collected during the period of time where the app will be in use is to be made publicly available to other researchers in the future, after an embargo period. Any player wishing to have their data removed from the dataset may ask us to do so (at [colorgame@shh.mpg.de](mailto:colorgame@shh.mpg.de)) and their request will be immediately fulfilled. (Since the app's anonymised IDs do not allow us to identify individual players, the players will need to provide us with a way to identify them: for instance, the exact date and time of their first connection, or the exact date and time of their last five puzzles played. )

This study has been approved by the ethical committee attached to the president of the Max Planck Society (advice n° 2017\_05). The advice is attached to this document, followed by our official request for authorisation.



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Ethikrat der MPG  
Der Vorsitzende  
Prof. Dr. R. Wolfrum

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**Votum des Ethikrates der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zum Antrag 2017\_05**

**Dokumentieren des Benutzerverhaltens in einem Videospiel, das ein Referenzkommunikationsexperiment reproduziert**

Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. Morin,

der Ethikrat der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft hat die von Ihnen eingereichten Unterlagen zum Projekt **des Benutzerverhaltens in einem Videospiel, das ein Referenzkommunikationsexperiment reproduziert**, sorgfältig begutachtet. Nach eingehender Diskussion sieht der Ethikrat die Aufklärung der Probanden bzw. Teilnehmer am Spiel sowie die Systematik des Spiels und seiner Auswertung als ausreichend sicher für die Teilnehmer und in Hinsicht auf die dabei erhobenen Daten an. Der Ethikrat sieht keine grundlegenden Bedenken gegen das beantragte Forschungsprojekt.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen und den besten Wünschen für Ihre Forschung

Ulrich Braun  
Referent in der Geschäftsstelle des Ethikrates

für den Vorsitzenden, Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Wolfrum