# Facebook, Youth and Privacy in Networked Publics

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### Abstract

Media accounts would have us believe that today's youth are a particularly narcissistic generation. Young adults are often portrayed as exhibitionists who share personal information excessively and only react if "burned" by experience. This paper reports results from 450 surveys of young adults on social network site usage and privacy and surveillance experiences as well as from a historical archive dating back to 2006. The findings show a complex picture of a generation actively engaging visibility and social boundaries online through privacy and visibility practices. A striking increase in privacy protective activities is documented. I examine whether these changes are in response to personal negative experiences from online disclosure or if they derive from general awareness. I find that students are reacting pro actively and adjusting their privacy settings above and beyond the impact of negative personal experiences. Contrary to media reports, young adults do not appear uncaring about privacy and are not waiting until they get burned. Significant racial and gender differences remain in privacy behaviors. Strikingly, about 20% report having deactivated their profile at least once.

## Privacy: A Uniquely Narcissistic Generation or Young Adults Adapting to New Realities?

Media accounts would have us believe that today's youth are a particularly narcissistic and exhibitionist generation. Silicon Valley leaders also often talk of evolving norms towards increased sharing of information (Barnett, 2011). In contrast, most studies do find that young adults attempt to control their privacy online. However, there is little empirical probing of how young adults balance privacy and exposure, especially in a historical light.

### Social Norms and Privacy

Privacy is a historically-situated concept (Proust et al., 1994). Norms regarding visibility, knowledge and intimacy change from epoch to epoch and vary according to place, gender, social class, sexual orientation and social status, among other variables. Recent media reports have conveyed a picture of a momentous generational shift towards disclosure and (over)sharing among youth (Boyd & Hargittai, 2010). These accounts, tinged in part with a sense of moral panic (Marwick, 2008) ..

Recent empirical studies, however, have challenged the notion that youth do not care about privacy (Boyd & Hargittai, 2010, Pew; Madden & Smith, 2010; Hoofnagle et al, 2010). Madden & Smith (2010) reported that 71% of youth on social network sites had adjusted their privacy settings, exceeding the proportion of older users who had undertaken similar pro-active measures. Boyd and Hargittai (2010) examined a sample of 1,115 first-year students and found that, "the majority of young adult users of Facebook are engaged with managing their privacy settings on the site at least to some extent" and that there was a spike in engagement with privacy settings between 2009 and 2010, a year in which Facebook unveiled many controversial privacy changes that made more of information on the site public.

Often, it is argued that if youth were concerned about privacy online, they would quit Facebook or they would not disclose so much online. However, that overlooks the important fact that Facebook usage is a strong social norm on college campuses and online disclosure has social capital benefits. While individuals can resist social norms, it comes at a cost. This study, too, finds that Facebook use is widespread (over 90%) and students interviewed as part of this research often state that it is perceived as an act of resistance or a social "faux pas" not to be on Facebook.

Unsurprisingly, levels of disclosure remains high and young people do share a lot of information online (Gross and Acquisti, 2006; Tufekci, 2008). Other studies do reveal that users are trying to balance their need for disclosure to wanted audiences with trying to protect their information from unwanted ones (Raynes-Goldie Kate, 2010; Stutzman, 2011). Stutzman (2011) finds that, in a sample of 983 college students, 92% used Facebook' privacy features and 70% had their profile limited to friends-only.

However, as boyd and Hargittai (2010) point out, we do not know whether increase engagement with privacy settings comes from "increase in public attention to privacy matters" or another reason such as personal negative

experiences.

This paper will attempt examine this question by contextualizing young adults' attempts to control their visibility within social network sites with experiences related to peer and authority-surveillance that stem from Facebook use, as well as their orientations and motivations for using these sites. I will also attempt to detangle whether youth are responding to general concerns about visibility and privacy, which they may have absorbed through media exposure or parental or other guidance, or whether they have personally encountered or witnessed unwanted consequences from using Facebook which in turn has prompted them to alter their privacy settings. In other words, this paper attempts to go beyond the notion that users try to balance exposure and privacy, but instead probe the ways in which experience and motivations mediate individual decisions in this realm.

