

ASSESSING PRIVACY FOR THE “ME” GENERATION:
IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS AND PRIVACY ATTITUDES AMONG
YOUNG ADULT USERS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

By

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To my parents and my sister

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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By

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As social networking sites grow in popularity, young people’s willingness to freely convey personal information about themselves on these sites seemingly increases. This tendency toward greater information disclosure and personal revelation may lead to unforeseen and negative consequences for young adults who have difficulty deciding whether certain information should be privately withheld or publicly displayed. Does this tendency necessarily mean that young adults are unconcerned about privacy on social networking sites? Do they think differently about privacy than older generations? How do young adults control their digital personas on a medium that facilitates displaying the greatest amount of information possible? This thesis investigated this trio of questions and explored how young adults regulate personal information on social networking sites within the combined context of privacy and impression management theories. Through focus groups, this thesis examined young users’ control over information and levels of concern about perceived impressions that may be created by information revealed on social networking profile pages. To highlight the attitudes and perspectives of college students, this thesis contrasted them with the attitudes and perspectives of older adults.

After eight focus group sessions with 73 participants, the researcher found that users exercised a moderate amount of control over their content, particularly content that third parties shared about them. The most common form of control among both groups was untagging or deletion. The majority of users invested minimal effort in managing their profile pages. They were also slightly concerned about the impressions others might form about them. This concern was fueled significantly by a desire to avoid secondary impressions. Age may be a factor in how social network users regulate their content and manage their privacy, but the significance of age in impression management is still unclear. Impression management, as it currently exists, might not fully explain online behaviors of adult social network users. Future researchers should conduct detailed surveys to determine the relationship between age and impression management on social networking sites.

CHAPTER 1 SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

1.1 Introduction

“Cisco just offered me a job! Now I have to weigh the utility of a fatty paycheck against the daily commute to San Jose and hating the work.” *Theconnor*, the alias of a newly-hired Cisco employee, posted this comment to his Twitter™ account in March 2009. The tweet caught the attention of Tim Levad, a Cisco employee. “Who is the hiring manager. I’m sure they would love to know that you will hate the work. We here at Cisco are versed in the web” (Popkin, 2009, para. 5). Even though *theconnor* tightened his privacy settings and removed information from his personal website, the recruitment office at Cisco already had been notified, and within days of “tweeting” about his dilemma, *theconnor* was searching for a new job (Popkin, 2009).

In July 2007, Jessica Ceponis was working at the pick-up window of a Taco Bell™ in Merritt Island, Florida. After she handed a soda to the 16-year-old driver of one vehicle, he yelled “Fire in the hole!” and hurled the drink at her before speeding away. The passenger, a 15-year-old boy, recorded the prank, and both boys posted it on YouTube™ and MySpace™ (Celizic, 2008). After Ceponis tracked their identities online and contacted authorities, the boys were required to perform community service and to film, edit and post a reenactment and apology video on YouTube™. Brevard Circuit Court Judge Morgan Reinman doled out this unique form of justice to deter future wrongdoing among minors (“Court Makes Pranksters,” 2008).

Both situations illustrate that social networking sites, such as Twitter™, YouTube™ and MySpace™, are capable of disseminating content to broad audiences. In many cases, individuals who were not part of the intended audience for certain content may nonetheless receive it. This unintended viewing of materials, in turn, can have unexpected consequences for social network

site users. A recent incident in New Jersey demonstrates that young people's usage of these sites sometimes has severe repercussions.

In March of 2009, the Passaic County, New Jersey, Sheriff's Office received a tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that led it to thirty "very explicit" MySpace™ photos of a nude 14-year-old girl from Clifton. The sheriff's office made an arrest for possession and distribution of child pornography, but was shocked to discover that the girl in the photos had posted them herself ("N.J. Girl," 2009). If convicted, the *Clifton girl* must register as a sex offender under Megan's Law, which publicizes information about sex offenders ("Megan's Law," 2007). The charges were dropped three months later and the *Clifton girl* was proscribed six months counseling and probation ("New Jersey Girl," 2009). As the first case in which child pornography charges may have resulted from a teen's posting to a social networking site ("N.J. Girl," 2009), this situation, although perhaps an extreme example, is indicative of a larger trend in which minors freely reveal personal information on social networking sites, leading to unforeseen and negative conflicts.

1.2 The Problem

These examples highlight the latest twist for privacy concerns in that many of the problems teens and young adults encounter on social networking sites actually "result from voluntary disclosures, especially by younger adults and minors" (Tufekci, 2008a, p. 20). This phenomenon has been well-reported in the media (Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Tufekci, 2008a). In fact, young adults' penchant for online sharing and self-revelation likely will continue as they age (Anderson & Rainie, 2010). On a broader scale, the current problems surrounding social networking sites continue to challenge legal conceptions of privacy (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The examples above illustrate that young adults may not understand effective impression management or privacy management online. Because social networking sites are relatively new

forms of computer mediated communication, many users do not fully understand them (Melber, 2008). This lack of understanding may stem from young users' questionable ability to decide whether certain information should be privately withheld or publicly displayed.

1.2.1 The Blurring of Lines

Arguably, the judgment to decide what information should be kept private or made public is a learned skill, one that typically accrues with age and life experience. It thus should come as no surprise that teenagers and young adults, such as college students, have difficulty making this judgment. There is an interesting parallel between their behavior online and their tendencies to indulge in outward self-exhibition in the "real world." For instance, public displays of affection are particularly common among young people, especially high school students, often in settings where older adults would consider such displays inappropriate (Muir, 2006). It is somewhat easy to dismiss this behavior as "teens being teens" or "college students being college students," but as technology continues to shape human communication, the increasingly frequent intersections between the "real world" and the "online world" create acute uncertainty and a blurry line for social norms that separate acceptable behavior on the Internet from acceptable behavior in person. This ambiguity, when coupled with a young population that has difficulty exercising judgment online and offline (Livingstone, 2008), has already damaged and affected the lives of people like *theconnor*, the *fire in the hole pranksters* and the *Clifton girl*.

There is some support for the notion of a muddled boundary that separates what is perceived to be acceptable information for disclosure on the Internet from what is seen as acceptable information for disclosure in person. This inability to delineate appropriate disclosure from inappropriate disclosure may be "a manifestation of generational differences" (Solove, 2007, p. 197), rather than a simple lack of maturity. In fact, social media experts and researchers have provided some support for this idea. Today's young people who comprise Generation Y,

also known as Millennials born after 1980 (Millennials, 2010), actually believe that the benefits of personal disclosure outweigh concerns about privacy (Anderson & Rainie, 2010). The cloudiness associated with sharing certain information may arise from “the porous nature of the Net,” which has “radically redefined the arena in which individuals are willing to disclose personal information” (Rosenblum, 2007, p. 44). As a result, young adults are left with only vague guidelines about managing their information on social networking sites and in the broader online world (Livingstone, 2008).

Few studies have measured how widespread this problem is among young adults. A question posed by Hoofnagle, King, Li & Turow (2010) approaches the idea that inappropriate usage online has some effect on Internet users. They asked adults who were more concerned about privacy now than they were five years ago to explain why they were more concerned. About 17% of all adults said they were more concerned because they had experienced a prior event that changed their attitude toward privacy. Further research revealed that more than one-fifth (22%) of young adults ages 18-24 years and about one-quarter (23%) of adults 35-44 felt the same way. Having privacy-attitude-changing experiences does not necessarily mean that all of these people had experienced negative consequences from behaving irresponsibly like *theconnor*, the *fire in the hole pranksters* and the *Clifton girl*. Because quantitative data concerning this behavior are hard to measure, summary data on the frequency of negative repercussions from young users’ social network behavior may never be known (D. Boyd, personal communication, May 14, 2010). For now, however, intermittent news reports about

these and similar incidents¹ suggest that social network users have at least some difficulty understanding when and how to regulate their behavior online.

1.2.2 An End-All, Inadequate Answer

A general, simplistic recommendation for young Internet users is to employ common sense and exert greater discretion over their digital profiles. Individuals who “limit the circulation of information” (Solove, 2007, p. 35) achieve more control online, “either in reviewing what [users themselves] post, or in periodically reviewing what is available online about themselves” (Rosenblum, 2007, p. 48). However, a review of the literature reveals that young people are not assuming control to the degree they should. To address these concerns, this study attempts to discover why.

1.3 The Purpose

This study examines how college students regulate information about themselves that they make publicly available via social networking sites. By incorporating privacy theories and impression management theory—both of which were developed separately but recently have been examined together in the narrow context of social networking sites (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Dwyer, Poole, Gubner, Hennig, Osswald, Schlieblberger & Warth, 2010; Krämer & Winter, 2008)—this study explores the relationship between privacy concerns and impression management behaviors among college-age users of social networking sites. Through focus groups, it investigates how privacy concerns and impression management behaviors affect users’ exertion of control over content and their level of concern about perceived impressions

¹ Duarte, J. (2008, November 10). Egg on His Facebook. *Houston Chronicle*. Retrieved from <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/hotstories/6105699.html>

Gatewood, D. (2010, May 9). Is Facebook Really a Good Thing For College Football? *Bleacher Report*. Retrieved from <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/389987-is-facebook-really-a-good-thing-for-college-football>

Ruppenthal, A. (2010, May 13). College Coaches Finding Ways to Monitor Athletes’ Social Networking Activity. *Missourian*.

that may be created by online information about them. It highlights the views and behaviors of college students by contrasting them with the views and behaviors of older adult social network users.

1.4 The Support

Social networking sites provide useful areas for academic research, enabling both ethnographic and survey studies (Tufekci, 2008a) not widely attempted until 2006 (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007). Because they supply “rich sources of naturalistic behavioral data” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 220) and greater user control over self-presentational behavior (Krämer & Winter, 2008), social networking sites present researchers with an ideal opportunity to study impression management.

These sites offer “additional repositories of impression-enabling information” and provide insights that spark even more questions about the formation of impressions (Walther, van der Heide, Hamel & Shulman, 2009, p. 230). This study addresses a less frequently-studied angle of impression management and audiences, namely information disclosure and privacy concerns (Tufekci, 2008a), to advance the “effort to understand the development of relationships” among young people (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007, p. 9).

1.5 The Format

Chapter 1 continues with an overview of social networking sites that examines their history, implications and the impact of the two largest sites, FacebookTM and MySpaceTM. This chapter describes site characteristics, illustrates intended and unintended uses, explains the on-going privacy debate and examines the extent to which privacy and impression-related problems affect the current environment. It concludes with a discussion about how social networking site audiences, real or imagined, can influence user behavior online.

Chapter 2 then introduces the theory of impression management and describes how privacy decisions are made on social networking sites in the context of impression management. Chapter 3 proposes the research methods for this study while Chapter 4 interprets results. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses the significance of the findings and study limitations and concludes with recommendations for future research.

1.6 Introduction of Social Networking Sites

1.6.1 Definition

A social network is “a configuration of people connected to one another through interpersonal means, such as friendship, common interests, or ideas” (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008, p. 13). Social network theory is defined by norms that determine information sharing within certain groups (Solove, 2007). Social networks are also essential to human survival (Solove, 2007). The Internet enables social networks to exist online as social networking sites.

Social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection,” and, unlike other sites, “view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). These sites develop into a virtual community, comprised of members through different networks (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007) who can interact with one another (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Social networking sites can easily become participatory cultures, or cultures that strongly support the creation and sharing of content among members who consider themselves to be socially connected (Jenkins, 2009). The popular social networking site FacebookTM, for instance, is an example of a participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009).

1.6.2 General Function

Social networking sites have two general functions relating to information and networks. First, they facilitate the sharing of personal information (Livingstone, 2008) by providing “opportunities for self-description and content uploads” (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008, p. 13). Second, they help to establish a network of connections (Acar, 2008) made visible to everyone with whom users communicate (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

1.6.3 Content

Every social networking site contains a profile page that displays a variety of personal information, such as a real name, pseudonym, birthday, hometown, religion, ethnicity and personal interests (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007). Most profile pages contain status updates, comments (originally referred to as ‘testimonials’ but now commonly referred to as ‘walls’), online links, pictures, videos and educational and work information (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

Unlike other websites, social networking sites enable users to acquire friends. A “friend” on a social networking site is anyone who has approved or given approval to a request to establish a connection (Boyd, 2006). By becoming a friend, users gain access to the pages of other friends and provide them with access to their own pages (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007).

Social networking sites provide many optional features to enhance user identity or keep members entertained. These features are known as applications. Applications “allow users to personalize their profiles and perform other tasks, such as compare movie preferences and chart travel histories” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 218). Some popular examples on Facebook™ include the Family Tree™ application, which displays how members are related to each other, and the Bookshelf™ application, which allows users to write book reviews. Popular MySpace™ applications include music players, which enable users to build playlists of songs that can be

automatically played upon opening a page, and blogs, which are digital journal entries that can be accessed by other members on a network. Both sites are capable of displaying links from other websites and video-sharing sites like YouTubeTM. Games like FarmvilleTM and Mafia WarsTM are also popular applications on these sites. These applications give members additional access to personal information and content.

