“Add as Friend”: Privacy on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 2004, Facebook has become a communication and cultural revolution, connecting individuals through its innovative, interactive, ever-changing platform of public and private messaging, photo sharing, and chat—all aggregated through a user's news feed. Originally conceived as a way for Harvard students to network, Facebook's usership has expanded to include both high school students and older adults, all of whom disclose biographical details upon registration and continue this disclosure as they become more active users: by posting or tagging photos or sharing a comment on a "friend's" wall. As Facebook's platform evolves, so, too, do our conceptions of privacy. A review of published literature on privacy, the internet, social networking, and the digital divide reveals a gap in understanding the way in which older adults manage privacy settings. Framed through symbolic interactionism, this research project compares the difference in levels of restriction among a randomly selected group of individuals stratified by age (those born before 1980 compared to those born after 1981, but before 1993) to determine the extent to which Facebook users who manipulate privacy settings. The current study reveals that although all users in this sample manage their digital identities well, members of the first generation (those born before 1980) allow the public to view more data about themselves than do members of the second generation (those born after 1981).

"[P]erhaps technology is revealing more clearly to us now what has always been a truth, that everyone has something rare and powerful to offer our society, and that the human ability to adapt is our greatest asset"
--Aimee Mullins, "The opportunity of adversity"

Today, millions of individuals share information on the internet—some of biographical, some of it deeply personal, all of it unique. Facebook has been called the twenty-first century version of a telephone book (Clark, 2007 as cited in Lewis and West 2009: 1212). However, on Facebook users can share much more than name and telephone number. As little as a decade ago--before the internet connected almost every computer user to innumerable pieces of information--one had to get to know a person before knowing their birthdate or their favorite food. Facebook has changed that; the social networking website, which recently celebrated its 500 millionth user, promotes a culture of "openness" by encouraging those who become users to share as much information with others as they feel comfortable. This "openness" raises questions about the extent one's information on the internet remains private at all. The current study will examine the ways in which individuals--adults born before 1980 compared to adults born after 1981--manage their identities through the positioning and posting of photographs and biographical information on Facebook as metrics to indicate one's level of sharing. I argue that Facebook highlights a digital divide focused more on a lack of knowledge (how to modify privacy settings) than on a lack of access (having a computer with internet access or not). Thus, I expect that younger individuals will more frequently provide unrestricted access to their profile pages, not only because they conceive of privacy differently but also because members of this generation can better manipulate privacy settings than older individuals. Privacy settings can be manipulated by the click

of a button, but understanding the motivation behind an individual's changes requires a synthesis of narratives about presentation of self, privacy norms, and the digital divide. By synthesizing the scholarly literature in publication on Facebook, privacy norms, photographs, and the digital divide and then connecting it with content analysis, I intend to extend symbolic interactionism to the digital, Web 2.0 world.

In order to understand the ways in which notions of privacy have changed, a working definition of privacy must be established. Privacy in the social networking context differs from privacy as the concept is generally understood. Definitions and an application in context reinforce the notion that the meaning of privacy has changed in the age of Facebook.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a historical perspective on the definition of privacy, useful in understanding the magnitude of change brought about by the internet. It defines the word as follows: "The state or condition of being alone, undisturbed, or free from public attention, as a matter of choice or right; seclusion; freedom from interference or intrusion" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). If one applies this definition to the internet-driven culture in which many individuals live today, very little would be considered private. A simple internet search may reveal an individual's address, social security number, home value and a host of other information. While the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition presents a general understanding of privacy, one that remains applicable today, it does not specifically address concerns brought about by social networking.

Nissenbaum (2010), in contrast, describes scenarios in which information can be taken out of context. This application of privacy in the context of Facebook transcends

traditional notions of privacy while retaining applicability in the contemporary, internet-driven culture in which we live today. Nissenbaum identifies three "privacy issues...in the context of social networking sites" that describe privacy norms as they apply to Facebook (Nissenbaum 2010: 59). First, Nisseumbaum notes "the typical sequence begins with individuals posting information about themselves; later, when this information is discovered, it gets them into trouble" (Nissenbaum 2010: 59). Second, Nissenbaum identifies "the near universal practice of posting content about others on one's [Facebook profile] page" (Nissenbaum 2010: 60). Third, Nissenbaum warns readers about "systems that monitor and track" online activity, which, in the context of social networking sites, can be sold to third parties for advertising endeavors (Nissenbaum 2010: 62-63). Once alert to potential privacy concerns, users may turn to Facebook's privacy policy to learn Facebook's views on its roles and responsibilities regarding the information users share.

Facebook's privacy policy should be considered in the formation of a working definition of privacy. The privacy policy, linked from facebook.com or accessible directly, outlines Facebook's legal obligations regarding the information users provide. Section three of this policy, entitled "Sharing information on Facebook" contains pertinent information that must be kept in mind when analyzing Facebook pages. Specifically, the policy states the following about information available to everyone:

> Facebook is designed to make it easy for you to find and connect with others. For this reason, your name and profile picture do not have privacy settings. If you are uncomfortable with sharing your profile picture, you should delete it (or not add one). You can also control who can find you when searching on Facebook or on public search engines using the Applications and Websites privacy setting. (Facebook's Privacy Policy)

In order to understand the ways in which privacy has changed in the age of Facebook, one must first understand the types of information Facebook collects and

disseminates about its users. Each Facebook user creates a profile page upon registration. On this page, users may provide a wide variety of biographical details in each of the following six categories: basic information, photographs, relationships, family, education and work, likes and interests, and contact details.[1] Users have the option of restricting access, but concerns about privacy on Facebook, voiced by both scholars and the general public, persist in large part because one must first be aware of current settings in order to change them.

The Facebook platform undergoes constant change making it necessary for individuals to routinely update their privacy settings. New features appear regularly, encouraging users to return frequently to experience updates. One needs only to visit the Facebook Blog (blog.facebook.com) to read announcements about improvements to existing features and the introduction of new features. Many of these changes, consistent with Facebook's mission of "openness," expect users' willingness to share more information. Inside Facebook, a web site "dedicated to providing news and market research to the Facebook platform," reports that, historically, features on the social networking site which remain popular today were met with skepticism upon their introduction ("About Inside Facebook," insidefacebook.com):

> The news feed was met with user outrage when it launched years ago, because Facebook aggregated data about users' activities in an easy to view way. Even though the data it used was available already, users felt betrayed because that availability became far more obvious. But everyone got used to it, and the news feed has become Facebook's main avenue for sharing information... (Inside Facebook, 11 May 2010).

Users' resistance to the News Feed illustrates not only the speed at which change occurs but also the extent to which users cherish control (or, at least, a sense of control) over

[1] See also: Appendix A.

their privacy. Innovations such as the News Feed highlight the ways in which Facebook promotes communication by making it easy for users to disseminate different types of information—photographs, status updates, conversations—to friends and friends of friends, presenting instances in which privacy has the potential to be breached. These types of changes raise questions about the notion of public versus private and the notion of choice: Do both public and private personas coexist in the online realm?[2] How do people choose what to make public and what to make private? By "giv[ing] people the power to share" Facebook gives users a sense of control over the way in which and to whom one's profile details may be shared; however, users have that control only if they know how to manipulate their privacy settings (Facebook Mission Statement). A digital divide of knowledge, between those individuals who know how to change settings and those who do not, results.