## The Sample and Methods

This study was undertaken in a mid-sized public research university in the mid-Atlantic during December of 2010. This paper also examines historical data from surveys which were repeated with partially overlapping questions undertaken in Spring 2006; Fall 2006; Fall 2007; Spring 2007; Spring 2008. The participants were enrolled in multiple sections of an introductory social science course. A total of 457 usable surveys were collected in December 2010. (Demographic characteristics are in Table 1). The university is among the most diverse in the country with amicable race relations, and is nationally renowned for high levels of minority participation across disciplines. About 16% of the student body is African-American (compared to 17.5% of the sample), and the student body is drawn from across the socio-economic spectrum. The sample is fairly diverse racially, evenly split between men and women, and also draws from majors across the school. Sample closely matched the demographics of the school. 403 surveys with complete data were used in the analyses.

This is a cross-sectional trend survey rather than a longitudinal study; thus it captures trends among this age group rather than maturation of the subjects. The survey represents a snapshot of social media practices and attitudes of college students just as they begin attending an institute of higher education, a time of transition which increases the complexities of social ties (Stutzman, 2011).

## Measures and Variables:

The following variables were included in the analyses:

**Privacy:** Respondents were asked how concerned they were about privacy in general. The scale ranged from "never thought about it" (1) to "very concerned" (5)

**Orientation towards FB:** Respondents were asked about various ways they used Facebook including keeping in touch with friends in the same school, keeping in touch with friends elsewhere, to find potential friends, and to find friends with similar interests. The scale ranged from never (1) to very often (4). This variable helps distinguish those who are using Facebook more with ties that they are more likely to see face-to-face.

**Privacy settings:** Respondents were asked when, if ever, they had changed their privacy settings. They were also asked whether their last change made their profile less or more visible. Respondents were asked to whom their profile was visible. While responses allowed for complicated answers, a dummy variable marking those who say their profile is visible to everyone versus more limited settings was created for analysis. Also a dummy variable was created to indicate those who had changed their settings in the last month (the most active), those who have never changed their settings (the least active) as well as those who made their profiles less visible.

|  | N | (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 219 | (53.3) |
| Female | 184 | (45.6) |
|  |  |  |
| White | 172 | (43.0) |
| Black | 70 | (17.5) |
| Hisp./Other | 52 | (13.0) |
| Asian-American | 106 | (26.5) |
|  | MEAN | (SD) |
| General Privacy Concern (1-5) | 4.06 | (0.81) |
| Years on FB | 3.58 | (1.42) |
| How concerned are you that people you don't want to see your profile would see your profile (1-5) | 3.3 | (1.0) |
| **Use FB to: (1-4):** |  |  |
| Keep in touch with friends in same school | 3.1 | (0.7) |
| Keep in touch with friends elsewhere | 3.4 | (0.6) |
| To find people with similar interests | 1.5 | (0.7) |
| To find potential friends | 1.8 | (0.8) |
| **Ever done the following because of a privacy or visibility concern?** | N | % |
| Untagged themselves from a photo | 298 | 73.9 |
| Deleted info from profile | 328 | 81.3 |
| Unfriend someone | 275 | 68.3 |
| Deactivate their profile | 79 | 19.6 |
| **Those who have:** | N | % |
| Never changed privacy settings | 38 | 9.4 |
| Changed their privacy settings last month | 148 | 36.7 |
| Changed their privacy settings in the last year | 334 | 82.9 |
| **Of those who changed ever privacy settings (n=363):** |  |  |
| Those whose last change was to make their profile LESS visible | 328 | 90.3 |

## Table 1. Descriptive Variables (n=403)

**Privacy protecting acts:** Respondents were asked if they had ever undertaken following acts because of a privacy or visibility concern: untag, delete info from their profiles, unfriend people, deactivate their profiles. Response options ranged from 1 to 7: Never (1) to several times a day (7).