From 2009 to 2010, Internet users were three times more likely to be visiting a social networking site than engaging in any other Internet activity (Nielsen Company, 2009a). Social networking sites now are the fourth most popular sector on the Internet, even surpassing e-mail (Nielsen Company, 2009a). Despite their exponential growth, social networking sites may breed as many problems as benefits for Internet users (Hoadley, Xu, Lee & Rosson, 2009). Examining their history elucidates why so much has changed within the thirteen years since the introduction of the first social networking site, SixDegrees.comTM (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

1.7 History of Social Networking Sites

Introduced in 1997, the earliest social networking sites featured personal, professional, and dating profiles that attracted primarily niche groups. Some sites were used for particular purposes; LiveJournalTM allowed users to post journal entries and FriendsterTM enabled users to meet friends of friends (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The popularity of FriendsterTM in 2002 spawned the development of newer social networking sites that also targeted niche groups. Working professionals gravitated to LinkedInTM, while photo-sharers and video-sharers frequented FlickrTM and YouTubeTM. The birth of MySpaceTM in 2003 launched social networking sites into the world of mainstream online communication (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

1.7.1 MySpaceTM

Founded in 2003, but launched a year later (“Fact Sheet,” 2009), MySpaceTM initially attracted emerging artists, music enthusiasts and fans. Established as an “entertainment portal”

and medium for self-expression for younger demographics (Nielsen Company, 2009a), MySpace™ provided a place for everyone, including corporations, celebrities, film companies, politicians and musicians (Boyd, 2006).

1.7.1.1 Content.

MySpace™ profile pages are customizable, either through application of existing themes or HTML coding. Like other social networking sites, MySpace™ pages provide identifying and biographical information, videos, links, blogs, photos and friends. Users can even create musical playlists and add images to the main welcome screen (Boyd, 2008). Because of this customizability, MySpace™ pages are considered “carefully produced personal brochures” (Rosenblum, 2007, p. 42) that are “practically synonymous with self-promotion” (Hearn, 2008, p. 211). The site’s enabling of self-promotion continually garners a strong following of teenagers (Boyd & Ellison, 2008) who “take great care and spend a lot of effort to build an appropriate identity in MySpace™” (Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2008, p. 649).

1.7.1.2 Teens and privacy.

When teens began joining MySpace™ in 2004, the site updated its policy to include minors age 13 and above, solidifying its position as the “civil society of teenage culture” (Boyd, 2007, p. 3). The site’s popularity caught the attention of News Corp.’s Rupert Murdoch, who in July 2005 purchased it for \$580 million (“News Corp.,” 2005). Despite its prominence in the online world, MySpace™ is criticized continually for not enacting tighter privacy settings.

By default, the profile pages of users 18 and up are accessible to everyone (Boyd, 2008). The age restrictions are not enforceable, making it possible for any user to have complete freedom over the presentation of personal profile pages and chosen networks (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). This freedom created acute privacy concerns among adults who feared the potential for sexual predators to communicate with MySpace™’s large following of young

people (Tufekci, 2008a). Those concerns were raised in *Doe v. MySpace*, a 2008 case in which a 19-year-old man arranged a meeting with and sexually assaulted a 14-year-old Texas girl who had pretended to be 18 years old on her MySpace™ profile (*Doe v. MySpace*, 2008). As a general response to its many privacy concerns, MySpace™ released a new version in December 2009 that added privacy settings for different profile areas (“Frequently Asked Questions,” 2009).

Because of its reputation for failing to sufficiently protect users’ privacy, MySpace™ is a topic of interest to researchers studying information disclosure. In 2006, Hinduja and Patchin (2008) analyzed 2,423 publicly viewable MySpace™ profiles of teens who revealed personal information and displayed content of an adult nature, like posing in undergarments or swimsuits, drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana or cursing. In 2007, Patchin and Hinduja (2010) conducted a follow-up study of the same profiles to detect any changes in information disclosure and content. They discovered that over the course of one year, more teens were “increasingly exercising discretion in posting personal information on MySpace™,” and were utilizing privacy settings to limit access (p. 197). The trend toward tighter user control may be due to either greater user familiarity with site features or an overall maturity of the population; two-thirds of teens had turned 18 years old at the time of the second study. There was additional speculation that cultural changes had affected disclosure on MySpace™. These shifts could range from salience of privacy issues to movement to other social networking sites. Although the study does not explain why profiles changed (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), it suggests that teens still widely use MySpace™, but they use it differently than they had one year ago.

1.7.2 Facebook™

Although MySpace™ attracts 100 million active members worldwide (Nielsen Company, 2009b; “Fact Sheet,” 2009), Facebook™ supersedes MySpace™ as the number one social networking site in the United States (Nielsen Company, 2009b).

Founded by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, Facebook™ was established exclusively for college students (“Founder Bios,” 2010), connecting members to each other offline and online (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006). This exclusivity immediately made Facebook™ unique because it was organized around real-world physical communities (Lenhart & Madden, 2007) within an ostensibly bounded domain (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). The long-term effect on the earliest Facebook™ users was the perception that the site was an intimate and private community (Boyd & Ellison, 2008); this perception contributed largely to its growth and niche appeal (Urista, Dong & Day, 2008). Eventually, Facebook™ expanded its networks to include high schools, employers, geographic regions, corporations and, by 2006, everyone (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

1.7.2.1 Content.

Facebook™ provides users with many types of content-sharing features that allow for great amounts of information disclosure. In September 2006, Facebook™ launched NewsFeed—an updated, time-stamped log on users’ homepages that published changes, comments or updates from friends (Zuckerberg, 2006). NewsFeed coincided with the introduction of MiniFeed, a NewsFeed version of changes and updates that come from a particular user. NewsFeeds appear on users’ home pages, publishing activity from their entire social network; MiniFeeds appear on a profile page owner’s wall, publishing activity that comes from that single user. These features made information more accessible and more visible to members on a given network (Boyd, 2008). For example, if Marc changed his relationship status from “single” to “in a relationship,”

users would receive an update on their NewsFeed that would read, “Marc is now in a relationship.” Similarly, if Marc commented on Klara’s picture, users who visit Marc’s page could click on a link that takes them directly to Klara’s picture where they could read Marc’s comment.

These added features did not publish new information. Before NewsFeed and MiniFeed, friends had been able to view profile changes by visiting other friends’ pages. But when the new features were implemented, friends automatically received notifications of any changes that users made themselves (Hoadley et al., 2009). In essence, FacebookTM distributed information that users already had revealed (Melber, 2008). This disclosure is voluntary, and NewsFeed and MiniFeed provided alerts to that information (Solove, 2007). The feed “made what was previously obscure difficult to miss and even harder to forget” (Boyd, 2008, p. 15).

NewsFeed and MiniFeed received immense criticism from FacebookTM users, who vehemently complained that it initially violated their privacy. NewsFeed “plucked personal details that previously existed in a social context, limited by visitors' interest in a person and shattered any sense of concentric circles of control by broadcasting them across wider networks” (Melber, 2008). Because users perceived they had less control, they became more uncomfortable sharing information (Hoadley et al., 2009) and were alerted to the extensiveness of their exposure online. Their heightened awareness, however, may not necessarily have translated into heightened concerns for privacy risk: “Although they may understand that what they put online is widely exposed, they might not really grasp the consequences” (Solove, 2007, p. 198). In response, FacebookTM implemented settings that allowed users to choose what can and cannot be published.

In September 2007, FacebookTM offered its users the option to be searched via Google, a public search engine (“Facebook opens,” 2007). This feature enabled non-FacebookTM members to view personal profiles. Like NewsFeed, this generated significant privacy concerns, which grew when FacebookTM launched Beacon in November 2007. Beacon is a social advertising program that used profile pictures and purchasing activity to promote products and services. This feature allowed advertisers to target specific users (“Leading Websites,” 2007). For example, if Marc purchased an item from Fandango.comTM, Overstock.comTM, NYTimes.comTM or any of the other 44 partnered companies, his image appeared on Klara’s FacebookTM as a personal ad endorsing that company. Beacon was originally designed as an “opt out” feature, which meant that users’ settings were automatically altered to include Beacon. If Marc did not want his image to be used through Beacon, he would need to manually change his default settings to disable Beacon. Predictably, Beacon raised significant privacy concerns over its violation of laws protecting information on the Internet. It became an “opt in” feature, which meant that users would have to manually select Beacon to activate it (Catone, 2007).

1.7.2.2 Structural changes.

Over time, FacebookTM altered its infrastructure toward greater disclosure. In March 2009, users could make any profile section viewable to everyone, signaling a departure from its previous accessibility that was limited to network members and friends (Slee, 2009). The site became global when it abolished its regional networks in July 2009 (Kelly, 2009) and offered less control to users when it rescinded the option to restrict any publications on NewsFeed in December 2009 (Sanghvi, 2009).

FacebookTM’s newest data collection service is changing how FacebookTM and other companies respond to members’ online behavior. As of May 2010, FacebookTM users can click a ‘like’ button on other web pages, such as a *New York Times* article, a song on Pandora RadioTM,

or a photo on Flickr™ (Bronstein, 2010). Clicking “like” activates Open Graph, a new service that sends this information back to Facebook™. The end result is two-fold; Facebook™ users who are still logged in are welcomed by personalized *New York Times*, Pandora Radio™ or Flickr™ welcome pages, and notifications of what was liked appear on users’ MiniFeed. Considered “an ambitious attempt to rewrite the web as a socially linked network,” (van Buskirk, 2010), Open Graph consolidates online behavior on non-Facebook™ sites. As with Beacon, critics are calling Facebook™ to make this an “opt in” feature to give users more control; four United States senators are at the forefront of this movement (Swartz, 2010).

1.7.2.3 Greater information disclosure: pull v. push.

Through these expanding features, Facebook™ continually contributes to greater information disclosure. Before the introduction of NewsFeed and MiniFeed, information was built upon a ‘pull’ model, “visible only when users intentionally ‘pulled’ and read a profile.” After the introduction, Facebook™ published information in a ‘push’ model to “make new information easier than ever to find” (Hoadley et al., 2009, p. 2). Although more information is available on Facebook™ than on MySpace™, users share more truthful information on Facebook™ than on other social networking site (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009; Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006; Tufekci, 2008b). Social norms on Facebook™ dictate more truthful disclosure because information is verifiable (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006) and because Facebook™ acts as an “extended phonebook or directory” (Tufekci, 2008a, p. 33).

Facebook™ challenges current privacy attitudes. At the Consumer Electronics Show in January 2010, Facebook™ founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg stated that the site’s direction toward greater information disclosure reflects what users want: “We view it as our role in the system to constantly be innovating and be updating what our system is to reflect what the current social norms are” (Paul, 2010). The problem with this statement is that Facebook™ does more

than react to current social norms; it plays a pivotal role in determining those social norms. By reducing the amount of user control and increasing the number and variety of information-sharing mechanisms (Bankston, 2009), Facebook™ encourages—some would even say it forces—users to share more information and contributes to an evolving, or arguably, a devolving idea of privacy.

These characteristics of information disclosure should make Facebook™ a prominent cause for concern among the majority of users. However, this is not the case. One explanation may be that Facebook™ and other social networking sites “are not designed in ways to emphasize the potential harms to privacy and other consequences” (Solove, 2007, p. 200). Potential harms to privacy have not deterred members from using Facebook™. Despite the site’s many criticisms, Facebook™ attracts over 500 million active members worldwide (“Company Timeline,” 2010) and maintains the number one spot as the largest photo-sharing site (Putnam, 2009), the most popular social networking site for college students (Tufekci, 2008b) and the most popular social networking site in the United States (Nielsen Company, 2009b).

1.8 Commonalities of Social Networking Sites

1.8.1 Information Revelation

One researcher argued that these sites were “the largest examples of information systems that have ever existed” (Dwyer et al., 2010, p. 1). Indeed, they reveal a significant amount of information in three ways:

- Identifiability
- Content
- Visibility

First, social network developers encourage members to use their full name; this approach stems from the idea that offline acquaintances should be able to search for and find one another easily before they request to be online friends. Second, social networking sites prominently display

users' hobbies, interests and other content, such as photos, videos, blogs and links. Without this user-generated content, members would have nothing to share or display. Third, social networking sites have varying degrees of visibility. Visibility on a social networking site is characterized by the extent to which other people can see profile pages, content and information. Visibility varies by site. For example, Marc can adjust his privacy settings on Facebook™ to allow only his immediate family to view his photo albums; Marc cannot do this on MySpace™ because MySpace™ was designed to make content more visible to a greater number of friends. Users have fewer options to control visibility on MySpace™ compared to Facebook™. This is especially true on MySpace™'s version 1.0, which displays the more commonly-known layout that was the center of MySpace™'s popularity as early as 2003. The site's 2.0 version is optional and offers greater control over photo-sharing and privacy, but still falls short of matching the controls that Facebook™ offers. Visibility is also subject to individual preference. Marc may want his friends to know the identity of his girlfriend by revealing his relationship status on his page, but Klara might be uncomfortable with sharing the identity of her boyfriend; social networking tools allow Klara to limit this information to only her page by changing the visibility of this category through her privacy settings.

These three characteristics may seem neutral, but they leave open the possibility for greater data-gathering. Users who disclose their real names could be re-identified by birthdates, voter lists and hospital records. Hackers who attempt to access an individual's banking information may be successful at answering security questions. An individual's profile page can display his or her birthday, favorite hobbies, year of graduation or mother's maiden name; these facts are used to answer common security questions. If a hacker comes across these facts on a social networking site, it is possible that they may use this information to commit fraud, open

accounts and steal funds (Ibrahim, 2008). Lastly, users are finding it more difficult to control the visibility of their profile pages because these sites thrive on their capability they give users to access others, display themselves and “be seen” (Gross & Acquisti, 2005).