This digital divide of knowledge prompts a discussion of symbolic interactionism, the theoretical school out of which preeminent sociological theories of the self originate, because knowledge about privacy settings could impact the way in which a Facebook user presents him or herself to fellow users. Symbolic interactionism "focuses primarily on the individual 'with a self' and on the interaction between a person's internal thoughts and emotions and his or her social behavior" (Wallace and Wolf 2006: 199). This focus--on the self one presents to society--has been best articulated through the Goffman's theory of presentation of self. The current study suggests that Goffman's that can be extended to investigate generational differences in privacy restriction on Facebook.

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[2] Professor Sacks' words on this subject may express these ideas more cogently: one can see "privacy as a matter of selective efforts of self-definition." Thus, privacy is tied up in "to whom," a matter, perhaps of audience rather than content, that shapes decisions made in the online realm (Personal communication, 12 November).

Goffman's concept of impression management builds upon Mead's earlier ideas. Goffman's front stage describes "that part of the individuals' performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (Goffman 1959: 22, as quoted in Wallace and Wolf 2006: 238). Backstage, by contrast, describes instances in which an individual "do[es] not need to engage in impression management; [one can be him or herself]" (Wallace and Wolf 2006: 239). Goffman's ideas can be extended to social networking by thinking about the public profile--information available to everyone regardless of friendship status--as the front stage and an individual's offline persona as the backstage. One might think of the content analysis discussed in the methods section of this study as a contemporary application of Goffman's theories. The literature review, to follow, will make the case for this contemporary application by synthesizing the scholarly research that has been conducted on Facebook, on privacy norms, on photographs (both in print and in digital formats), and on the digital divide.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Privacy norms

Much of the research on privacy in online social networking environments has centered on today's teenagers, those members of Generation Y who have grown up with internet access in the home. This group's evolving relationship with and ever-growing dependency on internet-mediated communication has led researchers to investigate the ways in which Facebook has changed the way in which young adults structure friendships and consider privacy.

Existing theoretical literature about privacy frames the way changing social norms are perceived and understood. Steeves (2008) describes the changes in privacy norms in terms of a legal system that cannot keep pace with the times. Information captured online remains indefinitely, placing power in the hands of those who can best manipulate the online infrastructure—not necessarily those people about whom the information has been generated (Steeves 2008: 337). Solove (2008) presents the 'Nothing to Hide' argument by discussing privacy in relation to national security: "The value of privacy, the argument provides, is low, because the information is often not particularly sensitive" (Solove 2008: 753). Solove reports that much of the information uncovered by government security protocols is mundane—he cites phone numbers dialed as an example—and can easily be accessed by other individuals, so its value remains relatively low (Solove 2008: 754). Fox (2004), in turn, discovers that internet users want control over their personal information, but have no idea when or how information they willingly provide is being used (Fox 2004: 194-195). Finally, Nissenbaum (2010) looks at privacy through the lens of contextual integrity--a theory she developed--positing that one must look to norms and context in order to determine if a person's privacy has been breeched (Nissenbaum 2010: 127). Nissenbaum contends that if we fail to understand privacy's changing role in shaping the information we receive, then we fail to understand the way in which what we choose to share shapes our very identity [Nissenbaum 2010: 82, citing Goffman (1959) and Austin (2007)]. Similarly, Annan (2003) warns readers: "One of the hallmarks of the information society – openness – is a crucial ingredient of democracy and good governance. Information and knowledge are also at the heart of efforts to strengthen

tolerance, mutual understanding and respect for diversity." (Annan 2003, as quoted in Livingstone and Helsper 2007: 672).

Facebook

West, Lewis and Currie (2009) studied how university student Facebook users interacted with their parents on the social networking site. The authors described the extent to which the interviewed university students became 'friends' with their parents on Facebook, and the university student's "attitudes" towards these types of relationships (West, Lewis and Currie 2009: 616). The authors stress the need for a rearticulation of public vs. private in light of social networking (West, Lewis and Currie 616). In interviews with sixteen students, many expressed concern about parents on Facebook and an "apparent desire to protect the mother from intrusion by the individuals' friends" (West, Lewis and Currie 2009: 622). The interviews point to a change in the public/private dichotomy, but the authors' caution that more research must be conducted on Facebook's role in blurring the "public/private dichotomy" before a definitive conclusion can be reached (West, Lewis and Currie 2009: 625).

Lewis and West (2009) explore the ways in which the process of "friending" makes Facebook a public space. The article discusses the ways in which Facebook has changed social dynamics between and among friends: while it has offered an avenue through which one can keep up with and acquire friends, the social networking site has also engendered a "collision of contexts," whereby individuals from different spheres of a user's life (parents, teachers, employers) have access to the same information; these feelings expressed confusion about the public/private dichotomy on Facebook (Lewis and

West 2009: 1218). The authors provide the following conclusion: "perhaps Facebook is best understood as a form of entertainment first, and as a means to a larger group of weak social contacts second" (Lewis and West 2009: 1225). Similarly, Skeels and Grunnin (2009) discuss both the positive effects and the perils of using Facebook in the workplace, praising the social networking site for its ability to connect and inform individuals regardless of geography while also cautioning individuals to track what they post.

Livingstone (2008) discusses the ways in which Facebook users conceive of the site as "intimate" space (Livingstone 2008: 10). Livingstone's research reveals that teens carefully consider the impact of their online disclosure: "teenagers must and do disclose personal information in order to sustain intimacy, but they wish to be in control of how they manage this disclosure" (Livingstone 2008: 10). Livingstone believes that teenagers think about privacy "zones," grouping online friends based on levels of intimacy and desired disclosure (Fahey 1995, as quoted in Livingstone 2008: 11). Interestingly, when Livingstone's interviewees were asked to manipulate the privacy settings on their social networking profiles many had trouble, pointing to "broader internet literacy issues" discussed later in this paper (Livingstone 2008: 11).

Much of the research on young adult's online activities has been conducted under the auspices of the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life Project[3]. The Pew Internet and American Life Project provides access to reports that survey individuals about not only the digital divide but also presentation of self online. The Project produces

[3] Other studies, such as Karyda and Kokolakis' (2008) case study, for example, have been conducted, but the Pew data are, to the best of my knowledge, the only nationally-representative sample whose data deal with social networking.

numerous reports each year on a wide breadth of topics related to the way in which Americans use the World Wide Web. In particular, the Project's report "Reputation Management and Social Media" outlines the ways in which "users are learning and refining their approach as they go—changing privacy settings on profiles, customizing who can see certain updates and deleting unwanted information about them that appears online" (Madden and Smith 2010: 2). The report draws its data from two telephone-based surveys: one sample drawn in 2006, the other drawn in 2009. The excerpt below describes the respondent's answers to questions about the function of photographs online:

> Overall, 42% of internet users say that a photo of them is available on the internet for others to see, which represents a huge increase from the 23% of internet users who said the same in 2006. Among SNS [social networking site] users, fully 71% say photos of them are available online, compared with just 18% of non-SNS users. […] Looking at the standard age breaks, 68% of young adult internet users age 18-29 say that photos of them are available online, compared with 44% of those ages 30-49, 24% of those ages 50-64 and 17% of wired seniors ages 65 and older. (Madden and Smith 2010: 14)

Madden and Smith's (2010) report highlights the importance of photographs to the social networking experience, correlating lower prevalence with older age. Older Facebook users may be more accustomed to viewing photographs in albums rather than online; understanding the ways in which the consumption of photography has changed over time synthesizes disparate narratives on Facebook, the digital divide, and privacy through the camera's lens.