**Accepting Friends:** Since a large part of visibility is determined by who is accepted as a "friend," respondents were asked about their likelihood of accepting requests from people they "know in person", or they "don't know in person" on a scale of 1(never accept) to 4 (always accept).

**Profile information:** Respondents were asked whether they used a nickname or their real name on Facebook. They were also asked about multiple profile usage, whether such usage was for privacy concerns, and whether they had a main profile.

**Disclosures:** Respondents were asked whether they disclosed their political views, their sexual orientation, their romantic status and their religion.

**Demographics:** Gender, race, age as well as sexual orientation were asked. There was too little variability in age. About 5% of the sample self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual. The sexual orientation variable was not analyzed statistically due to de-anonymization concerns with a small subsample. However, this subsample had stronger privacy protections, were more active in privacy-related modes, and had all changed their privacy settings.

**Facebook-related negative interactions:** The respondents were asked about personal negative encounters stemming from a posting or a photo on a social network site. They were first asked if it had happened to "someone they know" and later, separately, if it had happened to them ("happened to you".) The separation between direct and indirect experience reflects methodological as well as theoretical concerns. Methodologically, the "third person effect" in argues that people tend to think others are more impacted than they are (Davidson, 1983).Things happen to "others", not to us. Further, people may be unwilling to admit negative experiences due to socially-desirable response bias (Dillman et al, 2008) but may be more willing to respond to the question as it pertains to others. Also, conceptually, Bandura's social learning theory argues for the importance of learning through observation (Bandura, 1977). Thus, the respondents may alter their privacy setting based on observing consequences of social network site use by their friends.

The scenarios are shown in Table 2 and Table 3. The responses, ranging from 1(never) to 4(many times) were combined into two separate indexes called "To Me" and "To Someone Else" –and used in the multivariate analyses-- to indicate the degree with which the respondent had personally experienced or witnessed negative consequences from social network site use.

| (%) | Never | Once | A few times | Many Times |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lost a job | 99.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Did not get hired | 99.5 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.2 |
| Had issues at work | 97.5 | 1.5 | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Had a fight with a girlfriend/boyfriend | 72.3 | 15.9 | 9.2 | 2.4 |
| Broke up with a girlfriend/boyfriend | 92.0 | 5.4 | 1.8 | 0.75 |
| Had a fight with a friend | 74.3 | 18.7 | 6.4 | 0.5 |
| Had a fight with a parent | 82.8 | 11.1 | 4.7 | 1.2 |
| Had a legal problem | 99.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 |

**Table 2. Did any of the following happen to you? (due to online social network posting)**

| (%) | Never | Once | A few times | Many Times |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lost a job | 80.3 | 15.1 | 3.7 | 0.7 |
| Did not get hired | 80.6 | 14.1 | 4.9 | 0.2 |
| Had issues at work | 69.2 | 21.0 | 9.50 | 0.2 |
| Had a fight with a girlfriend/boyfriend | 29.1 | 15.4 | 39.9 | 15.4 |
| Broke up with a girlfriend/boyfriend | 49.8 | 15.7 | 23.4 | 10.9 |
| Had a fight with a friend | 33.8 | 20.4 | 35.5 | 89.8 |
| Had a fight with a parent | 47.2 | 18.1 | 27.1 | 7.4 |
| Had a legal problem | 78.1 | 15.1 | 4.4 | 2.2 |

**Table 3. Did the following happen to someone you know (due to online social network posting)?**

**Peer and other surveillance:** The respondents were asked about situations reflecting peer (shown in Table 4). Responses ranging from 1-never to 4-many times were combined into an index named "Surveillance" used in multivariate analyses.