1.8.2 Networked Publics

Social networking sites are a form of networked publics. Networked publics are “the spaces and audiences that are bound together through technological networks” in which the “network mediates the interactions between members of the public” (Boyd, 2007, p. 8).

Networked publics have four attributes:

- Persistence
- Searchability
- Replicability
- Invisible Audiences

On networked publics, information persists because it is digitally stored. Statements and comments on a social networking site, unless deleted by the user, can be retrieved. Because this information persists, content can be sifted and searched, making it more likely that specific information can be discovered through search engines (Rosenblum, 2007). For example, if Klara wanted to identify Marc on NetflixTM, she could view his profile and movie list as long as she could provide his gender, zip code and birthday—information that can be found through a profile page (Klein, 2010).

Networked publics also enable replication. For example, perhaps Marc was identified in an embarrassing photo on FacebookTM. If Klara had bad intentions, she could copy this photo and paste it on her FacebookTM page. Even if Marc has barred his coworkers from seeing his tagged photos, they are now able to see this photo because Klara misused Marc’s content (Greenwood, 2009). An incident in San Bernardino, California, in April 2010 highlights the implications associated with replication. When a group of eight teenage girls had sent nude and

semi-nude photos to friends via cell phone voluntarily in a practice commonly known as sexting, four teenage boys who had received the photos reposted them to their profile pages (“Four Teens,” 2010).

The breadth of potential audiences on the Internet makes it impossible to predict who may view a user’s profile. Last year, an Indiana high school banned two sophomore girls from extra-curricular activities after a photo depicting them dressed in lingerie and pretending to lick a penis-shaped lollipop surfaced from their MySpace™ pages. The two girls intended to only share the photos with friends as a joke, but when an unknown individual had accessed these photos, he or she forwarded the material to school administrators (“Ind. Teens,” 2009).

Invisible and unknown audiences are viewing content that users had not intended for them to see. Openbook, a website launched in May 2010 by independent web developers, is an example of unintended audiences. Openbook aggregates Facebook™ status updates and displays them through search queries, but only status updates from public profile pages are shown; content from users who activated privacy settings to make status updates available to selected friends do not appear on Openbook. However, because many users are still unfamiliar with Facebook™’s privacy settings, a large amount of users’ status updates is accessible on Openbook without users even being aware of it (“New Site,” 2010). For example, users who type in “hate my boss” in the search box receive a chronological list of all Facebook™ users with public pages who have used the phrase “hate my boss.” The list displays a speaker’s profile picture, a working link to their profile page and the actual statement that included the phrase “hate my boss.” Openbook is not limited to Facebook™ account-holders; in other words, any individual who visits the site and types a word or phrase can read the results. To summarize, Openbook enables sharing, “whether you want to or not” (Openbook, 2010). The reality that

invisible audiences can access content on social networking sites is the primary focus of this study.

Several recent studies have arrived at varying conclusions when attempting to assess how young adults and college students manage their privacy and impressions online (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Dwyer et al., 2010; Fogel & Nehmad, 2008; Foulger et al., 2009; Hoadley et al., 2009; Hoofnagle et al., 2010; Lenhart, 2009; Livingstone, 2008; Madden & Smith, 2010; Morris & Millen, 2007; Patchin and Hinduja, 2010; Tufekci, 2008a). These varying conclusions reveal the intricacy of this area of study and the evolution of privacy and impression management on social networking sites and, to a broader extent, on the Internet in general.

1.9 The Uses of Social Networking Sites

1.9.1 Intended Uses

Researchers have identified several intended uses of social networking sites. Main uses include communicating (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007), keeping in touch with friends (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008; Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Hoadley et al., 2009; Rosenblum, 2007) and engaging in chatty, short conversation as a supplementary form of communication (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Other intended uses include providing fun and entertainment, viewing and posting photos, avoiding boredom (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008; Shi, Lee, Cheung & Chen, 2010), updating activities and presenting an idealized persona (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007). These uses are shaped in part by the presence of particular audiences. Social network users expect their peer groups to witness their activities on these sites. However, many profiles can be accessed easily by outsiders. This can create a situation in which users perceive themselves to be communicating to an imagined audience made up of peer group members while the real audience is made up of employers, recruiters and family members. To put it nicely, “privacy expectations may not be matched by privacy reality” (Boyd, 2007, p. 4).

The lack of control users have over the expansion of their networks further reduces the users' ability to predict which audiences will use the individual's content or whether that content will be used in ways that are approved by the user. In the previous example, Klara's unacceptable behavior toward Marc would be an example of audiences not always acting in predictable ways. Tufekci (2008a) epitomized this idea through the following example:

A person may act in a way that is appropriate at a friend's birthday party, but the photograph taken by someone with a cell phone camera and uploaded to Myspace™ is not appropriate for a job interview, nor is it necessarily representative of that person. Yet that picture and that job interview may now intersect (p. 22).

Intended uses are important in the study of "technologically mediated sociality," which includes the social representations and interactions of activities that straddle the border between public and private communication (Tufekci, 2008a). The classification of social networking sites as a "technologically mediated sociality" further stresses the necessity for controlling account visibility and boundary settings and practicing audience management. Although the public tends to scrutinize social networking sites for privacy concerns, researchers instead seek answers to questions, such as, "What do we want to show to whom? Who can see us? Who's looking at us?" The element of an invisible or undefined audience contributes to social networking sites' many unintended uses.

1.9.2 Unintended Uses

The unintended uses of social networking sites articulate the potential for certain audiences to monitor individuals through surveillance on profile pages (Hearn, 2008). Some college admission committees practice this type of surveillance (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2009). In a study of 50 colleges whose admissions offices screened social network profiles, more than one-third (38%) discovered information about at least one applicant that led them to decide not to admit him or her (Hechinger, 2008). Employers

are following suit. Almost half of employers surveyed in 2009 (45%) reported that they had used FacebookTM and TwitterTM to screen candidates—a 23% increase from 2008 (Grasz, 2009).

Similar to the use of social networking sites by college admissions offices, one-third of employers reported that they had found content on social networking sites that led them to decide not to hire an individual they were considering (Grasz, 2009).

Other institutions utilize content on social networking sites to provide grounds for discipline or legal action. Recently, high schools have begun extending their reach into the online world beyond “the schoolhouse gate,” disciplining students for behavior that occurs in non-school-related contexts (*Tinker v. Des Moines*, 1969, p. 504). Employers are following suit. A 2009 Marketwire study revealed that 8% of companies in the United States had fired employees for inappropriate behavior on FacebookTM (Marketwire, 2009) and LinkedInTM, a career-oriented social networking site specifically for working professionals (“About us,” 2008).

Some law enforcement bodies have used FacebookTM and MySpaceTM photos to charge individuals in connection with illegal activity like hazing (Barnes, 2006) and underage drinking (Findlay, 2008; Stewart, 2009). For civil cases since 2006, Texas has allowed evidence obtained from social networking sites to be used as evidence in court. Texas Associate Judge Kathryn Lanan has said this change of law helps her; she befriends juveniles in her jurisdiction on social networking sites in order to monitor their postings (Rozen, 2009). An incident in July 2008 illustrated the repercussions that may result from law enforcement agencies accessing profile pages. In July 2008, Rhode Island prosecutor Jay Sullivan used a picture he found on FacebookTM in support of harsher sentencing for a defendant in a drunk-driving case. The defendant, Joshua Lipton, had been photographed at a Halloween party wearing an orange jumpsuit with the word “jailbird” only two weeks after he injured a woman while driving drunk.

Although Lipton had not posted the photo himself, he was “tagged” in it, meaning that the individual who had posted the photo named Lipton as the photo’s subject. Sullivan used the photo to support his argument that Lipton was an “unrepentant partier who lived it up while his victim recovered in the hospital” (para. 3). After viewing the pictures, the judge sentenced Lipton to two years in prison. Although this practice is not widespread, this case indicates that prosecutors have used social networking sites when they have found incriminating pictures online (Tucker, 2008).

Some institutions consider these surveillance methods acceptable. Companies justify these methods by arguing that they have a right to know about a job candidate’s character before they hire, train and invest their time and money (Rosenblum, 2007). While these unintended uses do exist, not every college admissions committee or lawyer is actively monitoring the social networking environment. Colleges such as Princeton University, University of Virginia and Ohio State University do not screen applicants this way because it takes too much time. To avoid a double standard, some lawyers recommend that colleges avoid this practice unless they have a legitimate reason to suspect they will find proof of illegal activity on a person’s profile page (van der Werf, 2007) or will use the social networking site to verify information on resumé’s. Some companies are taking an active role to address the ethical arguments concerning the presence of social media in the workplace. The auditing firm PricewaterhouseCoopers instituted an official “Social Media Policy” in an effort to define social media boundaries and educate workers about the tenuous line that separates their personal and professional lives online (Singh, 2010). Some institutions continue to peruse social networking profiles, however, and businesses, schools and other institutions are gravitating in this direction (Greenwood, 2009).

The overarching idea in these examples reiterates the potential to track individuals through social networking sites. Several recent cases illustrate the potential for stalking on social networking sites. Convicted several times of stalking young men and women, 28-year-old Robert Slye from New Hampshire had set up fake Facebook™ profiles in order to solicit photos from his stalking victims (Kimble, 2009). In May 2010, police arrested a 14 year old Virginia girl for stalking another girl for two years on Facebook™. The girls had maintained an online relationship, but after meeting in person several times, the stalker girl sent provocative messages and wall posts of a suggestive nature (Chavez, 2010). Two months earlier, in March 2010, Paul Bristol, an IT technician for the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Administration, saw a photo of his ex-girlfriend with another man on Facebook™. Plagued with jealousy, he flew from Trinidad to London and stabbed accountant Camille Mathurasingh twenty times, whom Judge Pontius said had done nothing to provoke Bristol. The jury convicted Bristol of murder in one hour (“Jealous Lover,” 2010).

The potential for stalking is a real concern, given the magnitude and sensitivity of information on these sites (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). The structure of online social networks as a “digital dossier for its participants” (Gross & Acquisti, 2005, p. 9) makes it relatively easy for unintended audiences to search through and discover archived information anonymously (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007; Rosenblum, 2007). The unintended uses discussed here illuminate the large-scale and on-going privacy debate surrounding social networking sites.

1.10 The Privacy Debate on Social Networking Sites

1.10.1 Privacy

1.10.1.1 Definition.

Privacy is a “sense of control over information, the context where sharing takes place, and the audience who can gain access” (Boyd, 2008, p. 18). It is a means of exerting control over how

our information is used, revealed and spread (Solove, 2007). Although there is no universally agreed definition, the concept of privacy can be broken down into a variety of privacy concerns, which are multidimensional, depend on context and vary with life experience (Dinev, Xu & Smith, 2009). These privacy concerns are made up of degrees and dimensions, not absolutes (Solove, 2007). An individual's culture determines the rules of privacy (Moloney & Bannister, 2009), but an individual's values toward information sensitivity, information disclosure and expectations of organizational privacy practices determine individual privacy attitudes (Dinev, Xu & Smith, 2009). These determining factors produce a concept of privacy, which, on its own, is a set of norms that influence how individuals interact and share information with each other (Solove, 2007).

Researchers have inspected privacy concerns on social networking sites in the context of trust (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007), risk-taking (Fogel & Nehmad, 2009), student-teacher relationships (Foulger et al., 2009), attitudes among adults (Lenhart, 2009) and legal boundaries (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The following section examines three other aspects of privacy on these sites.

1.10.1.2 Disclosure of information.

As previously mentioned, social networking sites encourage the disclosure of large amounts of information (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). This information may contain semi-public information (e.g. previous schools and employers), private information (e.g. drinking, drug usage, sexual orientation) or open-ended information (e.g. varied content found on blogs) (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Individuals weigh these types of disclosures differently (Tufekci, 2008a). For example, Klara may be more inclined to reveal her favorite books and educational background than her phone number or her sexual orientation. Information disclosure is shaped in part by an individual's concern for unwanted gaze.

1.10.1.3 Unwanted gaze.

Unwanted gaze is defined as concern over the possibility that people, who are not meant to view a profile page, actually view it (Tufekci, 2008a). Instances of unwanted gaze occur when an outside peer group, usually unknown to an individual, accesses that individual's profile page and content (Ibrahim, 2008). Levels of concern for unwanted gaze differ among social networking sites. For example, students are less likely to use their real names on MySpace™ than on Facebook™ because they perceive Facebook™ as having tighter restrictions and less unwanted gaze than MySpace™ (Tufekci, 2008a).

1.10.1.4 Impressions.

Influenced by the previous two aspects of privacy, perceived impressions matter to individuals when they are behaving and interacting in front of an audience. Users assign varying levels of concern based on who they think their audience is. Commenting on the discrepancy of audience concern among college students, Tufekci (2008a) noted the “interesting... contrast [of] the effect of real concern over unspecified undesirable audiences with the lack of concern about government, corporate, or employer surveillance” (p. 33). He suggested that the students' concerns for unwanted audiences tend to be limited to those direct authority figures (i.e. parents, coaches, professors) who play a role in their present lives, rather than those who may have an impact on their future lives (i.e. employers, admissions committees). The vague and fluctuating nature of audiences makes it very difficult for social network users to manage their impressions appropriately.