Photographs

The photograph ties together this research project in much the same way it ties together individuals: the click of a shutter captures a moment in time but not its context.

Adrienne O'Rourke's (2009) work on family photographs discusses the ways in which families from different social classes display photos in the home: what types of images are displayed, where they are displayed, and why they are displayed. In the home, one has control over what photos to display, where to display them, and who can view them; on Facebook, in contrast, one only has similar control over audience if he or she manipulates the site's privacy settings. This dichotomy raises questions not only about privacy but also about the digital divide: do what data we make public and what data we make private differ by generation, and, further, by degree of technological knowledge? As older adults join Facebook in record numbers, are we experiencing a digital divide of technical knowledge? Since the photograph serves as a metric through which one can measure privacy restriction on Facebook, understanding the shift from print photography to digital photography provides context and justification for both the change over time and the digital divide arguments explored in the current study.

Photographs in the home serve a different purpose and appeal to a different audience than do photographs on Facebook. Halle (1991) notes that most of the photographs one displays in his or her home are group shots; very rarely does someone frame a self-portrait for display. Reiakvam (1993) developed a theory of photographic practice after investigating the reasons families took photographs on vacation: "Photographic practice functions as a vehicle for experience, as a ritual aid to create order and system in time and space, and as evidence that the journey has taken place" (Reiakvam 1993: 54).[4]

[4] Reiakvam (1993) also quotes Bourdieu on photography. While not directly relevant to the investigation at hand, Bourdieu's thoughts on why we take photographs could be extended to explain, in part, why we choose to post photographs in a public/private forum

Foster's (2009) work on cameraphone tourism in Japan describes the reasons individuals choose to take photographs with their mobile device, providing insight into the implications of the shift from print photography to digital photography. Foster (2009) cites Okabe & Ito (2003) to comment on the omnipresence of mobile phones—every moment can be captured because clicking the shutter on a mobile phone is easier than clicking the shutter on a traditional camera; "The camera allows the user to make remarkable that which may have gone unnoticed before; through apprehending and freezing a thing or event digitally, 'the mundane is elevated to a photographic object'" (Okabe & Ito 2003, as quoted in Foster 2009: 363). Foster research proves that individuals in Japan favor cameraphones over traditional cameras, but he does not speculate as to why some individuals post photographs online. Davies' (2007) research focusing on the way in which users interact on the photo-sharing website Flikr concurs with Okabe and Ito's (2003) observation that online photo sharing fosters the capture and dissemination of otherwise unremarkable everyday events (Davies 2007: 555-56). Davies' theoretical framework rests on the idea of photographs as "cultural artifacts," asserting that meaning can be found even in the mundane (Davies 2007: 561, citing Stewart 1993). Mendelson and Papacharissi (2010) apply many of the concepts articulated by previously mentioned authors to Facebook. The pair studied eighty-nine college-aged students' photo albums, linking Goffman's idea of "performance" to Facebook: "Facebook pictures are where college students visually play out their lives for

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such as Facebook: "The need for photography and the need to take photographs is neither a natural need, nor a need created deliberately, it is in reality nothing but a reflex in the consciousness of the subjects about the social function this practice serves" (Bourdieu, as quoted in Reiakvam 1993: 42)

each other, demonstrating their identity as a college student. These practices serve as performative exercises of identity and belonging, simultaneously declaring and corroborating shared experiences" (Mendelson and Papacharissi 2010: 12-13 and 32). The ability to post and consume photographs online indicates a level of proficiency with technology; less technologically adept individuals might fall into the digital divide.

Digital Divide

The digital divide highlights "the gap between individuals and their opportunities to access information and communication technologies and the internet" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001, as quoted in Redsell and Nycyk 2010: 38). A paucity of information exists about the way in which older users interact on social networking sites; much of the available data on this group focuses on the digital divide in terms of access. Understanding the available literature on the digital divide in terms of access justifies the need for further research into the digital divide in terms of knowledge.

Differences in the way in which "silver surfers" and "digital natives" use the internet may indicate a difference in the way that privacy is understood among these two cohorts (Palfrey and Gasser 2008). Hargittai (2010) finds that "both age…and education are important predictors of varied internet usage" (Hargittai 2010: 97). Shapira and colleagues (2007) found that internet usage had a positive impact on the lives of elderly individuals. The study revealed that "when older people have the willingness to engage in and the potential (as assessed by themselves) for computer activity, they can successfully employ this potential and achieve both direct goals (e.g. search for information, communicate with relatives) and indirect goals (e.g. a higher sense of control, decreased

feelings of loneliness)" (Shapira et al 2007: 482). Shapira's study focused on the individual effects of internet usage, and neglects to consider wider, societal implications (Shapira et al 2007: 482). Chen and Persson (2002) employ psychological measures to assess the digital divide among younger and older internet users; their research uncovered that "older Internet users were more like young adults than non-users" (Chen and Persson 2002: 741). Redsell and Nycyk (2010) examine the methods by which older adults can be trained to use the internet through a case study of a successful program (Redsell and Nycyk 2010: 38). The case study revealed that older adults enrolled in the program returned for further training if the teacher relayed the information effectively (Redsell and Nycyk 2010: 39-40).

The growing body of research on the digital divide among and between young people sheds light on the group's difficulties navigating the World Wide Web as an educational issue; members of the older generation may face similar difficulties, as they may not be as accustomed to computers (Light 2001, as quoted in Goode 2010: 500-501). Livingstone and Helsper (2007) explore the digital divide as experienced among children. Their research found "the vast majority of children and young people access the internet at home (74%) or at school (92%)" (Livingstone and Helsper 2007: 675). In addition, the authors highlight a digital divide of knowledge: "benefits of internet use depend not only on age, gender, and SES but also on amount of use and online expertise (skills and self-efficacy)" (Livingstone and Helsper 2007: 689). Although Livingstone and Helsper's sample was limited to children, one can infer that children with limited online exposure might approach internet use in the same way as older adults with similarly limited online exposure. Schradie (2009) argues that the digital divide manifests itself not only in access

to equipment but also in the production of online content, creating a "socioeconomic participation gap" (Jenkins 2006, as quoted in Schradie 2009: 2). Goode (2010) establishes a theoretical framework around which individuals can better understand the affect of low socioeconomic status on the computing abilities of college students. Case studies were interpreted through the theoretical framework by means of a content analysis: Lara's story highlights the assumptions made about Generation Y's technological proficiency (Goode 2010: 504-505). Lara perseveres against obstacles of class and race to enter college; yet, once there, Lara realizes that her comfort with computers puts her at yet another disadvantage. Lara's experiences with computers, in general, may be similar to the experiences of older adults as they attempt to navigate Facebook and other social networking sites. The empirical portion of this project, presented in the next section, aims to extend and enrich previous scholarship on the digital divide among the older generation as it relates to notions of privacy.