## Analyses and Findings

Descriptively, a striking finding is that about 20% have deactivated their profile at least once due to privacy or visibility concern. I also notice high levels of privacy concern, and active management of privacy settings with 82% having changed the settings in the last year, and 90% of those having made their profile less visible.

**Historical changes:**

Historical analysis of variables "% of profiles visible to everyone", "% concerned about privacy", and "% concerned that someone unwanted will find their profile" are in Figure 1 and 2. As can be seen, the level of visibility of profiles to "everyone" dramatically plunged between Spring of 2006 and December of 2010, going from almost 60% to a mere 12%. Similarly, Concerns about unwanted audiences as well as privacy rose fairly sharply.

| Did the Following Happen to You ? (%) | Never | Once | A few times | Many Times |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Someone you did not want found your profile | 27.1 | 21.1 | 43.5 | 8.2 |
| Other people posted pictures of you that you wish they had not | 30.0 | 16.8 | 42.6 | 10.4 |
| Someone else got upset with you seeing a picture of you with someone else | 65.3 | 12.8 | 16.5 | 5.2 |
| You got upset with someone after seeing a picture of theirs with someone else | 61.2 | 14.8 | 19.1 | 4.7 |
| Someone harassed/stalked you online | 67.4 | 18.3 | 10.5 | 3.7 |
| Someone much older contacted you | 46.4 | 19.6 | 24.3 | 9.6 |
| You found out something very important about a friend | 22.1 | 19.6 | 43.5 | 14.6 |
| You found that someone else had been lying to you by looking at their profile | 40.4 | 19.3 | 31.5 | 8.6 |
| You got caught in a lie by someone else through your profile | 77.5 | 13.2 | 7.2 | 2.0 |

**Table 4. Did the Following Happen to You?**
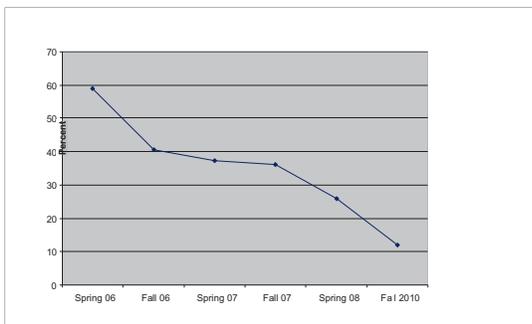


**Fig. 1. Proportion of Profiles Visible to Everyone May 06-Dec 10**

## Multivariate Analyses

First, I examined the associations between privacy protecting behaviors such as untagging while controlling for demographic and other factors. In Table 6, predictors of increased likelihood of the following activities due to privacy or visibility concerns are modeled in OLS regressions: untagging, deleting information, unfriending, and deactivating one's profile (these dependent variables vary from 1 to 7). The controls are demographics; how likely the student is to use Facebook to keep in touch with friends in the same school ("Near friends," 1-4), with friends elsewhere or in other schools ("Far friends," 1-4), privacy concerns (1-5 with 5 most concerned) and the number of years the student used Facebook.

Table 6 shows that women are more likely to have untagged themselves or deleted info from their profiles. Hispanic and Asian students are more likely to have deactivated their profiles. Those who interact more with friends in their school (variable near friends) are significantly more likely to both untag themselves from photos and delete information from their profiles. The number of years the student has spent on Facebook has an impact on the likelihood of deactivating one's profile: those with more experience are more likely to do so.

Table 7 looks at predictors of acts about privacy settings and models the predictors of the outcome that the last privacy change made the profile less visible, that it was done in the last month, that privacy settings were never changed, or that the profile is visible to everyone. The variable ("profile concern") reflects the concern that respondent's profile will be found by unwanted audiences. Table 7 is logistic regressions with binary outcomes in the dependent variables; coefficients represent odds ratios.