1.10.2 Three Views Regarding Unintended Audiences

A review of the literature suggests that individuals adopt one of three different views or levels of concern regarding unintended audiences. Individuals exhibit little or no concern, some concern or high concern.

1.10.2.1 Little or no concern.

Some users have no or only have a modicum of concern for the possibility of unintended audiences finding and using their profile pages. For these individuals, the audience that caused the most concern was a potential romantic partner, rather than a future employer, the government or school institutions (Tufekci, 2008a).

1.10.2.2 Some concern.

Members of the second group of users are somewhat concerned about unintended audiences. These concerns vary according to age groups (Tufekci, 2008a) and the features of different sites (Hoadley et al., 2009). The introduction of NewsFeed and MiniFeed on FacebookTM in 2006 illustrated that users became very uncomfortable sharing information. Users' overall concern decreased slowly after the FacebookTM team tweaked the new features and added privacy control settings (Boyd, 2008; Zuckerberg, 2006). Users can mitigate these concerns by activating privacy-regulation mechanisms, such as using nicknames and tightening visibility preferences (Lenhart, 2009; Tufekci, 2008a). Although users are somewhat aware of the privacy implications that exist on social networking sites, the majority do not utilize privacy settings (Gross & Acquisti, 2005).

1.10.2.3 High concern.

This viewpoint represents users who are extremely concerned about unintended audiences. The less control a user perceives he has over his information, the higher his or her concern for privacy (Dinev et al., 2009). High general privacy concerns are the number one reason some individuals refuse to join social networking sites (Tufekci, 2008a). These users are cognizant that the wide scope of audiences on these sites negates any sense of privacy (Rosenblum, 2007) and that a reduction in privacy is the price users pay to use those sites (Moloney & Bannister, 2009).

Users who have some or high levels of privacy concern approach social networking sites by limiting access to unintended audiences. This is achieved by restricting the visibility of profiles to friends (Tufekci, 2008a). For example, Foulger et al. (2009) found that participants viewed these sites as a “personal diary...intended for a privileged readership” (p. 14). Users still disclosed large amounts of information, but they found it less likely that the information would be accessed by unintended audiences if they simply limit who sees it. “Users seem to be much more concerned about what personal information is likely to be accessed than what personal information it is possible to access” (Hoadley et al., 2009, p. 8). Teens and college students widely practice this approach. Both groups view privacy restrictions as an opportunity to assert at least some control over their content and information while being able to freely express themselves. Unfortunately, the boundaries on social networking sites are not absolute (Boyd, 2007), and so privacy settings on these sites cannot wholly guarantee limited access for unintended audiences.

In surveying the various implications regarding these sites, this author concludes that privacy settings are not adequate remedies for the protection and management of profiles and impressions against unintended audiences. Unintended audiences can circumvent privacy settings, transforming data perceived to be private into public data (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Even if an audience is meant to view something, it may not always use friends’ information wisely or expectedly (Livingstone, 2008). Despite these realities, users continued to believe in a right to privacy over their information, claiming that because unintended audiences were not meant to view content, they should not view it (Foulger et al., 2009). The following analogy captures this thinking. A person undresses in front of his or her hotel window without intending other hotel guests to see this display. Several hotel guests see this display. Because this person

did not intend for them to see it, he or she believes that the guests should look away, despite the fact that the undressing was performed in a prominent place for display. This mentality captures the paradox of privacy on social networking sites.

1.10.3 Paradox of Privacy

1.10.3.1 Site structure.

The structure of social networking sites requires continuous negotiation between information disclosure and relationship building. These sites encourage the disclosure of large amounts of information (Gross & Acquisti, 2005) over time (Hoofnagle et al., 2010). FacebookTM alone has had a profound effect on the timeliness of disclosing information (Boyd, 2008; Hoadley et al., 2009). The structure of these sites allows users to ‘get to know someone better’ by being able to access their information and content. This benefit even extends to users who have not had any or have had very little face-to-face communication. Incoming freshmen at the University of Florida and other Florida schools have used FacebookTM to find potential roommates, learn about randomly selected dorm roommates, build relationships and seek advice on professors, classes and majors (Coleman, 2010). The ability to prepare and find information about others is a defining feature of social networking sites.

Content developers “work hard to create tools that support the ability to express oneself through a profile,” resulting in more “active engagement” among members (Dwyer et al., 2010, p. 8). The customizability of MySpaceTM and plethora of applications for self-branding on FacebookTM encapsulate this idea (Hearn, 2008). According to Mary Madden, senior research specialist at the Pew Research Center's Internet and & American Life Project, sharing information helps users build relationships. "By posting a photo or an update about what you did at a bar last night, you are sharing with friends to initiate an exchange and continue a friendship" (Klein, 2010). As a result, a new form of intimacy becomes widespread—“the sharing of

personal information with large and potentially unknown numbers of friends and strangers altogether” (Gross & Acquisti, 2005, p. 3). Overall, these sites encourage greater disclosure and thereby breed greater intimacy among members.

1.10.3.2 User control.

At the same time, the openness of information on these sites is in direct conflict with privacy concerns. An individual’s desired level of privacy is characterized by control (Boyd, 2008). On a social networking site, however, a user’s control is limited. Users cannot assume that other members will use content in predictable ways (Tufekci, 2008a). Most importantly, users also cannot control their audiences because the nature of the audiences on social networking sites is obscured (Boyd, 2007; Tufekci, 2008a). The amorphous audiences on these sites make it difficult for users to begin to know how they should regulate themselves online. In regard to privacy management, “if consumers are concerned about privacy, what makes them willingly disclose information in social networking sites?” (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007, p. 2). Conceptually, this conflict is defined as the paradox of privacy on social networking sites.

1.10.3.3 Implications.

This paradox provides some underlying evidence that explains why young people encounter so many privacy- and impression-related problems on social networking sites. Young users disclose content and behave in ways that suggest that they view these sites as intimate spheres of communication with limited and known set of peers (Boyd & Ellison, 2008) or that the information posted to the site is irrelevant to other contexts in the offline world (Morris & Millen, 2007). For instance, social networking sites “have almost become indispensable for teenagers, who often think their lives are private as long as their parents are not reading their journals” (Barnes, 2006, para. 17). Behavior reflecting these views continues, although these sites can arguably be considered public information (Boyd, 2007). In April 2010, a Facebook™

employee tweeted that FacebookTM founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg does not believe in privacy, further perpetuating the debate that poses users' expectations of privacy against users' actual amount of privacy on these sites (van Buskirk, 2010).

Some users possess an expectation of privacy on social networking sites that is arguably contradictory to the actual amount of privacy that these sites afford. On one hand, the developers of these sites have designed them in ways that display the greatest amount of information possible. Users can choose to control the flow of their information by adjusting privacy settings or by regulating their behavior (i.e. deleting unsavory pictures, not disclosing phone numbers, etc.). Many times, users may not know how to effectively self-regulate, how to control their information, or how to distinguish between information that should be made public and that which should be kept private. These dichotomous ingredients, which are information disclosure-enabling site structure and privacy-ambiguous member usage, create a paradox that perpetuates uncertainty and blurs the line that separates acceptable offline and online behavior. As a result, "the presumption of relative anonymity [on these sites] has endured, even though it is increasingly unfounded" (Rosenblum, 2007, p. 41). This paradox, however, does not imply that all social network users are behaving naively on social networking sites. The paradox of privacy simply points out that the structure and usage of these sites contribute to a certain degree of conflict between information sharing, relationship building and user control over privacy and self-presentations.

A recent study by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project attempted to measure this degree of conflict, stating that "young-adult Americans have an aspiration for increased privacy even while they participate in an online reality that is optimized to increase their revelation of personal data," (Hoofnagle et al., 2010, p. 20). The study examined privacy

attitudes of 532 Internet users of various age groups and asked their most important reason for being more concerned about privacy now than they were five years ago. Respondents chose from three options. The first option—greater knowledge about privacy risks—was most often (42%) selected by young adults 18-24. The second option—severe consequences if privacy violations were to occur—was selected by a third (32%) of young adults. The third option—occurrence of a past experience that changed privacy attitudes—was selected by only 22% of this group. The overall findings suggest that this group is more concerned with potential privacy violations and previous privacy experiences than actual knowledge of online privacy risks.

This author argues that the first and second options relate to awareness and knowledge of privacy implications online, while the third option relates to life experience and the previous occurrence of problems. The third option is particularly important to this study because it is relevant to young adults' direct experiences with posting questionable content on a social networking site. Some research suggests that young adults and college students encounter more privacy- and impression-related problems than any other age group (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Tufekci, 2008a), yet this study reveals that almost as many adults 35-44 (23%) as young adults (22%) had encountered privacy attitude-changing experiences. There is some evidence to suggest that privacy- and impression-related problems are not limited to the younger population.

This study showed that young adults do not have a “cavalier lack of concern regarding privacy,” but they “believe incorrectly that the law protects their privacy online and offline more than it actually does,” which may explain why they “engage with the digital world in a seemingly unconcerned manner” (Hoofnagle et al., 2010, p. 4). Although this may be true, Madden and Smith (2010) reported that young adults, specifically adults 18- to 29-years old, are the most active reputation managers. Compared to older adult users on social networking sites,

this group assumed a more active role in limiting the amount of available personal information, tightening privacy settings, deleting unwanted posts and “untagging” themselves from photos. The findings of this study (Madden & Smith, 2010) and the earlier study (Hoofnagle et al., 2010) may provide some evidence to suggest that young people are assuming greater control in regulating their behavior online. Does this increased control extend to their behavior on social networking sites? Does this control vary among particular types of users? Although these questions remain unanswered, social networking sites continue to affect privacy attitudes toward lower or higher expectations of privacy.

1.10.3.4 Dimensions of privacy.

The diversity of social networking studies highlights the multi-dimensional nature of studying privacy. Privacy attitudes can be examined through site structure; site structure enables information disclosure, unwanted gaze and impressions, all of which can vary in degree by social networking site. Privacy attitudes also vary greatly among people who have different levels of privacy awareness, life experience and the tendency to engage in public self-exhibition. This literature review has examined these facets; this study now focuses on one specific aspect, the role of the audience.

1.10.3.5 The audience.

The role of the audience as an impression-forming party is an intriguing aspect of study. Among social network users, audiences form impressions of users based on their profile pages, but in some cases, users misunderstand the context of online interaction (Boyd, 2007). This position makes it possible that individuals misinterpret impressions and cues on these sites (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2009) and form judgments rooted in only partial understanding of information (Solove, 2007, p. 67).

Most literature suggests that college students and recent graduates are the most affected by poor impression management. About 72% of this group, specifically those ages 18-24, use social networking sites on a daily basis (Klein, 2010). Traditionally, these groups are skilled at establishing spatial boundaries on social networking sites (i.e. these groups can navigate the technical nature of privacy settings), but they fall short in establishing temporal or time-related boundaries. For example, young people may believe that content posted in the past is no longer relevant in the present day. “College students, even if currently not concerned about the visibility of their personal information, may become so as they enter sensitive and delicate jobs a few years from now—when the data currently mined could still be available” (Gross & Acquisti, 2005, p. 9).

To summarize, the varying degrees of concern for online privacy among college students, the preferred approach of limiting access rather than limiting information, the lack of awareness of unintended audiences forming undesired impressions and the public nature of social networking sites make college students a fascinating population in which to study online impression management. The paradox of privacy allows for many possibilities for exactly how the perceived audience (intended and unintended) affects the amount of control and concern users have over their information and impressions. Further exploration could help “ensure that users are allowed to understand the implications of their information sharing behaviors online” (Hoadley et al., 2009, p. 9).

The aspect of the audience is the primary focus of this exploratory study. By definition, the audience plays a central role in the study of impression management. Much pre-existing research has examined privacy theories and impression management theories separately, but an emphasis on the role of the audience in a social networking environment is lacking. The

following section discusses the basics of impression management theory. A section on the application of this theory to social networking sites follows. The study of audiences, as an extension of both privacy theory and impression management theory, will elucidate how college students are managing—or failing to manage—their impressions and information in today’s online social environment.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Impressions

Impressions are “source[s] of information about unapparent facts” (Goffman, 1959, p. 248). They represent the means for people to guide responses and reactions and are the symbols, signals and cues that lead to forming a view of person. Impressions involve actors and audiences. Actors are the individual persons who put on performances which audiences witness. Audiences can be real or imagined (Goffman, 1959).

There are two types of impressions. Calculated impressions are a combination of inferences that an actor wishes an audience to draw about him- or herself. Conversely, secondary impressions are a combination of inferences that an actor did not intend or wish for an audience to draw about him- or herself (Schneider, 1981). Both calculated and secondary impressions can be truthful or false representations of an actor’s self-concept (Schlenker, 1980).

Actors approach these impressions differently. For an actor to convey a calculated impression, he or she should know what behaviors lead audiences to draw particular inferences. Conveying calculated impressions is more difficult than conveying secondary impressions. For example, Klara’s calculated impression may be to seem quiet and shy, but Marc might misinterpret her cues and form a secondary impression that she is aloof and disinterested. Because actors have less control over the inferences and interpretation that audiences make about a specific behavior (Goffman, 1959), audiences can form undesirable secondary impressions that can “alter the meaning of the calculated impression and in extreme cases spoil it” (Schneider, 1981, p. 33). The nature of impressions is essential to understanding the theory of impression management.