METHODS

Facebook has always fascinated me because it provides a forum through which one can connect with and remain connected to friends. The website has changed the fabric of Generation Y's social relations: keeping each of us better informed about the everyday lives of those near and far. Operationalizing my interest in Facebook's ability to connect people proved challenging because many angles could be explored. Ultimately, I

remembered reading a news article that noted baby boomers as the fastest growing demographic on Facebook from which I developed the current project.[5]

The current study explores the correlation between age and privacy restriction, and the extent to which Facebook users willingly change settings in order to expand or restrict specific individuals' access to content. To that end, I created two cohorts: individuals born before 1980 and individuals born after 1980. Much of the current research on internet users focuses on teens, so called "digital natives," but very little of the literature I've come across talks about older individuals, even though they have become the fastest-growing demographic group on Facebook and similar social networking sites (Palfrey and Gasser 2008). The content analysis I conducted provides richer, more specific data on a smaller population not often juxtaposed: those born before 1980 and those born after 1981. I chose these two generations because individuals born after 1980 are far more likely to have grown up with a computer in the home than individuals born before 1981, according to market share research (Reimer 2009).

In order to accomplish this research--to investigate and operationalize my research question--I analyzed the content of my own friends' Facebook profiles, only to realize that sampling individuals who were already a part of my network did not yield the desired results. Individuals with whom I was already friends granted me access to their profiles on the basis of our friendship; thus, investigating their privacy settings would not result in the types of data I desired. In addition, the majority of people with whom I am "friends" on Facebook are my own age, making comparative results challenging to draw. I needed access to the names of individuals whom I did not know, for whom I could

[5] See also: ww.insidefacebook.com/2009/02/02/fastest-growing-demographic-on-facebook-women-over-55/

search on Facebook to determine the extent to which privacy restriction changes by generation.[6]

I drew a random sample (n=79) of Professor Doe's[7] Facebook friends in order to determine privacy restrictions users place upon people whom they do not know. I generated a list of random numbers (from random.org). Facebook alphabetizes friends' lists by first name; Professor Doe matched the randomized number with the corresponding friend, and provided me with the randomly generated list of individuals for whom to search. Then, with Professor Doe's supervision, I logged-in to my own Facebook account, typed in the names of participants, and performed a content analysis on the publically available information found. When a name yielded more than one search result, Professor Doe told me which profile corresponded with the correct individual; again, the only information to which I had access was the individual's first and last name and age group. The information garnered from this analysis has been placed in a password-protected spreadsheet accessible to only the researcher.

Measuring Levels of Restriction on Facebook

I developed an effective metric to measure levels of restriction on Facebook by assessing my own privacy settings; by logging-in to my own Facebook account, I was able to denote and assess the full array of information one could provide to Facebook. I created a list[8] to manage and assess the variables in my sample. As I searched for each

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[6] The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge the tireless assistance of Professor Nikole Hotchkiss, Professor Jennifer L. Johnson, Professor George E. McCarthy, and Professor Howard Sacks.

[7] Pseudonym

[8] See Appendix A for complete list of variables.

participant I took note of the type of information they made public, focusing on the number and type (profile photo, tagged photo[9], or album) of photographs available.

RESULTS

This project's empirical component was designed to shed light on concerns about privacy in the age of Facebook. The Pew data notes that older users are less likely to post photographs than younger users; by collecting my own data, I aim to synthesize narratives on privacy, on Facebook, on photographs, and on the digital divide. My methodology captured types of information that individuals consider public because the participants selected were individuals whom I do not know.

Table 1 indicates the frequency of each variable present in my analysis, stratified by generation. I successfully found thirty-four of the forty-eight members of the first generation and twenty of the thirty-one members of the second generation for whom I searched. Information made available by members of each generation appears in table one. The sample's results point to a greater awareness of privacy than I expected.

One particularly interesting finding: more than a quarter of individuals in each generation for whom I searched could not be found; that is, they deliberately altered their privacy settings. The screenshot below shows the menu at which one makes such a change; note the text at the top: Facebook—in keeping with its mission of "openness" —encourages users to remain searchable to everyone at the expense of their privacy. Those who choose to change search settings must know not only that such a menu exists but

[9] The term "tagged photo" describes a photo in which the user appears. It may have been posted by the user or by a friend. The process of "tagging" identifies individuals in the photo, intensifying the social experience of Facebook.

also which option to select. Of those individuals sampled, a greater percentage of younger users (35.4%) manipulated their privacy settings to hide their profile from Facebook's search function. This counters my expectation that younger users would be more apt to share because they had grown up around technology but it supports my hypothesis that older users face a digital divide of knowledge.

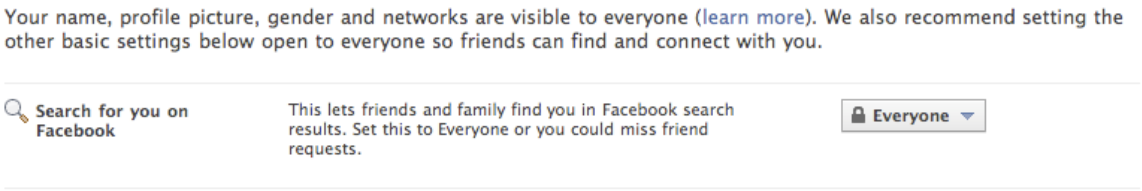

Figure 1: Making Your Profile Hidden

The limited access may be in response to Facebook's recent sensitivity to privacy concerns, and the implementation of more transparent default privacy settings. The institution of these recommended/default settings may explain why the individuals profiled only shared certain pieces of information with the public (see figure 1). The extent to which users customized privacy settings was not a variable in the current study.

I expected more individuals to share photographs in addition to their profile pictures. Surprisingly, only four individuals from the first (older) generation and one individual from the second (younger) generation did so. This could be explained by the digital divide of knowledge, on the part of older users, and an attention to presentation of self, on the part of younger users. However, these five individuals fell into different categories for the purpose of grouping the information users in this study chose to share, which may indicate a conscious choice. Younger users, many of whom may either be looking for work or recently employed, may have disabled public photo sharing in order to present themselves in to employers or future employers in the most positive light.

Although a small number of users in this sample posted additional photographs, many individuals added biographical data—the type of information one might give when introducing him or herself to a new business contact, for instance—from which patterns emerged.

Table 1: Frequency Table[10]

Variable	Generation 1 (pre-1980)	Generation 2 (1981-later)
Total Searched	48	31
Profile Not Found	14 (29.16%)	11 (35.4%)
Total Found	34 (70.83%)	20 (64.5%)
Profile picture	34 (70.83% of total searched; 100% of found group)	20 (64.5% of total searched; 100% of total found group)
Basic information	2 (4.16%)	0 (0%)
Just Name and Picture	3 (6.25%)	1 (3.2%)
Flair[11]	1 (2%)	1 (3.2%)
Current city	5 (10.4%)	0 (0%)
Sex	4 (8.3%)	3 (9.67%)
Hometown	3 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
About me	23 (47.9%)	5 (16%)
Education and work	9 (18.75%)	5 (16%)
Likes and Interests	24 (50%)	15 (48.3%)
Cities visited	0 (0%)	1 (3.2%)
Music	0 (0%)	2 (6.4%)
Relationship Status	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Networks	1 (2%)	0 (0%)
Wall	1 (2%)	2 (6.4%)
Bio	0 (0%)	1 (3.2%)
Additional Photos	4 (8.3%)	1 (3.2%)

[10] Percentages were calculated using the total searched as the denominator.