Table 7 shows that increase in the concern that the profile will be found by unwanted audiences dramatically increases the odds that a respondent made their profile less visible (67% increase in odds for each level increase in concern). This is quite a large effect. A similar pattern holds for those who made a change in the last month: concerns about the profile being seen by unwanted audiences is the most significant predictor of having changed privacy settings in last month, followed by the likelihood of a person using Facebook to interact with physically proximate audiences.

In contrast, neither the respondent's personal experiences with surveillance, nor negative consequences from social network site use that the respondent experienced or observed are associated with making the profile less visible. This suggests a pro-active stance rather than one reacting to witnessing or experiencing negative consequences of peer or other surveillance. This is in direct contradiction with the idea that youth do not care about privacy; or that they do so only after they have a mishap.
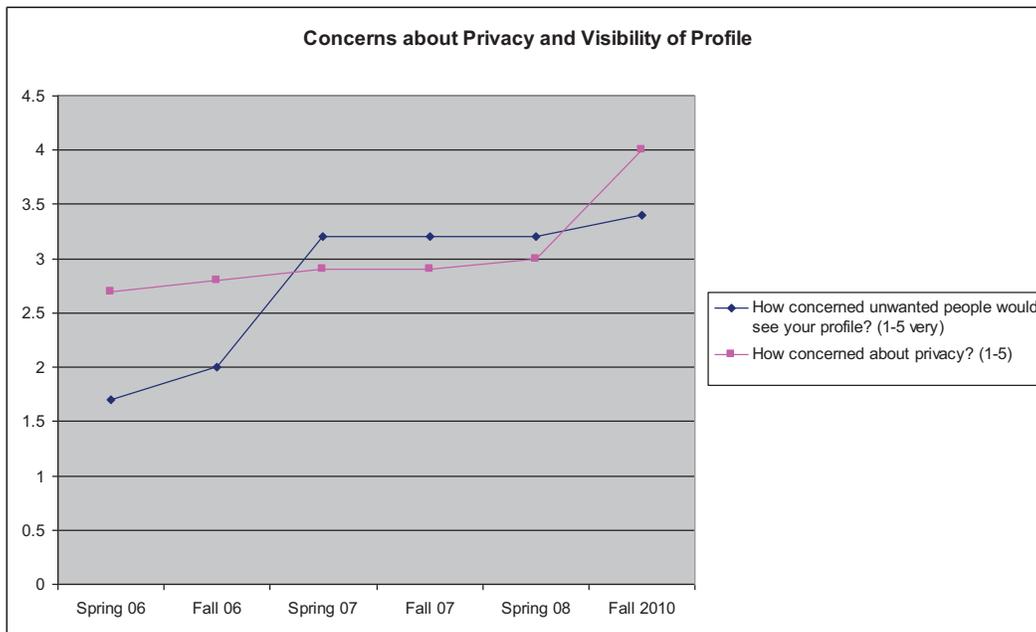
**Fig. 2. Concern about privacy and visibility of profile**

|  | Untag | Delete Info | Unfriend | Deactivate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 0.242* | 0.197* | 0.088 | 0.002 |
| Black | 0.178 | 0.188 | 0.192 | 0.118 |
| Hisp/Other | 0.067 | 0.261 | 0.075 | 0.175* |
| Asian | 0.077 | 0.162 | 0.281* | 0.269*** |
| Far friends | 0.070 | 0.051 | 0.009 | 0.034 |
| Near friends | 0.128* | 0.124* | 0.057 | 0.004 |
| Find potential | 0.071 | 0.063 | 0.004 | 0.051 |
| Find similar | 0.083 | 0.095 | 0.108 | 0.047 |
| Privacy concern | 0.091 | 0.101 | 0.114 | 0.046 |
| Years on FB | 0.045 | 0.031 | 0.034 | 0.045* |
| _cons | 1.105* | 1.075** | 1.033** | 0.883*** |
| ll | 574.980 | 509.161 | 528.792 | 276.990 |