2.2 Impression Management Theory

2.2.1 Definition

Impression management is the “goal-directed activity of controlling information about some person, object, idea, or event to audiences” (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000, p. 201). This theory involves actors who control, manipulate and influence their self-images among particular audiences (Goffman, 1959). When actors attempt to convey impressions, they also attempt to convey preselected personality traits and images (Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981). For example, a candidate at a job interview “dresses the part” to increase his chances of being hired. He wants to be seen as professional and competent; making eye-contact, donning a crisp suit, having a firm handshake and being well-spoken are all traits and images he believes will form a desirable impression to secure the job. These images are managed consciously or unconsciously during real or imagined social interactions (Schlenker, 1980).

2.2.1.1 Control.

Impression management is characterized by attempts at control. Actors seek to control the impressions audiences form about themselves as the acting party and the meanings of those impressions, thereby controlling the outcomes of social interactions (Schlenker, 1980). This control can take the form of self-regulation or self-monitoring. Self-regulation occurs when an actor anticipates an audience’s impressions and self-corrects his or her behavior to produce a specific impression (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). Self-monitoring occurs when an actor can synchronize verbal and non-verbal actions to convey intended impressions (Schlenker, 1980). For example, people who are skilled at self-monitoring may be able to cry on cue or to maintain the appearance of being calm in frightening situations.

2.2.1.2 Perception.

Impression management is also characterized by perception. By exercising control over self-associated images, actors attempt to affect the audiences' perceptions and impressions (Schneider, 1981). In other words, actors will consider the viewpoints of others and adjust themselves accordingly (Lindskold & Propst, 1981). "What matters most to the actor is not how he views his own behavior and their consequences, but rather how others view them" (Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981, p. 6). When an actor takes some action to enhance an audience's perception of him- or herself or to avoid negative or secondary impressions, he is engaging in impression management (Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981). The importance of perception in impression management is very similar to Charles Cooley's looking-glass self, which states that individuals develop themselves based on other people's perceptions of them (Cooley, 1902).

2.2.1.3 Audience.

The audience, on the other hand, is less subject to an actor's control. The audience can be real or imagined (Goffman, 1959) and even generalized. Schlenker (1980) referred to audiences as the generalized other that represents society's perceived views of an actor (p. 56). The audience as a generalized other may also represent the internal presence of society's attitudes and rules (Schlenker, 1980, p. 69).

The audience affects the self-regulating behavior of actors in the following ways. First, actors monitor themselves and shift their behaviors in order to receive more rewards than costs in social interactions. Marc may be aware that by admitting to speeding and acting respectfully to the police officer who just pulled him over, he is less likely to receive a ticket. By shifting his behavior, Marc increases his chances of receiving a reward (i.e. a warning) and decreases his chances of receiving a cost (i.e. a speeding ticket). Second, audiences activate different identity images, goals and scripts. The representation of an actor will depend partly on who his or her

audience is. Suppose that Klara is a substitute teacher. When teaching math to a group of unruly high school juniors, she acts strict and authoritarian, gives problem students detention and raises her voice to restore order. But when Klara teaches a well-behaved art class of 3rd graders, she acts lively and warm, encourages their creativity and gives them animal crackers as a reward for their good behavior. Klara's goals, scripts and roles change when her audiences change. Third, audiences influence how an actor packages and tailors information (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). When Marc's guests bring up a controversial political topic at his wine and cheese party, Marc may speak more openly about his assertive views in front of like-minded guests. If his guests had opposing views, Marc might still express his opinions, but he may be more likely to tone them down. Overall, the presence of the audience affects how actors communicate themselves to others.

2.2.2 Mechanics of Impression Management

2.2.2.1 Who uses impression management?

People with sufficient cognitive skills who are conscious of a separation of oneself from others engage in impression management (Jones, 1990). "All people control, more or less, through habit or conscious design, the way they appear to themselves and others" (Schlenker, 1980, p. 7).

2.2.2.2 When is impression management used?

Impression management is used in front of different audiences. The faces that actors present reveal aspects that are relevant to a certain group of people. "Such changes in face represent not gross inconsistencies in personality, but simply different aspects of our identities called forth by the situation" and by particular audiences (Schlenker, 1980, p. 36). For instance, students are more inclined to wear business casual dress when attending academic meetings and conferences, but prefer casual wear, jeans and T-shirts when attending regular classes. Similarly,

students' usage of language changes when situations change; students are more likely to speak properly and refrain from cursing when communicating with parents and professors than when communicating with friends. Impression management aids actors during problems and predicaments. For example, if an audience witnesses an actor conveying conflicting impressions, the actor will engage in impression management to regain control of the situation (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000; Tedeschi & Riorda, 1981). Often times, in order to appeal to a wide variety of voters, political candidates attempt to show support to many different groups of people. For example, a candidate who speaks in favor of and against the death penalty in front of two separate audiences is likely to convey conflicting impressions to voters. Impression management may provide this candidate with the means to justifying his or her statements in order to regain control among voters who are sensitive to a particular issue.

The perceived presence of an audience is amplified if the event is significant. "Care will be great in situations where important consequences for the performer will occur as a result of his conduct" (Goffman, 1959, p. 225). Finally, actors manage their impressions during states of objective self-awareness. In this state, actors are conscious about how they might be viewed by real or imagined audiences. This is a conscious use of impression management (Schlenker, 1980).

2.2.2.3 How is impression management used?

To manage their impressions, actors utilize impression management tactics (Schlenker, 1980). These are maneuvers that adapt to present situations for the purpose of conveying positive impressions (Hass, 1981). Actors also use cues, signals and symbols to lead an audience to accept actors' desired calculated impressions (Goffman, 1959). These cues vary according to different situations and contexts (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000).

Actors take on roles of the audience to manage their own impressions. Role-playing requires putting oneself in another person's shoes before asking, "If I was someone else, how would I see myself?" Role-playing is a crucial part of impression management because actors imagine audiences' responses before they act (Felson, 1981). This type of role-playing creates social identities for actors and determines what types of interactions are perceived to be appropriate (Tedeschi & Riess, 1981). Lastly, actors use props and scenery to buttress their desired impressions on an audience. A potential job candidate's crisp suit and clean haircut, an individual's well-furnished and attractive but seldom-used kitchen, a teenage boy who borrows his friend's sleek car when picking up his blind date are examples of this use of props; the implementation of these props and scenery are designed to enhance impressions and add the "right touches to performances" (Schlenker, 1980, p. 275).

2.2.2.4 Why do people engage in impression management?

Some theorists believe that impression management is used to gain social status and rewards (Felson, 1981), while others believe that actors desire to be liked (Reis, 1981). Researchers have identified a dominant reason why actors manage their impressions; actors practice impression management to achieve their goals. Goals are "desired end states we want to achieve" (Schlenker, 1980, p. 17). When actors are consciously focused on conveying a desired impression to audiences, they are attempting to reach their goals, some of which are derived from concern about others' thoughts (Jones, 1990). In these situations, researchers are most likely to attribute these behaviors to "impression management and self-presentation rather than simply self-expression and 'natural' behavior" (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000, p. 205).

Some goals are more important than others. Schlenker and Pontari (2000) report that actors devote different amounts of attention to goals depending on whether these goals exist in the foreground agenda or the background agenda. A specific goal that has been widely studied in

impression management is the desire for approval (Arkin, 1981). Approval could mean being well-liked by others (Reis, 1981) or being perceived to possess particular traits and skills (Schneider, 1981). Overall, the driving force of impression management theory is that the actor gauges an audience's reaction first before adjusting his or her behavior in a way that meets his or her goal to convey desired impressions (Schneider, 1981).

2.2.2.5 When is impression management successful?

Actors convey their desired impressions when they reorient their frame of reference (Goffman, 1959). The observed (i.e. an actor) can influence the observer (i.e. the audience). In this way, the audience determines an actor's frame of reference, and actors will draw from the audience to convey certain impressions. For example, Klara receives an invitation to dinner at a restaurant. When choosing between a cocktail dress and comfortable jeans, she decides on the outfit she believes most closely matches what others will wear to the restaurant.

Actors convey desired impressions when they package information that has a desired impact on an audience. Schlenker and Pontari (2000) refer to this as effective communication to audiences. "To communicate effectively, one must put oneself in the place of the audience; take into account their perspective, including their competencies, interests, and attitudes; gauge how they are likely to interpret and react to alternative message possibilities; and then edit, package, and transmit the information in a way that leads the audience to draw the desired conclusion" (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000, p. 211). In this way, audiences receive specially tailored information based on who they are.

Audiences accept actors' desired impressions when actors are able to support their claims about their character. This requires performance and cognitive skills of a good actor in knowing how various behavioral cues will be interpreted and translated to become a calculated impression (Schneider, 1981, p. 38). Impression management is difficult to study because it requires so

many different social skills (Schneider, 1981) and because it derives from other studies of self-concept, relationship between persons and society, and social identity (Schlenker, 1980). To fully understand impression management, a short review of its parent theories is required.

2.2.3 Theoretical Roots of Impression Management Theory

2.2.3.1 Symbolic Interaction.

Impression management theory has roots in symbolic interaction theory. Symbolic interaction theory focuses on the “importance of symbols in understanding the relationship between people and society” (Schlenker, 1980, p. 26). Symbols give social meanings to objects, events and especially actions. These actions take on an expressive role about actors’ identities. The connection to impression management is that impression management focuses on the audience’s role of symbolically interpreting an actors’ behavior. The presence of the audience reminds actors that certain social rules exist between actor and audience during communication (Schlenker, 1980).

Symbolic interaction theory differs from impression management because symbolic interaction theory focuses on the internalized self and center around private behavior (Felson, 1981). In symbolic interaction, three entities respond to an actor and influence his perspective. The first entity comprises significant others (i.e. one’s parents, one’s spouse); the second, the generalized other (i.e. one’s culture or subculture). The third entity is all other responders; this group makes up an actor’s audience. This third entity is emphasized in impression management theory, whereas symbolic interactionism emphasizes the other two sources of influence (Felson, 1981).

2.2.3.2 Self-Presentation.

Symbolic interaction theory is the ‘mother theory’ of self-presentation theory. Self-presentation theory explains “the manner in which individuals plan, adopt, and carry out the

process of conveying an image of self and of the interaction context to others” (Schlenker, 1980, p. 311). Actors base their behavior on their own interests, and they “knowingly and unwittingly project a definition of the situation.” When they project, an actor’s idea of himself is an important part (Goffman, 1959, p. 242). Self-presentation stems from an actor’s desired identity images; they embody “who I want to be or should I be tonight.” (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000).

An actor’s self-concept is the reason actors desire to manage their impressions in the first place. Actors engage in self-presentation when they extend their self-concept to an audience. For instance, when you project yourself, you are concerned with who you think you are (the images that reflect your identity). Consequently, you present yourself in different ways to meet that definition of who you think you are (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000, p. 204). This is called self-presentation and refers to choices the actor makes in response to the question, “What would I like to express about myself?” (Schlenker, 1980). Impression management, on the other hand, focuses on influencing the audience. For instance, when you project yourself, you are concerned with whom your audience thinks you are (the impressions that reflect your identity). Consequently, you present yourself in different ways to meet your perceived definition of who you think the audience thinks you are. When an actor steers these impressions in a certain direction, he or she is engaging in impression management (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000)

2.2.3.3 Defining points of impression management.

There are three significant points that are crucial to analyzing impression management in different communications environments.

- Impression management relays information about an actor
- Impression management is neutral
- Impression management is not always deliberately done

First, when an actor behaves and manages his impressions, he is relaying some information about himself (Schneider, 1981; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi & Riess, 1981). Second, impression management is neutral (Schlenker, 1980). It does not inherently imply deception, dishonesty, or unethical values. To summarize, “Impression management is, in part, the art of self-advertisement to particular audiences” (Schlenker, 1980, p. 169). Lastly, impression management is not always deliberately done (Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi & Riess, 1981). Some cognitive processes are automatic and operate naturally, making some impression management behaviors unnoticeable to even the actor (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). The next section discusses how impression management theory is applied to social networking sites.

2.3 Impression Management Theory on Social Networking Sites

By creating profiles on social networking sites, users engage in self-presentation (Dwyer, 2007) and by extension provide an “ideal setting” for impression management (Krämer & Winter, 2008). “A profile on a social networking site is an opportunity to present yourself, as you really are, or as you would like to be, i.e. impression management” (Dwyer et al., 2007, p. 5). The ability to construct and maintain a profile affords users greater control over messages than in face-to-face communication (Krämer & Winter, 2008). Self-presentation and impression-managing behaviors on social networking sites are apparent, considering that these sites encourage self-branding and self-promoting behavior (Hearn, 2008).

Social network users manage their impressions in several ways. They assume certain roles and thereby become characters in a story (Dwyer et al., 2007). They maneuver through social context cues, which influence how others form impressions and impact how social network members understand and reply to messages (Dwyer et al., 2007). Users sometimes use social networking sites as a vehicle to relay certain traits about themselves, such as extraversion

and high self-esteem (Krämer & Winter, 2008), thereby engaging in active impression management.

Calculated impressions on social networking sites are best achieved when they appear to be natural (Dwyer et al., 2007). Like other modes of communication, there is a possibility to convey secondary impressions. For instance, when forming impressions of others, users may be more influenced by third-party statements (e.g. a person's wall postings, tagged pictures) than a person's self-statements (e.g. a person's self-descriptions, profile pictures) (Walther et al., 2009). Although these secondary impressions are outside their control, users consciously or unconsciously try to manage their impressions on these sites.