[11] BlogWorks.org explains what the "flair" application on Facebook is: "Playing off one of the best parts of Office Space, the flair application allows Facebook members a spot to display user-created buttons on their virtual bulletin board." (http://www.blogworks.org/archives/2008/03/facebook_flair.html)

Table 2: Patterns

Pattern	Generation 1 (pre-1980)	Generation 2 (1981-later)
Less than the norm	10 (20.83% of total searched)	4 (12.9% of total searched)
The Norm	13 (27% of total searched)	7 (22.5% of total searched)
Emphasis on Education	6 (12.5% of total searched)	2 (6.45% of total searched)
A Little Something Extra	3 (6.25% of total searched)	2 (6.45% of total searched)
Profile Not Found	14 (29.16% of total searched)	11 (35.38% of total searched)

The patterns shown in Table 2 consolidate the most notable information offered in Table 1. Table 2 indicates that many individuals feel comfortable sharing information one might also glean from small talk: imagine two strangers engaging in conversation, discussing hometowns and favorite books—seeking commonalities on which to build a friendship. Each participant in this study appeared conscious of privacy concerns: no single participant offered access to every piece of information Facebook asks users to provide.[12] In the paragraphs that follow, I explain the criteria for each category and offer a profile screen shot from each generation as an illustrative case study.[13]

"The Norm," so called because it includes the two most prevalent categories of information revealed in this study, classifies those individuals who share the following sections of their profiles with anyone who knows their first and last name: "about me," "likes and interests," and a profile picture. The "about me" section of the profile provides a space for users to describe themselves, in as many or few words. The "likes and

[12] See Appendix A for full list of variables.
[13] To safeguard the anonymity of each participant, not every case study screen shot includes each component detailed in the pattern description (e.g. case study screen shots for "The Norm" may not include the "about me" pane because the biography includes identifiable information).

interests" section may give visitors a sense of the user's personality; the profile screen shot in Figure 3, of a member of the first generation, could spark conversation between fans of *The Goonies*, for instance. The second generation case study, shown in Figure 4, reveals much more information, as this particular user added numerous "likes and interests," indicating preferences and presenting themselves as a country music fan who loves both Harry Potter and Glen Beck.

"Less than the norm" describes individuals who have elected to remain searchable but provide little information about themselves to people with whom they are not friends. Figure 5 provides an example of the type of information one receives when visiting such a profile. Limiting publicly-available information to this extent requires manipulation of privacy settings, leading one to why these individuals did not join those who made hide their profile from Facebook's search feature and other search engines; perhaps they did not know how to do so, or perhaps they were hoping to reconnect with former schoolmates.

"Emphasis on Education" denotes those individuals who share the "about me," "likes and interests" and "education and work" sections of their profiles. Figure 6 suggests that those more likely to make work and education information available have prestigious jobs and attended well-respected universities.

"A Little Extra" highlights those individuals who provide an exceptionally high level of access to strangers.[14] All members of this category shared "about me" and "likes

[14] Each participant in this group elected to make different pieces of information available to those who knew their first and last name. Participants #253 and 279 (Generation 1) provided the following data: Profile picture, about me, education and work, likes and interests, current city, hometown. Participant # 275 (Generation 1) made these pieces of information public: Profile picture, about me, education and work, likes and interests,

and interests," as well as other information—perhaps access to their wall (the space in which a user communicates with others by posting status updates and corresponding via "wall posts" and comments) or a short biography in the "about me" section. The case study shown in Figure 7 provides rich data: age, education, employment status, hometown, relationship status, and a family update. From the details provided, one might infer that this individual may use Facebook as a means to stay in touch with elementary and secondary school acquaintances who would also know the family. Yet, as Table 2 illustrates, most participants in the current study did not provide such full disclosure—and, in fact, this individual was the only participant to provide a biography—reinforcing Goffman's ideas of presentation of self. In addition, the impact of Facebook's default privacy settings must also be considered before attributing the user's disclosure decision to the digital divide of knowledge.

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current city, hometown. Participant #52 (Generation 1) shared the following: about me, education and work, likes and interests, wall, pictures of baby via wall. Participant #278 (Generation 2) shared the following: wall, about me, likes and interests, bio. Participant # 262 (Generation 2) shares the following: wall, about me, education, likes and interests, profile photo.

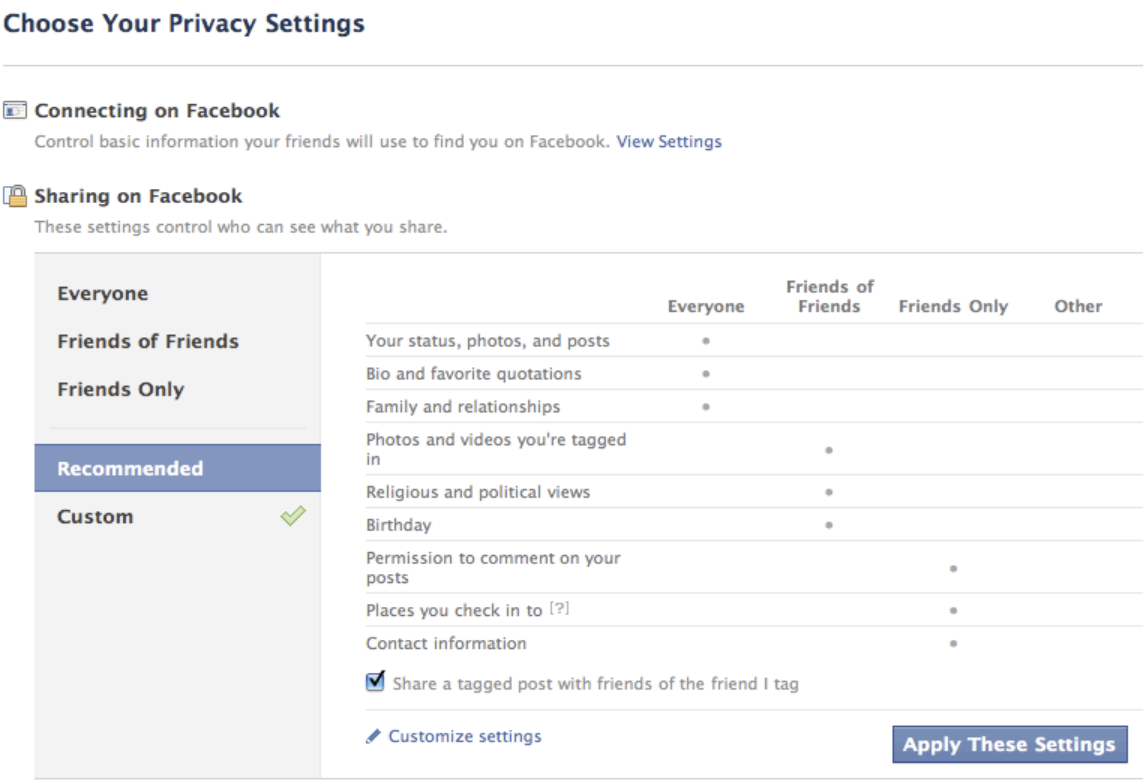

Figure 2: Facebook's Recommended Privacy Settings

Facebook's recommended settings, pictured in Figure 2, encourage individuals to share basic information about themselves, of the kind to which a casual acquaintance would be privy. As the type of information becomes more sensitive—an individual's birthdate, for instance, which could be used to steal his or her identity—the level of recommended restriction becomes more stringent. These more stringent restrictions may explain why the case study in Figure 7 included a biography, or, more generally, why my study did not capture any "tagged photos"— pictures in which one appears, often from parties or other social gatherings, which may have been posted by another individual. Since my study was not conducted longitudinally, I have no way to know to what extent these default privacy settings impacted users' consciousness. Although an individual's privacy consciousness impacts the information he or she willingly shares, each user

shares information about him or herself that others might not learn without Facebook's facilitation.