**Table 6. OLS regression modeling privacy related activities (N=403)**

|  | Less Visible | Last Month | Never Changed Settings | Profile Visible to Everyone |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | exp(b) | exp(b) | exp(b) | exp(b) |
| Female | 1.583 | 1.732* | 0.611 | 0.255** |
| Black | 1.032 | 0.684 | 0.428 | 1.232 |
| Hisp/Other | 0.693 | 0.929 | 1.828 | 1.192 |
| Asian | 0.676 | 0.934 | 0.680 | 1.861 |
| Someone else | 0.988 | 0.980 | 1.044 | 1.016 |
| Me | 1.099 | 1.023 | 1.079 | 1.085 |
| Surveillance | 1.049 | 1.004 | 0.754*** | 0.937 |
| Far friends | 1.181 | 1.165 | 0.824 | 0.925 |
| Near friends | 0.892 | 1.538* | 1.186 | 0.907 |
| Find new friends | 1.002 | 1.283 | 0.740 | 1.031 |
| Find similar ppl | 0.679 | 0.761 | 1.801* | 1.337 |
| Profile concern | 1.671*** | 1.791*** | 0.624* | 0.375*** |
| Years on FB | 1.364** | 1.047 | 0.803 | 0.773* |
| cons | 0.097 | 0.008*** | 22.286 | 8.462 |
| ll | 162.272 | 223.213 | 97.021 | 104.967 * |

**Table 7 Logit regression modeling the odds of privacy changes (N=383)**

The people who have never changed their profile privacy settings provide an interesting contrast. Such respondents have fewer experiences with peer and other surveillance, are less concerned about their profile being seen by unwanted audiences, and are more interested in using Facebook to find people with similar interests. We thus see the association between motivation and disclosure behavior: wanting to use Facebook to find new friends with similar interests is associated with being more public in privacy settings. Also, reporting less experience with negative consequences of surveillance (either their own or observed through their peers) is associated with higher odds of never having changed privacy settings.

Finally, those who leave their profiles visible to everyone are significantly less likely to be female and significantly more likely to have far lower concerns about profile being found by unwanted audiences. As respondents have more years of Facebook experience, the likelihood that their profile will be visible to everyone goes down. However, respondents who have their profiles visible to everyone do not have more or less experience with with negative consequences of surveillance (either their own or observed through their peers). These findings again that youth are reacting not necessarily to direct experiences but acting on the basis of their general orientation towards visibility, although experience does play a role as we can see in the effect of number of years on Facebook.

| | Friend someone… | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | You know in person | You don't know in person |
| * | | |
| | b | b |
| Female | -0.098 | -0.141 |
| Black | 0.100 | 0.129 |
| Hisp/Other | 0.209 | -0.021 |
| Asian | 0.243** | 0.145 |
| Someone else | -0.007 | -0.003 |
| Me | 0.015 | -0.032 |
| Surveillance | 0.010 | 0.036*** |
| Far friends | -0.023 | 0.104 |
| Near friends | 0.017 | -0.026 |
| Find potential | 0.039 | 0.156** |
| Find similar | 0.029 | 0.138* |
| Profile concern | -0.033 | -0.164*** |
| Years on FB | 0.005 | -0.015 |
| cons | 3.219*** | 1.494*** |
| N | 381 | 381 |
| ll | -365.679 | -420.871 |

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

**Table 8. OLS Regression modeling the predictors of accepting friend request from someone respondent "knows in person" or "does not know in person"**

As privacy greatly depends on whom a Facebook user friends, Table 8 examines (OLS Regression) the likelihood of accepting friends from someone the respondent knows in person and does not know in person. Asian students are more likely to accept friend requests from people they know in person. Students with negative experiences of their own or observed their peers or with higher levels of concerns that their profiles will be found by unwanted audiences are significantly less likely to accept friend requests from people they don't know. On the other hand, students who want to find potential friends or other people similar to them through Facebook are more likely to accept friend requests from strangers, once again showing the complex interaction between motivation and experience in privacy behaviors.