Research pertaining to impression management behaviors on Web 2.0 sites is still in its infancy (Krämer & Winter, 2008), and related research geared to college students and young adults is limited. Morris and Millen (2007) concluded that young adults in the workforce are inept at effectively managing their impressions on social networking sites. Although this topic is in its exploratory stages, the intersection between privacy and impression management on social networking sites is worth a closer look.

Using a Technology Mediated Interaction Framework to examine the relationships between user attitudes, site features and social interaction, Dwyer et al. (2007) concluded that users view privacy as the byproduct of taking efforts to control willingly-disclosed information. The amount of control that users exert is influenced by their need to create and manage good impressions, just from viewing their profile. Dwyer and colleagues extend this thought process by suggesting that the need to control information is one aspect of privacy management (Dwyer et al., 2010). The intersection of impression management and privacy, within the context of the role of the audience, is the focus of this study.

2.4 Research Questions

Chapter 1 reviewed privacy in the context of user control, specifically control over information and content. Users control these aspects through privacy settings, self-regulation and role-playing. But how much control do college students in particular exercise? What factors affect their level of control?

RQ1: How much control do social network users exercise over the content in their social networking site profile pages?

Chapter 2 reviewed impression management in the context of audiences, both intended and unintended. Audiences on social networking sites receive packaged information that steers users to adopt certain impressions of other users. What factors affect users' level of concern about managing their impressions?

RQ2: How concerned are SNS users about the impressions they convey to others from their profile pages?

A recent study reported that young adults and college students do not view privacy very differently than older Americans (Hoofnagle et al., 2010). Another study reported that social network users of all ages are less concerned about the availability of personal information online (Madden & Smith, 2010). Is this true in the context of impression management and privacy management on social networking sites? How are these two groups similar and different?

RQ3: To what extent does age influence levels of control and concern related to disclosure of private information on social networking sites?

The following chapter describes how this researcher will answer these questions.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Defining the Problem

As social networking sites have grown in popularity, young people's willingness to broadcast personal information about themselves on these sites has increased; this tendency toward greater information disclosure may lead to unforeseen conflicts. Young adults may not understand effective impression management and privacy management on social networking sites. This lack of understanding may stem from their questionable ability to decide whether certain information should be privately withheld or publicly displayed. Also, young adults may think about privacy differently than older adults, making it difficult to educate young adults on the importance of impression and privacy management online.

3.2 The Purpose

This study explored the relationship between privacy concerns and impression management behaviors among college students who use social networking sites. Through focus groups of college students, this study investigated how privacy concerns and impression management behaviors affect the amount of control over content and the level of concern over perceived impressions. This study also highlighted the views of college students by contrasting it with focus groups of older adults who use social networking sites.

3.3 The Method

The academic study of social networking sites is still developing. These sites first appeared in 1997 and began attracting massive numbers of users only in 2003 (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). They have been the subject of academic study for only a short period of time and began attracting more researchers only four years ago, in 2006 (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007).

Because this study investigated such an exploratory topic, the researcher gathered data through focus groups.

Focus groups were an appropriate method of data gathering for this study because results of previous studies have been somewhat dissimilar. On one hand, several studies have suggested that young adults act in ways that imply they were unperturbed about privacy and impression management concerns. In addition to caring very little about privacy concerns (Tufekci, 2008a), most young users revealed a lot of personal information (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Tufekci, 2008a), took bigger risks when providing information (Fogel & Nehmad, 2008) and did not utilize privacy settings (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Young users also acted very differently from older generations online (Livingstone, 2008), managed their impressions poorly (Morris & Millen, 2007) and lacked knowledge about the potential for unintended audiences to view their content (Foulger et al., 2009).

On the other hand, some studies suggested that young adults had acted in ways that imply they were concerned about privacy and impression management. Young adults customized their privacy settings and limited unintended audiences more than any other age group (Madden & Smith, 2010). Not only were the majority of adult users (Lenhart, 2009) and young users (Dwyer, Hiltz & Passerini, 2007) found to be privacy conscious, but both groups also shared similar views with each other on the various ways to maintain one's privacy online (Hoofnagle et al., 2010). Users, however, exercised this concern for privacy on some social networking sites and not others (Dwyer et al., 2010). Some researchers argued that a shift in attitudes had occurred after the introduction of NewsFeed and MiniFeed to FacebookTM (Boyd, 2008; Hoadley et al., 2009), while others credited age as a contributing factor to shifting attitudes (Morris &

Millen, 2007; Patchin and Hinduja, 2010). Because the results of these studies vary so much, focus groups are necessary to sort through the diversity of viewpoints (Morgan, 1998).

This study contributed to this evolving body of research by pinpointing various dimensions of privacy and setting parameters through focus groups; survey research methods could not achieve the same goal. Because these dimensions are not yet set and hypotheses do not exist, the survey method of data gathering would prove highly ineffective before preliminary research laid any groundwork (Morgan, 1997; Morgan, 1998).

3.4 Participants

3.4.1 Active Users

Lenhart (2009) categorized social network users' usage levels by the following tiers: those who visited social networking sites several times a day, about once a day, every few days, once a week and less often. Although Lenhart did not explicitly say how much usage makes an individual an active user, this researcher utilized Lenhart's categories to come up with the following definition for active users. An individual is an active user of a social networking site if that individual:

- has a profile page on at least one social networking site, and
- visits that profile page or the profile pages of other members at least once each week, on average.

An individual is not an active user if that individual visits a social networking site every few weeks or less often than every few weeks. Because active users more frequently engage with social networking sites than non-active users, active users are more familiar with the implications of privacy and impression management. This qualification allowed the researcher to amass a large number of insightful viewpoints to explain impression- and privacy-related behavior in this group.

Participants were able to discuss social networking sites easily and actively. Because social networking sites are not considered a typical topic of heated discussion, the majority of participants did not find this discussion problematic to contribute.

3.4.2 Age

Participants were comprised of two groups of people: University of Florida undergraduates, ages 18- to 22-years old, and Gainesville, Florida adults in their 30s, 40s and 50s. The researcher segmented participants by age to create homogeneity among groups. Because these age groups are in very different life stages, this researcher predicted that they would have a greater willingness to talk and relate to others if clustered with their own peer age group.

3.4.3 Other Segmentation Considerations

The researcher did not segment users by gender. Although there are gender differences in levels of information disclosure (Fogel & Nehmad, 2008; Gross & Acquisti, 2005) and privacy concerns (Fogel & Nehmad, 2008; Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2006), these attributes may not be wholly determined by gender. The evolving nature of social networking sites in the direction of greater disclosure and less user control affects all users, male and female. Instead, an individual's age, rather than their gender, is a better factor to segment groups, at least until future research can support that gender is a greater influence.

Participants were not segmented by their preference for FacebookTM, MySpaceTM or any other social networking site. Although users gravitate toward each site for different reasons, many social networking sites are capable of disclosing large amounts of information to impression-forming audiences. Furthermore, previously-mentioned real world incidents involving young people who had borne consequences as a result of their social networking behavior occurred on a variety of sites, specifically FacebookTM, MySpaceTM, LinkedInTM,

Twitter™ and YouTube™. Nevertheless, the questionnaire asked participants to list the specific social networking sites they used.

Lastly, participants were not segmented by activity level. Active usage of social networking site is a qualifying factor that already yields a knowledgeable group to study. Mixing participants who represent different activity levels ensured a synergy of different attitudes, values and perspectives.

3.5 Planning Phase

3.5.1 Groups

The number of group sessions was not yet determined because this number depended upon the point at which saturation is reached; that is, new groups will continue to be conducted in each overall category (college students versus older adults) until additional groups do not contribute any new information. However, at least three focus group sessions were conducted with each age segment, for a total of at least six focus group sessions.

3.5.1.1 Moderator.

This researcher assumed the role of moderator to oversee group sessions. To ensure that all participants are heard and to prevent certain participants from dominating the discussion, the moderator exercised a moderate amount of control over questions and responses by following a semi-structured interview guide. For example, the moderator allocated less time to less important questions and more time to more important questions. The moderator also probed participants when they contributed unexpected answers.

3.5.1.2 Other personnel.

A colleague, Jonathon DelRosario, an Electrical Engineering major at the University of Florida, recorded group sessions with a personal digital video camera. Shivani Jaipershad, who recently received her master's degree from the College of Journalism at the University of

Florida, helped transcribed sessions. Only the moderator and these two individuals had access to the recordings, which were deleted according to procedural rules.

3.5.2 Location

Group sessions were held at the Tivoli Apartments Clubhouse, located on 2841 SW 13th St, Gainesville, FL, 32608, less than one mile away from the University of Florida's main campus. This location provided comfortable couches that are arranged in a circle and conducive to group discussion, ample counter space to set out food and a quiet atmosphere. The researcher reserved the clubhouse after office hours to ensure a quiet discussion.

3.5.3 Costs

The videographer used his personal digital video camera, so there were no recording costs. Printing of pre-session questionnaires and transcripts were free because of the researcher's complimentary printing account with the university. Participant compensation in the form of special coupons with local businesses was free. The researcher paid \$15 to \$25 per session for food and refreshments.

3.6 Recruitment

The researcher recruited participants through TwitterTM and FacebookTM messages, flyers on campus and through word-of-mouth to local businesses, coworkers and friends in the Gainesville area. To increase the likelihood of attending, the researcher sent e-mails and text messages the day before scheduled sessions and the day that sessions took place. She also sent thank you e-mails and texts the day after individuals participated.

3.7 Focus Groups

Before the focus groups began, each participant completed a Focus Group Participant Consent form and a questionnaire to collect background information about user demographics

and frequency of social networking site usage. This questionnaire is listed in Appendix A. Frequency of usage will be categorized according to the categories set forth by Lenhart (2009).

During the focus groups, the moderator took brief field notes to segue into further discussion, probe participants and list significant points. The questions on the interview guide were designed to give participants a chance to discuss privacy- and impression-management concerns on social networking sites freely. The interview guide is reproduced in Appendix B.

3.8 Analysis and Reporting

The researcher and assistant transcriber typed the dialogue from group sessions using Microsoft Word. Transcripts were categorized by concepts that answered each research question. Attentive to commonalities and differences in reasons, attitudes and perspectives within privacy management and impression management, the researcher grouped common patterns under the constant comparative method manually (Boeije, 2002). To answer RQ1, the researcher looked for themes that specifically addressed how much and what types of actual control users exercised over information disclosure. To answer RQ2, she scanned for themes that specifically addressed user level of concern over impressions. To answer RQ3, she compared the prevalence of these themes between college students and adults. The following section contains the researcher's personal experience and history with social networking sites, as well as her attitudes on privacy and impression management.

3.9 Cultural Categories

While writing this thesis, I devoted three days to “purging” my FacebookTM profile page. I was intent on finding full-time employment shortly after graduation and had been applying vigorously to companies. Knowing that jobs were scarce in this recession battered economy and that more employers had begun checking FacebookTM profiles of applicants, I untagged or deleted any information that might raise questions about my ability to work in a professional

setting. I sorted through 2,000 tagged photos, 20 tagged videos, 50 photo albums, 15 applications, 60 groups, 11 profile fields and 5 years of wall posts. I left groups like “University of Florida: America’s #1 Party School!” and “Spring Break 2005: What Happens in the Bahamas Stays in the Bahamas.” I removed any information that hinted at my religion and political affiliation, deleted third-party posts that had contained cursing, and changed my profile picture to a modest headshot in business casual wear. I recounted my intense Facebook™ purge to my 18-year-old freshman cousin who joked that I had stripped my page of any personality. I smiled, lightly disagreed and explained to her that these changes were driven primarily by my need to manage my digital identity and impressions in ways that increased my chances of obtaining a job. I believe that social networking pages are telling representations of a person’s character, and that people should control their behavior online as diligently as they would in real life. However, I was not always aligned with these notions of privacy and impression management.

Since 2001, I have held social networking accounts on Asian Avenue™, Xanga™, MySpace™, Fotki™, Friendster™, Facebook™, YouTube™ and Twitter™. While I seldom visited Asian Avenue™, Friendster™, Fotki™ or MySpace™, I used Xanga™, YouTube™, Facebook™ and Twitter™ on an almost daily basis. On those sites, I became more concerned about particular aspects of social networking sites. My first experience with unintended audiences and unwanted gaze was with Xanga™ in 2006. I had written about an upsetting experience with a friend, used her full name, and received an unexpected call the next day; my friend Googled herself sporadically and had read my entry. The experience that heightened my sense of privacy and need to control my information was with Facebook™ in 2007. After Facebook™ had broadened its networks beyond the collegiate population, I received friend requests from my 15-year-old cousin and my mother. On one hand, I thoroughly enjoyed

communicating with both the young and the older, but on the other hand, I now had to consider how new groups might interpret (or rather, misinterpret) my actions and information online.

Like other young adults, I regulate my information by granting greater access to some individuals and less access to others through lists. But over time, the more aggressively social networking sites shared information and the closer I became to entering the workforce, I revealed less information and consciously managed my impressions. Social networking sites have changed dramatically since I joined and I will continue to adapt and change with them.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

From July 19, 2010, to July 28, 2010, the researcher conducted five focus group sessions among 45 college students and three sessions among 28 adults. Moderating only one focus group a day, the researcher reached saturation, i.e. the point at which additional groups do not contribute any new information, after eight sessions, with 73 total participants. Each group session contained a minimum of six participants and a maximum of thirteen participants.