The data suggest that the information one shares on Facebook depends upon the way in which he or she uses the web site. Members of the both the first and second generations were especially keen to share their likes and interests, a few words about themselves, and a profile picture. By presenting these three pieces of information to the public, one has the opportunity to frame his or her life: "likes and interests" may trend toward the cultural, the political, or the nonsensical; "about me" offers an opportunity to describe family, career, hobbies, and aspirations. Interestingly, the older generation predominately provides public access to the about me and education and work sections of their profile; I expected that a stronger correlation would exist among members of the second generation. As many members of Generation Y struggle to find work, I anticipated that the Facebook profiles of many members of the younger generation would focus on skills and experiences of value to organizations. However, members of the first generation elected to make their educational credentials and work experience publicly available more often than did members of the second generation. This trend may be in response to the recent economic downturn, and the public positing of their educational credentials and work history may be an attempt to bolster employment prospects. A small but growing body of literature exists on the correlation between Facebook and employment (Johnson Conner and Alaniz 2008; Manjoo 2009; Staubli 2009; Skeels and Grunnin 2009). The current study suggests that Facebook has become an important vehicle for communication among individuals in both the younger generation and the older generation—a place to find a job or reconnect with an old friend; the discussion

section that follows weaves separate narratives about symbolic interactionism, privacy norms, and technological knowledge together into a single story about the successes and struggles encountered when presenting oneself online.

DISCUSSION

Facebook has made communicating with friends and acquaintances easier, but the site may also pose a privacy risk—at least to those who do not know how to manipulate its privacy settings—because individuals wish to present their best selves online but may not know how to do so. The current study uses the photograph as a metric by which to measure levels of privacy restriction because self-portraits represent the way one wishes to be seen by the world. The self-portrait provides the simplest and most powerful means to express presentation of self. A body of sociological literature already exists both about photographs on display in the home and photographs on display online, but, to the best of my knowledge, no recently published study explores the relationship, if any, between photography, privacy, and one's age on Facebook; the current exploratory study attempts to tie these three lines of inquiry together in order to provide an avenue for future scholarship.

I expected younger adults to provide information more freely than older adults, to provide access to photographs and other biographical details to perfect strangers because they had "nothing to hide" (Solove 2008: 753). I discovered that, consistent with earlier findings, members of both the first generation and the second generation were savvy about their privacy settings (Lewis and West 2010). One might expect that these individuals treat Facebook as more of private space than a public space: the ability to

communicate with others' individually and to send out "status updates" to all friends blurs the line between what should be considered public space and what should be considered private space online. The seventy-nine individuals profiled in the current study may have understood that anyone could view certain information made available on Facebook, and elsewhere on the internet, as long as the user did not substantially alter their individual privacy settings. By managing their privacy settings, these individuals engaged in impression management as defined by Goffman (Goffman 1959, as articulated in Wallace and Wolf 2006).

The teenagers whom Livingstone (2008) interviewed reported that they were concerned about the privacy of the information they made available online, but they felt that most of the content posted to their profile was innocuous. That Livingstone's interviewees remained not only conscious but also vigilant about what photographs and other content appeared on their profiles suggests an awareness of the cautionary scenarios that Nissenbaum (2010) describes. While neither Livingtone's study nor the current study were nationally-representative, one can infer from both sets of data that when many individuals post pictures or make other updates to their profile page they think about who might view the content, and the ramifications if taken out of context. Whether they know it or not, most Facebook users profiled in the current study and in Livingstone's study demonstrated a consciousness about presentation of self. The consciousness found among both groups extends to the positioning and posting of the Facebook profile picture, the image most often associated with a user's profile page.

Facebook requires each user to select and display a photograph in the upper left-hand corner of his or her profile. If a user does not choose a photograph for this purpose,

a silhouette appears. As a result, 100% of viewable users in this study (71% of the total searched in the first generation and 64.5% of the total searched in the second generation) displayed a profile photo. Nine members (26.5% of those viewable) of the first generation chose as their profile photo a picture of themselves; eight members (40% of those viewable) of the second generation did the same. Halle (1991) discovered that few photos on display in the home were self-portraits. Thus, one could infer that self-portraits on Facebook are a vehicle for branding an individual's online identity, and, extending Goffman's notion of presentation of self, that the profile photo should present users' best self to the online world.

Like photos in the home, Facebook profile photos may also highlight significant people in the user's life—perhaps a significant other, a child, or a pet. Fifteen members (44% of those viewable) of the first generation displayed photos of this type, as did seven members (35% of those viewable) of the second generation, including two profile photos taken at weddings. Many others use the space to broadcast life events: One member of the first generation posted an ultrasound image; another posted a photo of a baby wearing a "three months" bib. These images indicate careful selection, as though user anticipated another's "front stage" evaluation.

Previous research led me to anticipate that photographs on Facebook would focus on minutia (Davies 2007; Okabe and Ito 2003, as quoted in Foster 2009; Mendelson and Papacharissi). I had expected more liberal access to posted photos other than the designated profile photo as a result. Unfortunately, this sample yielded only five individuals with additional photos: four (8.3% of viewable profiles) from the first generation and one (3.2% of viewable profiles) from the second generation. All but one

of these photos were additional profile photos—photographs that had at one time been designated as the user's profile photo. This may indicate an increased tech savvy among all users, especially those of the second generation, about the way in which their Facebook profiles present themselves to the world because Facebook allows photo sharing with everyone as a default privacy setting (see Figure 2). The higher percentage of older individuals who shared additional photos rather than changing privacy settings links tech savvy with privacy.

The current study shed little light on the "gray divide," the digital divide among older individuals, those born before 1980, even though these individuals comprised 60.7% of the total sample. Most members of the older generation profiled in this study actively managed privacy settings—switching from the default settings shown in Figure 2 to customized settings. A higher percentage of older individuals allowed those who were not friends to view information such as hometown and current city (6.25% and 10.4% respectively) than did younger individuals (none of whom provided this information). Redsell and Nycyk (2010) might argue that the inclusion of this information points to a lack of education or understanding, to a digital divide in terms of knowledge, on the part of older individuals; however, the inclusion of this information may also be purposeful: by including current city and/or hometown, Facebook users may more easily connect with acquaintances from their past. If one believes this inclusion to be purposeful, then even these individuals think about the way in which they present themselves to others—even though it presents a negligible privacy risk.

Much of the content analysis data suggests that individuals of both cohorts, but especially the first generation, use Facebook as a means to get to know others as

acquaintances. This observation supports Lewis and West's finding that Facebook facilitates a "larger group of weak social contacts" (Lewis and West 2009: 1225). It makes sense then that individuals would not share overly personal information; while individuals may have met Facebook friends in real life, it is possible that the parties are not well acquainted. Since Facebook blurs the boundary between public and private, caution about the information presented may imply prudence, not a resistance to openness. Nissenbaum's (2010) identification of "privacy issues" brought about by this blurred dichotomy illustrates the need for caution and prudence because the information users provide Facebook—for all its privacy settings—remains largely public (Nissenbaum 2010).