**Profile Visibility, Multiple Profiles and Nicknames**
Facebook's TOS disallows the use of nicknames and most users appear to use their real name of Facebook. Historical sample had found that 94.9% had used their real names on Facebook. In this sample, not much had changed with 90.9% using their real name. However, this means that 10% are not using their real name and are in violation of Facebook TOS. A logistic regression (Table 9) shows that the only predictor of using a nickname was race: an African-American had almost three times the odds of a White person of using a nickname.

| | exp(b) |
| --- | --- |
| Female | 0.527 |
| Black | 2.810* |
| Hisp/Other | 0.951 |
| Asian | 1.194 |
| Someone else | 0.929 |
| Me | 1.081 |
| Surveillance | 1.021 |
| Far friends | 0.920 |
| Near friends | 1.020 |
| Find potential | 1.386 |
| Find similar | 0.798 |
| Profile concern | 1.196 |
| Years on FB | 1.101 |
| _cons | 0.031* |
| N | 383 |
| ll | 103.802 |

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

**Table 9. Logistic regression modeling the odds that a person uses a nickname on their Facebook profile**

**Multiple profiles:** Respondents were asked if they had resorted to using multiple profiles due to privacy or visibility concerns. Only 14 (3.5%) used this method. On the other hand, 119 respondents (29.6%) also have a Myspace profile. However, respondents with multiple profiles were asked if they had a "main" profile and almost all did, and almost all said the main profile was Facebook. It may be that this is a transitional effect, i.e. people have created and abandoned profiles on Myspace, or there may

be more subtle visibility issues at play as, unlike Facebook, majority of Myspace users reported using nicknames rather than real names in their profiles.

**Disclosures:** Table 10 reports results from logistic regression modeling the odds that a person has disclosed their sexual orientation, religion, politics or romantic status on Facebook. Descriptively, 61.4% indicate sexual orientation, 51.05% disclose religion, 32.79% disclose political leanings and 66.5% disclose romantic status. Except for religion, these are also lower levels of disclosure than the historical samples, which may indicate a growing level of concern among youth; yet the levels of disclosure are still quite high. There may be a practice of closing the profiles through privacy settings and then continuing to share within (In other words, making the profile visible only to Facebook friends to whom one continues to make disclosures). The increase in the levels of religious disclosure may be related to the increased participation of African-Americans on Facebook compared to 2008 since, as discussed below, their odds of disclosing religion are much higher than White respondents. Logistic

regression results also show that women have half the odds of disclosing their sexual orientation or politics, while African-Americans show three times the odds of disclosing religion and also their political preferences. Hispanic/Other and Asian students also show about twice the odds of disclosing their religion. Romantic status is most likely to be disclosed among those who are more likely to be interacting with their friends on the same campus, and least likely to be disclosed among those who have concerns about their profiles being seen by unwanted audiences. Finally, more years of using Facebook was associated with higher levels of disclosure of sexual orientation as well as religion, but not politics or romantic status.

**Limitations:** This is a cross-sectional study of a college population. Social habits of older cohorts may be very different. Causality cannot be established. However, the sample was heterogeneous with regard to race, gender, and major. Further, it is likely that causality runs both-ways for many of the results, i.e. that these processes are mutually-reinforcing.