The average age was 20.86 for college students and 34.14 for adults. There were slightly more females than males in both groups; 53% of college students and 57% of adults were females. College students were heavier users of social networking sites than adults. About 89% of college students used these sites several times a day, compared to 61% of adults.

Approximately 18% of adults visited their pages once a day and 14% visited their pages every few days, compared to the 9% of college students who visited their pages once a day and the 1% who visited their page every few days. All participants used FacebookTM. About a quarter of users used TwitterTM while a few used YouTubeTM, LinkedInTM, FormspringTM, FriendsterTM, LiveJournalTM and XangaTM. The following section reviews the results of this study. Findings are organized by research question and corresponding relevant concepts.

4.1 Research Question 1

RQ1: How much control do social network users exercise over the content in their profile pages?

4.1.1 Information Disclosure

Participants exercised a moderate amount of control over their content; in other words, they expressed a fair amount of diligence in monitoring third-party content, disassociating themselves from undesirable content regularly, and maintaining privacy settings. They posted

photos, videos, links, status updates and comments on their profile pages and their friends' profile pages. Those who hesitated to post content were influenced by two factors: audiences and impressions. In general, the wide scope of possible audiences caused participants to think twice about disclosing information. One recently graduated journalism student noted that he sometimes starts to post something, and then reminds himself: "Everyone can see what I post. I don't want everyone to see that. Delete." Both groups considered how their content might affect how certain audiences perceive them. For instance, a 30 year old physical therapy graduate student, who was concerned about her family's perceptions of her, continually checked her page after an event with friends:

After a weekend of having fun or partying with my friends, one of them would post something about that weekend. I take the wall post off or I untag photos. My family's on there. I don't want them to know what I do because I don't want them to see me differently.

4.1.1.1 Benefits.

Many participants withheld their cell phone numbers to avoid unwanted contacts, but several recognized the convenience when other people disclosed their contact information. A 20 year old nursing student stated: "Putting your number on FacebookTM is sometimes really handy. I don't have my number on there because I don't like weird people calling me, but it's easy to find other people's numbers when you lose them." One graduate student posted his number in order to become more accessible to his students: "I teach undergrads. If they can't get to me through e-mail and all they have is the FacebookTM group for the class that I teach, at least it's there. It's more of an emergency contact."

More adults than students acknowledged that information disclosure might strengthen relationships. One lawyer was able to learn new aspects about his coworkers' personalities through their profile pages: "I didn't realize one worker was very funny. That came across on

FacebookTM, but that never comes across in the work setting. It added a new dimension to our relationship.” A 31 year old retail operations manager bonded with other managers who post work-related comments online: “Our relationship gets closer because I feel their pain. I think it’s really good because I know who I can vent to and who feels the same way I do.” Although these benefits brought some adults closer to their friends or coworkers, the majority of students were more vocal about the risks of disclosure.

4.1.1.2 Risks.

Both groups were concerned about unintended uses of their information, but college students were more concerned than adults about the possibility of companies harvesting their information and targeting them with advertisements. One international relations student was very opinionated and knowledgeable about this particular risk. Of 45 college-age participants, he was the only individual who said he has read the terms of use for every networking site he uses:

A lot of applications have become phishing scams. They try to get your e-mail and phone number. They hack your page and make you post advertisements all over your wall and other people’s walls. That’s why I limit myself to only seven FacebookTM-approved applications.

The risks of revealing information were often mentioned alongside a lack of user control. Many participants were troubled about the possibility of people using their information in ways they had not intended. For example, a freshman health science major hid her birthday for security reasons: “Your birthday is a security question for a lot of things. People already know my name. Now they have my birthday too? You can find a lot of things from those two pieces of information.” Others were uneasy about the permanency of information posted to social networking sites. A 22 year old industrial engineering major explained: “Once you put it on there, you have no more control over it. It will always be in the system, even if you delete it.” Another student, an art history freshman, acknowledged the risk for replication: “Even if you

deleted something, there's always a chance that someone clicked and saved it and could put it up again.”

The accessibility of personal information to site programmers and social networking site support employees posed a significant risk for one adult, a 34 year old pediatrics nurse: “If someone working for Facebook™ really wanted to screw everyone over, they could easily write a program that puts everything out in the open. They're computer savvy and all the information is out there.” A 19 year old electrical engineering major expressed an uncommon view, shared by five other participants, about the correct way to eliminate all risks of information disclosure: “If you're *that* scared, then don't use the site. It's not a right to have a Facebook™ or any social networking site for that matter. If you don't like it, don't use it.”

4.1.1.3 Concern.

Knowledge of risks did not always translate into concern over personal information. Both groups showed very little concern about what personal information they provided; in other words, they were minimally concerned about the risks or possible consequences resulting from disclosure. Students and adults, however, differed in their reasoning. Most adults considered their information risk-free. A 30 year old stay-at-home mother of two stated: “My page is pretty much open. There's nothing bad about me that I'd have to go out of my way to make sure that gets off of Facebook™ through untagging or asking people to delete it.” College students, on the other hand, heavily relied on their privacy settings to mitigate concern about risks. A senior architecture major captured this idea:

As long as you adjust your privacy settings for your phone number, address, e-mail and everything else, those things would only be shown to people you have already accepted. That's what privacy settings are for. They give you that control and make it not a big deal.

4.1.2 Ways of Exercising Control

4.1.2.1 Untagging or deletion.

Participants asserted control over their information in several ways. The most common form of control among both groups was untagging or deleting undesired content. A public relations junior explained: “If it’s an embarrassing post or comment on my wall, or if it’s an unflattering picture or a picture that shouldn’t have been taken, I untag or delete the post right away.” College students were more likely than adults to ask original content owners to delete the photos or videos even after using site-specific tools to untag themselves; the majority felt that certain content was inappropriate to share. A 22 year old telecommunication major untagged himself, but only in photos with certain subject matter:

My parents don’t know I smoke. They would flip out. Photos or comments with me smoking can’t be anywhere on my page. I don’t put any up, but it’s always other people tagging me. I have no way of defending myself because there are pictures, so I ask people to take it off.

4.1.2.2 Privacy settings.

Both groups utilized privacy settings, but college students laboriously customized their settings more than adults. A 22 year old premedical student explained how she customized the accessibility of her 150 photo albums: “I set my page so that only friends can view it, but I put older relatives on a limited profile. They’re not allowed to see certain photo albums, so I have different settings for them in every album.” Although a few adults utilized lists to separate audiences, several were discouraged by the investment of time that customization required. A 36 year old engineer explained why he kept his page open to the public: “I just figure it would take too much time to sort through my friends for lists. I don’t bother with any other settings either. I’m just too lazy.”

4.1.2.3 Self-control.

Despite the various ways that users could control information, the majority of participants claimed to exercise self-control and often withheld posting particular content. This was a recurring theme in all groups. A 22 year old Spanish major explained, “I don’t have any privacy settings up. If there’s something I don’t like to share, I don’t put it up.” Similarly, a 32 year old account representative stated that “certain privacy features are helpful, but I rely more on my internal privacy setting,” perhaps suggesting the subjectivity of privacy.

4.1.2.4 Two accounts.

The least common form of control was the creation of two accounts. Ten users in the 18-22 age group set up two accounts to hide some of their information from their parents or family members. One account displayed their full name and contained only family-approved photos or statuses. The second account, which was made unsearchable, displayed a nickname and allowed users to be less stringent in their postings. Among the adult group, only three users created separate accounts, one for acquaintances and coworkers and another for friends and family.

4.1.3 Audiences

All participants distinguished between various types of audiences. Both age groups were especially conscious about the vast audience presence on social networking sites. An 18 year old political science major stated: “When I change something on my page, I know that everyone could possibly see it and visit it.” The majority of participants exhibited low levels of concern about audiences accessing their pages. College students were unconcerned, mainly because they wanted an audience. A linguistics major in her senior year explained: “If I put it up there, it’s something that I don’t mind you seeing. Maybe I want you to see it. The whole point is for people to come look at your page.” Students did not expand on why they desired an audience.

Adults, however, felt a greater need to hide from certain audiences. A 33 year old graphic designer wanted to avoid being found by coworkers:

I didn't want certain people to know that I existed on Facebook™, but they found me and friended me. Darn! I don't want to friend them, but I have to see them at work the next day. That's happened to me twice in the past year.

A 45 year old public relations doctoral student found it difficult to hide from high school and college acquaintances:

My Facebook™ chat will pop up because I forgot to turn it off. People I haven't seen in years will ask, "How are you? I haven't seen you in a long time." Yeah, there's a reason why it's been about 15 or 20 years!

College students showed moderate to high levels of concern about audiences whom they have not accepted as friends. Their concern ranged from a decent amount of wariness to considerable distrust. A 19 year old business administration student explained:

If I know you, even if I haven't talked to you for five years, I don't care if you look. But if I don't know who you are, even if we have 100 mutual friends, you're not my friend. Don't look through my stuff.

A 19 year old physiology major was very defensive toward unwanted audiences: "I block everything from creepy boys to protect my friends. If they see a girl commenting on my page a lot, they'll say my friend is really hot and find a way to get her number. Not cool." Almost all college students used privacy settings to limit profile page visibility to friends only. These observations were uncommon among adults, who were mainly concerned about coworkers and bosses. It is likely that college students used social networking sites to connect with present friends and audiences they deem trustworthy, whereas adults used social networking sites to reconnect with old friends with whom they once had strong relationships but with whom they had lost touch.

Participants exercised control over audiences by removing people from their friends lists in an act called unfriending. A 20 year old sociology sophomore described her process:

I used to have 1,900 friends. A year ago, I reduced it to the 100-something friends that I speak to on a daily basis. People got offended, but now I'm really comfortable with whatever I post.

More adults reported categorizing their friends into lists, which one adult described as being "another filter on top of friends only." Lists enable users to customize their privacy settings according to the type of friends. A 34 year old dental assistant explained the elaborate set-up of her lists:

I have five different lists and they each have different privacy settings. The group with my close friends is the only group that could write on my wall. Some lists can't see tagged pictures. Some can't even post. At midnight, I specifically post pictures and set some of my photo albums so that certain lists can't see them on their NewsFeed.

These measures were unique to only three adult users.

4.1.3.1 Unwanted gaze.

Although participants were minimally concerned about risks, prior experiences with unwanted gaze (i.e. instances when unintended audiences view their content) led users to pay greater attention to the repercussions of disclosure. A 19 year old nursing major recalled a distressing experience with her parents:

I thought about getting a tattoo once. I set my status, "Thinking of getting a tattoo." My sister saw it and told my dad, who got so upset and told my mom. I got upset because I only said I was thinking about it. I never said I was going to get it. It turned into this big mess that was completely unnecessary.

While parents were the most common unwanted gaze audiences for students, coworkers and bosses caused the greatest concern for adults. A 31 year old human resources recruiter recounted her experience with unwanted gaze:

I used a list to block my coworkers from seeing my updates, but the filter didn't work one time. Whenever the Orlando Magic basketball team wins a game,

Dunkin Donuts gives out a free donut. They won the night before so I made my status, “Gonna be late for work tomorrow cause the Magic won, biiiiitch!” My HR manager saw it and thought I was giving her my notice that I was going to be late to work. I was mortified!

Only one participant, a first year law student, had experienced a positive outcome from unwanted gaze:

I’ve actually gotten a job through Facebook™. I list that I was a lifeguard and a swimmer on my page and a local company messaged me and asked me to be a swim instructor. My boss searched “lifeguard” and “swimmer” on Google and found me, even though my page is on private. It was a really good job that paid very well.

4.2 Research Question 2

RQ2: How concerned are SNS users about the impressions they convey to others from their profile pages?

4.2.1 Impressions

Most participants invested minimal effort in managing their profile pages. They made occasional changes to their biographical information or checked their notifications and messages. One adult admitted, “I haven’t changed my info in years. I updated it when I got married, but that was it.” When forming impressions about others based on profile page content, participants inspected photos, biographical information, mutual friends and wall postings.

4.2.1.1 Audiences.

Users in both groups were slightly concerned about the impressions that certain audiences might form about them. Participants ages 18-22 were more heavily influenced by the presence of younger audiences and family members, like one 20 year old biology student:

These little girls that I used to teach dance are all growing up and trying to add me on Facebook™. I don’t want them going back to their parents and think I was drinking. I don’t drink, but you know all parties have red cups. You just assume it’s beer, but for me it’s apple juice.

Adults, like one 32 year old engineer, were mainly influenced by the presence of employers: “There are some things that I refrain from posting because my supervisor friended me. Some of my jokes are in poor taste. I don’t want to get fired or give off a bad impression.”

4.2.1.2 Secondary Impressions.

Some users, like a 20 year old political science major, mentioned their inclination to judge and form secondary impressions about other people:

I looked up my new roommate on Facebook™. She’s a junior and *only* has 40 friends. Her profile picture is of her making a funny face and an awkward pose. My friends are all so worried. They think I should switch her out. I feel so bad because I haven’t even met her.

Both groups imagined that other people might form secondary impressions about them based on their site content. A 32 year old real estate manager explained:

I used to be a competitive salsa dancer. I don’t get to pick the outfits I wear for competitions because I danced on a team. Sometimes, they’re not really my taste, and I can look a little bit like a hussy unfortunately. I’m not, but some people thought that after my friends posted pictures on Facebook™ that show me performing. They might even think I’m a stripper!