Facebook's institution of recommended settings indicates a nuanced understanding of the importance of control and privacy on the part of the company—but do users understand their options? The current study revealed that most users do understand how to manipulate their privacy settings—how to switch from Facebook's default settings to hide their profile from the search function, for instance--although more members of the older generation were searchable than the younger generation. These findings could support Redsell and Nycyk (2010) assertion that older individuals, those less likely to be tech-savvy, would benefit from computer training, even with Facebook's recommended settings in place; however, they may also point to the older generation's desire to be searchable. The choice of which privacy settings to activate depends not only upon education but also on the purpose of an individual's Facebook profile.

Individuals may be more aware of their privacy settings because they recognize the importance of maintaining a digital identity as a means of professional networking. More

stringent privacy settings assure candidates for employment that potentially embarrassing photographs and text will not be available to recruiters conducting an internet search, a horror story reported by many media outlets (Finder 2006: 1). Skeels and Grunin (2009) investigated the use of social networking sites in the professional setting, illustrating the extension of presentation of self to the digital age: "Facebook is used extensively, though not universally, to maintain awareness of colleagues and to build rapport and stronger working relationships" (Skeels and Grunnin 2009: 5). The case study shown in Figure 7 offers a case-in-point: in the "About Me" section, this user provides a description of qualifications and also reveals that he or she is not currently employed; interestingly, this individual also mentions his or her family, pointing to Facebook's dual role as professional networking application and social networking site. Since some users communicate with old friends and current colleagues on one Facebook profile, being mindful of privacy settings, and, in turn, presentation of self, makes sense. Skeels and Grunnin describe this dilemma as a personal/professional dichotomy, whereby individuals had difficulty deciding whether or not to use Facebook for professional and personal purposes (Skeels and Grunnin 2009: 7). The professional/personal dichotomy parallels the public/private dichotomy discussed above, highlighting the need for thoughtful interaction on Facebook.

CONCLUSION

Facebook has become the primary medium through which many individuals, young and old alike, stay in touch. In order to facilitate connection, Facebook encourages users to provide as much information as they feel comfortable; the company reasons that

the more information a user offers, the easier it will be to connect with others'. In the process of this disclosure, many individuals may be concerned about their privacy. Facebook offers default privacy settings (see Figure 2), but their usefulness depends upon how each user plans to interact with others on the Facebook platform.

Goffman's ideas of presentation of self play an important role in individuals' digital lives: Facebook users change privacy settings because they understand that their profile pages present a "front stage" image of themselves to others. The current study demonstrates that individuals use Facebook for both professional and personal purposes, resulting in notions of privacy that remain in flux. The current study suggests that privacy can be understood on a continuum, presenting both a historical definition of the term and Nissenbaum's (2010) contemporary application tailored to Facebook. Nissenbaum (2010) links presentation of self and privacy by the following logic: if we fail to understand privacy's changing role in shaping the information we receive, then we fail to understand the way in which what we choose to share shapes our identity [Nissenbaum 2010: 82, citing Goffman (1959) and Austin (2007)].

The current study reveals that members of the older generation reveal more about themselves than do members of the younger generation: of the twenty frequencies recorded, thirteen show larger values by percentage in the older generation, contradicting my hypothesis. Nevertheless, the current study indicates that the majority of individuals—regardless of age—do think about privacy as it applies to their digital lives. Only five of seventy-nine individuals profiled allow an individual with no connections to him or her to access photos beyond the required profile picture. Since photographs can signify the way in which a person wishes to present him or herself, restricted access to

photographs beyond the profile picture suggests an understanding of the link between presentation of self and privacy.

The current study faced many limitations in design and implementation. It may have been more effective to combine the content analysis approach with a series of interviews or a campus-wide survey in order to capture a wider breadth of respondents and more in-depth responses. The current study could have also collected more specific information, drawing comparison between information available to outsiders today and Acquisti and Gross's (2006) study. A larger sample size could also provide more generalizable results. Arranging cohorts by year of birth rather than by broad generation could have provided greater specificity, but may have also created greater confusion.

The current study leaves much for future research. How has Facebook become more networking friendly? What do the photographs we post say about ourselves? Why has Facebook become the dominant social networking platform? Why do so many Facebook users become addicting, checking the web site numerous times each day? In addition, future research might also extend the current study to incorporate how to teach the concept of privacy in the digital age and how to improve technological knowledge, especially among older citizens. Expanding research on Facebook among this demographic group may lead to findings that promote computer literacy and digital community building.

Facebook matters because it represents a mode by which millions of individuals create community. More than 500 million people from around the globe use Facebook to reconnect, to communicate, or to network—creating a virtual community tailored to each user. This simultaneously individual and universal website offers sociologists a

framework through which to understand how Goffman's notion of presentation of self operates in the twenty-first century. Facebook offers users the opportunity to engage in digital conversations—to connect with individuals regardless of geography, to share stories of struggle and strife, to inspire, to amuse, to question, and to challenge—but with this privilege comes the responsibility of managing privacy settings; without vigilance, anyone can click the "Add as Friend" button.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF ALL DATA COLLECTED ON FACEBOOK PAGES
(Source: facebook.com)

Basic information:

- Current city
- Sex
- Birthday
- Interested in
- Looking for
- Political views
- Religious views
- Bio
- Favorite quotations

Profile Picture

Relationships: Are you…

- Single?
- In a relationship?
- Engaged?
- Married?
- It's complicated?
- In an open relationship?
- Widowed?
- Seperated?
- Divorced

Family: List siblings, children, partners

Education and Work

- High school
- College
- Employer

Likes and Interests

- Activities
- Interests
- Music
- Books
- Music
- Television

Contact details

- Email address
- Mobile phone number
- Other contact telephone number
- Address/Residence

- Website

Figure 3: "The Norm" (Generation 1)

Arts and Entertainment

Music

John Butler Trio

Roommate

Movies

The Goonies

Activities and Interests

Other

I dont care about your farm, or your fish, or your park, or your mafia!!!, Caroline Petters Photography Pet Portraits, American Whitewater, Sapphire Celebrations, I bet COLORADO can get 1 million fans before any other state!!!, Echo Canyon River Expeditions, outdoor DIVAS, University of Denver, Human Rights Campaign, Longé Dominica, Hunker Down, Tabernash Tavern, Mountain Buzz, North American River Runners, Groupon and 3 more

Figure 4: "The Norm" (Generation 2)