| | Sexual Orientation | Religion | Politics | Romantic Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | exp(b) | exp(b) | exp(b) | exp(b) |
| Female | 0.584* | 0.958 | 0.581* | 1.403 |
| Black | 1.541 | 3.174*** | 3.282*** | 1.315 |
| Hisp/Other | 0.861 | 2.003* | 1.349 | 0.892 |
| Asian | 1.117 | 2.205** | 1.159 | 0.942 |
| Someone else | 1.021 | 1.008 | 1.043 | 1.059 |
| Me | 1.188* | 0.940 | 0.981 | 1.104 |
| Surveillance | 0.997 | 1.039 | 1.010 | 0.989 |
| Far friends | 1.377 | 1.353 | 1.445 | 1.324 |
| Near friends | 1.030 | 0.980 | 1.089 | 1.785*** |
| Find potential | 0.996 | 0.844 | 0.749 | 0.786 |
| Find similar | 1.015 | 1.168 | 1.296 | 1.367 |
| Profile concern | 0.809 | 0.944 | 1.045 | 0.731* |
| Years on FB | 1.298** | 1.193* | 1.132 | 1.047 |
| _cons | 0.085* | 0.135* | 0.037*** | 0.062** |
| N | 383 | 382 | 383 | 383 |
| ll | 235.731 | 250.005 | 229.583 | 217.663 |

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 10. Logistic regression modeling the odds that a person discloses different kinds of information on their Facebook profile

## Discussion

These results show a steep decline in the number of people who have profiles visible to everyone (a mere 12% in 2010 compared to an overwhelming 59% in 2006). They report substantive levels of negative consequences and personal friction due to disclosures on Facebook, ranging from fights with significant others (28%) and parents (18%). They've also observed such consequences among their peers in overwhelming numbers (71% observed friends

fight with significant others, 50% observed break-ups due to Facebook postings, etc (Tables 2 and 3). Overwhelming majorities report that their profiles were found by unwanted audiences (72.9%) and unwanted photos of them were posted (70%). On the other hand, respondents also report having discovered important facts about their friends (78.9%) as well as uncovered lies (32.5%).

However, disclosure and privacy behavior on Facebook is more complicated than merely having had negative

experiences. Many young adults have taken steps to hide their profiles from unwelcome audiences without reporting such high levels of negative outcomes.

In contrast, the strongest predictor of privacy-related actions (e.g. making a profile less visible, having recently changed privacy settings, not having their profile visible to everyone,) is the respondent's general concern about a profile being found by unwanted audiences, indicating that youth behaving pro-actively and not just responding to being burned by an actual outcome. Another factor correlated with privacy behaviors is whether a person interacts through Facebook mostly with day-to-day friends (as opposed to with friends located elsewhere). Those who use Facebook more with nearby friends are more likely to untag or delete information from their profiles and more likely to have modified their privacy settings recently

These results show that, far from relinquishing interest in privacy or being an unreflecting generation of exhibitionists or narcissists, many young users of Facebook are pro-actively adapting to the constraints and affordances of the platform in accordance to their social context and motivations. As Facebook increasingly became a social norm, thus making it difficult for a college student to avoid using it, and also simultaneously pushed its users to broader visibility and disclosure, these respondents have reacted by taking active steps to adjust their privacy settings so that they can continue to share information and social interaction with "wanted" audiences while avoiding the unwanted ones.

In a striking finding, about 20% indicate they have deactivated their profile at least once due to a privacy or visibility concern. Students are also not monolithic in terms of audiences they desire; those who seek to interact most with their day-to-day friends often have different privacy and visibility practices compared to those who use Facebook more to interact with friends and acquaintances located elsewhere. Similarly, privacy and visibility practices differ among those who use Facebook more to interact with people they know versus those interested in meeting potential new friends or people with similar interests,. Those seeking to broaden their networks have a greater likelihood of accepting friend requests from people they do not know in person, and are less likely to have made changes to their profile privacy settings.

Gender plays a significant role in privacy practices: women are more likely to have modified their privacy settings recently, a lot less likely to have a profile visible to everyone, and a lot less likely to disclose sexual orientation or politics and a lot more likely to untag themselves from photos and delete information from their profiles. African-American Facebook users, on the other hand, have much higher likelihood of using a nickname on Facebook.

These results do not show that youth passively accept default privacy settings. Rather, they attempt to manage the visibility and the privacy of their social spaces through active and considered engagement with privacy settings and privacy-related behaviors on Facebook in accordance with their motivation, concerns and experiences.

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