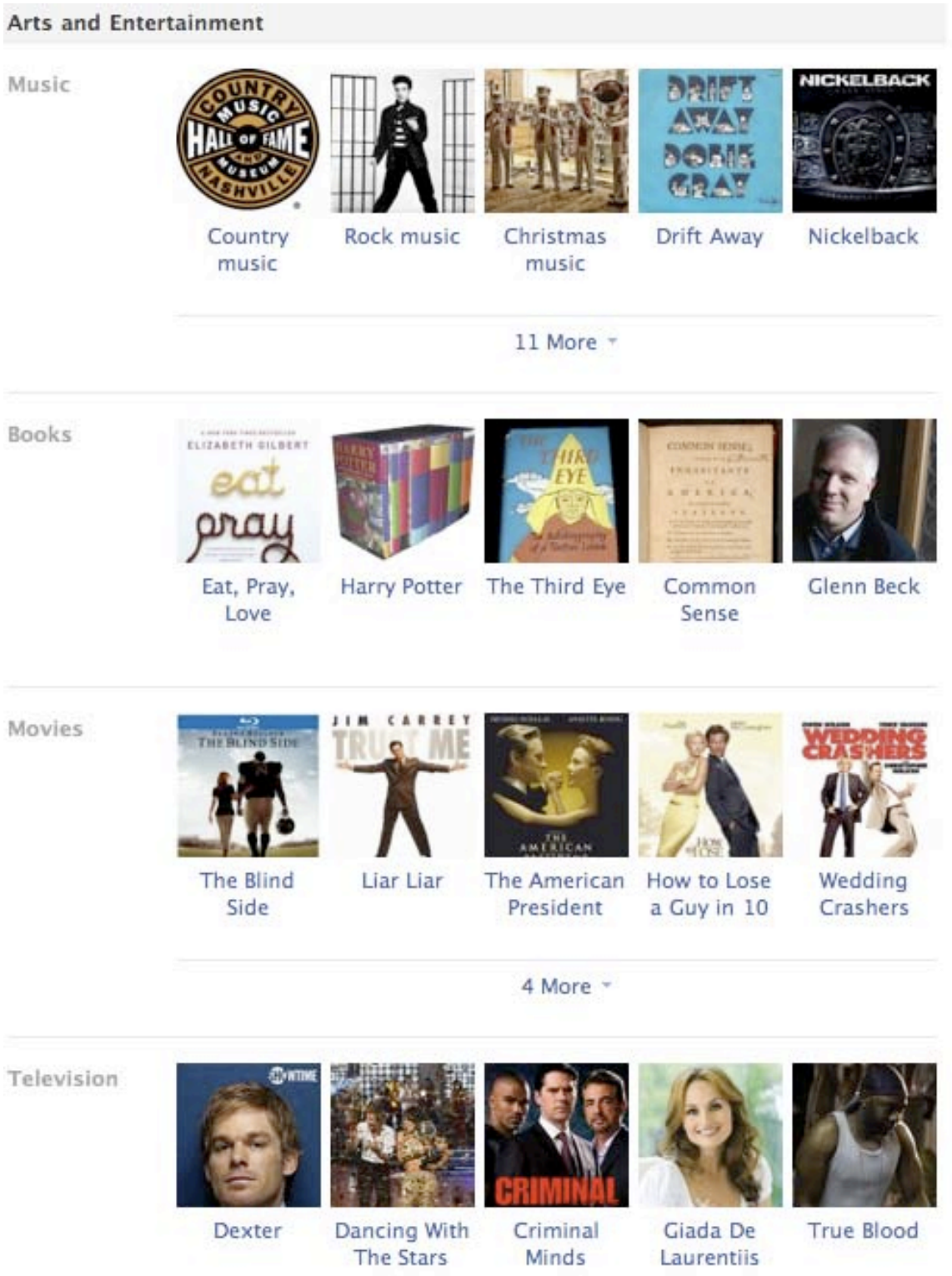


Figure 5: “Less than the Norm” (Generation 1)

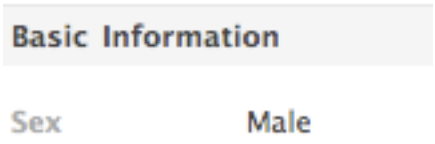
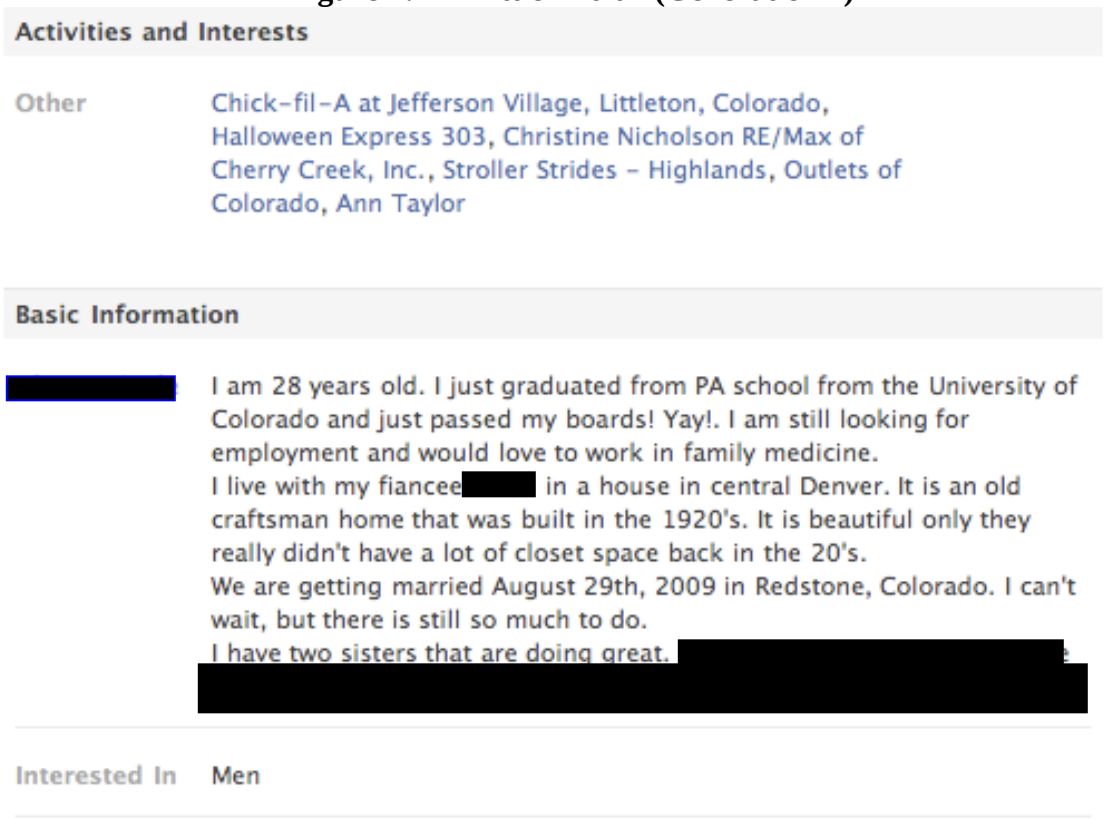


Figure 6: "Emphasis on Education" (Generation 1)

Figure 7: "A Little Extra" (Generation 2)



Activities and Interests

Other: Chick-fil-A at Jefferson Village, Littleton, Colorado, Halloween Express 303, Christine Nicholson RE/Max of Cherry Creek, Inc., Stroller Strides - Highlands, Outlets of Colorado, Ann Taylor

Basic Information

[redacted]: I am 28 years old. I just graduated from PA school from the University of Colorado and just passed my boards! Yay!. I am still looking for employment and would love to work in family medicine.
I live with my fiancee[redacted] in a house in central Denver. It is an old craftsman home that was built in the 1920's. It is beautiful only they really didn't have a lot of closet space back in the 20's.
We are getting married August 29th, 2009 in Redstone, Colorado. I can't wait, but there is still so much to do.
I have two sisters that are doing great. [redacted]

Interested In: Men