A 21 year old physiology student recounted how his friends’ practical jokes sometimes give people the wrong impression about himself:

I accidentally left my Facebook™ open and my friend posted, “Getting a nose job tomorrow.” Every time my friends see it, they’ll react with, “Oh my God, you’re getting a nose job tomorrow?!” That’s one of our inside jokes. It kind of sucks because people start wondering, especially people who aren’t into the inside joke.

4.2.2 Impression Management

To reduce the likelihood of audiences forming negative secondary impressions, college students were more likely to activate privacy settings. A 22 year old English major explained: “People from my church and younger cousins that look up to me are my friends on Facebook™. They might see me differently and would eventually tell my parents. It would just be faster to block everybody.” A freshman Chinese major who previously taught martial arts to young

children felt he had to make lists because his former students have friended him on Facebook™: “I can’t really say ‘ass’ and ‘shit’ on my statuses anymore, so I blocked them.”

Adults showed varying levels of concern for how others might perceive them. One adult, a 32 year old project manager, was very concerned about controlling how others might perceive him: “I’ll be honest. When I post jokes, it’s because I want people to think I’m funny. I post things because I want a response and I want people to have a certain impression of me.” Another adult, a 37 year old psychology doctoral student, was concerned mainly because of who her audience was:

I have 260 friends on Facebook™. I know them, but I don’t *really* know them. They’re from long ago, or they’re a friend of a friend. I think about the state of mind I’m in before I post something. I’m thinking how that’s going to be perceived by somebody else who doesn’t really know me.

Both adults and students frequently cited the difficulty of controlling impressions.

According to a 45 year old medical technician:

I think there’s a lot of variability when two people look at the same profile. They could come up with two very different perceptions, depending on their own views. There are limitations as to how much you can control.

A 30 year old sports management doctoral student stressed that things could easily be taken out of context, making impressions hard to control:

Everyone goes to Happy Hour, whether you’re 18 or 48. Everybody goes to birthday parties. Everybody goes somewhere where a picture could be taken out of context. Everybody has fun in some way or another. Most people have that social awareness, but there are some things that some of the older generation might frown upon.

Overall, participants’ concerns for their impressions were fueled significantly by a desire to avoid secondary impressions.

4.3 Research Question 3

RQ3: To what extent does age influence levels of control and concern related to disclosure of private information on social networking sites?

The results suggest that age is a factor. The 18-22 age group took greater measures to control their content. They were more knowledgeable than adults on customizing their privacy settings and activating lists to separate audiences. They also adapted and adjusted faster than adults when social networking sites altered the format of privacy settings. Like students, the adult group knew how to disassociate themselves from undesirable content, but they were less likely to customize their settings. Many adults cited a lack of knowledge, patience or time to heavily regulate their content.

Adults, on the other hand, were more selective than students with their audience composition. Many of them expressed a desire to hide from their employers or coworkers. Consequently, they were faced with the dilemma of accepting their employers or coworkers as friends when sent friend requests. Several attributed this dilemma and awkwardness to a desire to separate their personal lives (on a social networking site) from their professional lives (in the workplace). Students were more likely to block family members and parents from their pages, but often felt a significant obligation to accept friend requests from peers, even those whom they have met only once. For example, many were more open to being friends with a rarely seen acquaintance than their own parents or relatives.

Age may not be a factor in concern about impressions. Both groups, especially college students, expressed a need to control how others perceived them. They stated that they were influenced by the negative impressions that younger audiences might form of them. College students and adults were both minimally concerned about the need to manage impressions. There was a minor difference that motivated their concern. Adults were more concerned about current coworkers and employers accessing their content, whereas students were worried about parents

and relatives accessing their content. Only a few worried about *future* employers and graduate school committees viewing their pages.

Participants believed they exercised better control and judgment on social networking sites than age groups younger than them. For example, adults believed they possessed better judgment and impression management skills than college students. Similarly, college students believed they were better impression managers than high school and middle school students. When probed on why they felt this way, participants gave several reasons. The majority said that younger users had inadequate life experience to improve their judgment and awareness. A 32 year old nurse offered the following analogy:

As far as deciding what's appropriate and not appropriate to post, you're not going to think that's common sense until it's actually happened to you. When you're a kid, you're not going to think something is hot until you touch it and it burns you. You can assume that everyone's going to think the way you think, but not everyone's the same. It's not until they learn that lesson that I would think kids would know what's okay or not okay to post.

Others explained that they had had no awareness when they were younger. One student, an 18 year old microbiology major, explained how differently she used to act when she first started on social networking sites:

When I was younger, I was naïve and stupid. I just put up everything up, including all my pictures. I thought I was so cool. Now that I realize that was really stupid of me. My mom had a talk with me. And I deleted those inappropriate pictures because my younger cousins see that. That's not a very good role model of me. Now I feel like it's very important on how people see you, especially people younger than you.

Another student, a 21 year old business major, explained that his desire for an audience contributed to his display on social networking sites:

Younger kids in middle school don't really know what's going on. They don't really care too much about privacy, unless their parents intervene. When I first got a MySpace™, I didn't put any privacy settings. I wanted the world to know. I didn't hide anything. I even let people I didn't know be on my page. I thought, "This is me. Get to know me."

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Control of Content

5.1.1 Summary

RQ1 asked about the extent to which social network users exercised control over page content. It examined two aspects of information disclosure: how audiences and how impressions may or may not affect the sharing of content. While adults recognized the benefits of sharing information, college students highlighted its risks. Why this discrepancy? It is possible that adults refrain from posting content that they believe would cause others to form negative impressions about them. Many adults stated that they are not as likely as younger individuals to be engaging in wild activities (i.e. extreme intoxication, lascivious dancing in nightclubs and at parties, suggestive poses with props or other people, etc.) and if they do, they have no desire to share their activities with people who were not present for the activity. Although both age groups showed little concern over controlling their content, users exercised at least some control over their information, such as deleting undesirable content, adjusting privacy settings, forming two accounts, being selective about whom they accepted as friends and exercising self-control in what they post.

5.1.2 Implications

Users who participated in this study exercised little control over the content they voluntarily shared about themselves. To judge what content is appropriate and inappropriate to post, a majority relied on their own self-control, which according to Schlenker (1980) is a form of self-regulation. Students were most comfortable with posting their e-mails, birthdays, student organizations, extracurricular involvement, and approved photos, but they were uncomfortable with having unflattering or embarrassing pictures (i.e. pictures that capture them in a displeasing

light or at an angle that they perceive makes them look undesirable, overweight, etc.), or inappropriate party or nightclubbing pictures (i.e. pictures that indicate alcohol or drug usage or imply loose behavior, etc.) of themselves posted. Adults were comfortable with posting pictures of their family, especially if they used FacebookTM to reconnect with old friends and family members, but they were uncomfortable with posting their birthday and address because of the risks associated with unknown audiences and unintended uses.

Users also exercised a moderate amount of control over the content that third parties shared about them. For example, these users frequently monitored their notifications. Although many participants alluded to the difficulty of predicting what other people might post, several stressed that users can control whether third-party postings remain on their pages. They regain control by disassociating themselves from undesirable content.

These observations support some of the literature pertaining to information disclosure and control. In line with Hoadley et al. (2009), social network users grew more uncomfortable with sharing information when they perceived they had less control, which, in this study, occurred when third parties had posted content. Users' responses to assert greater control (i.e. untagging or deleting content) confirms the findings of Dwyer, Hiltz and Passerini's study (2007) surrounding the paradox of privacy. The paradox of privacy refers to the juxtaposition of users' high expectations of privacy with a form of media designed to maximize information-sharing and networking. Many users who felt they had less control in third-party postings regained control by deleting content or asking the original owners to remove content. They handled the contradiction described by the paradox of privacy by limiting the sharing capabilities of social networking sites.

In addition, participants frequently stressed user responsibility and accountability when users faced instances of unwanted gaze. College students spoke strongly about the idea that users have control over what is on their pages and who is allowed to look at their pages. In other words, they felt that an individual is still publicly accountable for what he or she says or what others say about him or her, regardless of privacy settings. This observation suggests that adults and college students assigned a substantial weight of responsibility to the individual, whom they perceive to be essentially in control of the information he or she shares or allows to be shared. This differs slightly from previous studies in which college students and young adults assumed the greatest risks when providing information (Fogel & Nehmad, 2008) and cared very little about privacy concerns (Tufekci, 2008a).

5.2 Concern about Impressions

5.2.1 Summary

RQ2 investigated users' concerns about impressions others might form of them based on social network site information, focusing on the role of the audience in impression management. Participants often cited the balancing act that occurs when they weigh the benefits of sharing information with the risks of having less control over the impressions others might form based on that shared information. Participants balanced the benefits and risks differently for certain audiences, such as family, young friends and employers or coworkers. Users associated greater risk with unintended audiences, including strangers (for college students) and employers (for adults). Over all, users were primarily concerned with being misunderstood in a negative way.

5.2.2 Implications

College students and adults exhibited low levels of concern about audience access; in other words, they were not considerably influenced by the fact that audiences could forage through the information on their pages. On the other hand, they were at least somewhat

concerned about conveying secondary impressions. To reduce the likelihood of secondary impressions, users reasserted control by customizing privacy settings, including limited profiles and lists, and by controlling audiences, including unfriending people and deleting content. How does this affect the usefulness of impression management theory among college students on social networking sites?

First, this study supports Klein's (2010) results, which showed that young adults are skilled at establishing spatial boundaries on social networking sites and navigating the technical nature of privacy settings. Students in this study were more proficient adjusters of privacy settings than the adults. Many of them pointed out that they had learned to adjust privacy settings as a result of frequent site changes in privacy settings. Several mentioned seeking help from their friends. Only a few students mentioned having difficulty in adjusting their settings.

Second, it contradicts results reported by Morris and Millen (2007). Recall that impression management is characterized by shifts in an actor's behavior in an attempt to influence how audiences perceive him. The literature review also examined calculated impressions and secondary impressions. A calculated impression is the actor's desired image—how he or she wants to be perceived. A secondary impression is an undesired image, a perception of an individual that does not accurately reflect that individual. Morris and Millen (2007) reported that college students managed their impressions poorly, but is their conclusion misleading? Do they define "poor impression management" as 1) failure to relay calculated impressions, or as 2) attempts to prevent secondary impressions?

If poor impression management is defined by the former, then this study would conclude that young and adult users were poor impression managers, mainly because very few users mentioned a desire to relay calculated impressions. A majority of college students, however,

were very vocal about wanting to prevent audiences from forming negative secondary impressions about them. No participant noted having learned about positive secondary impressions. This researcher argues that the latter interpretation of impression management is equally important as the first. Attempting to avoid being misunderstood or misperceived is one way social network users manage their impressions online. In this situation, users still acted on a desire to influence other people's impressions of themselves, which, by definition, is an act of impression management. Morris and Millen (2007) may be mistaken in concluding that college students were poor impression managers.

Third, it challenges what Foulger et al. (2009) discovered about college students' privacy attitudes on social networking sites. Foulger et al. (2009) found that their college-age participants still asserted privacy rights over information posted on publicly-open social networking profiles, which were "intended for a privileged readership" (p. 14). In contrast, almost all students in this study believed they had very little to no privacy on their pages and that they were ultimately accountable for content, even if they had enacted privacy settings. These users seemed to accept the idea, expressed by one student that, "If you post something and it gets you in trouble, that's your responsibility. You should know better." Future sections address the issues and recommendations of study that this mentality raises.

What factors may explain the incongruity? Perhaps college students in this study were more aware of the potential for unintended audiences than the students in Foulger et al.'s (2009) study. In fact, about a quarter of college students in this study relied greatly on secondhand stories about other people experiencing negative consequences as a result of them posting inappropriate content or personal information on a networking site. At least two college students in every session cited this type of secondhand knowledge, passed on through friends' narratives,

news stories and shared online links. It is possible that knowledge about consequences and risk might contribute to college student users' increased awareness of unintended audiences.

It is possible that the significance of audiences might have caused the difference in results. Foulger et al. (2009) did not focus on the presence of audiences; instead, researchers used a social cognitive domain approach to investigate users' moral and non-moral concerns by asking scenario questions about privacy rights and risks. In this study, the researcher used an impression management approach and gathered data through focus groups for the purpose of inspecting the role of the audience in social networking behavior. It remains unclear why such different conclusions were reached.

Fourth, these observations confirm college students' heightened concerns "over unspecified undesirable audiences" and "lack of concern about government, corporate, or employer surveillance" (Tufekci 2008a, p. 33). Many students in this study enacted privacy settings or became very selective about their audiences to control content access by specific audiences: ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends, groups of estranged friends, professors, older relatives and especially parents. Perhaps college students felt that those groups, especially family members, might not approve of their activities, but peers might approve because they were likely to engage in the same activities as well. The 18-22 group channeled significant effort into controlling what those audiences were allowed to see; these efforts included the creation of two accounts, routine unfriending of certain individuals, constant monitoring of their sites and frequent untagging of content. The few students who held part-time jobs showed minimal concern if their current bosses were to access their pages.

The researcher noted a difference in concern among college students. Users who were 22-years-old were more concerned about future employers or future schools checking their pages

than users who were 18-21 years old. Most 22 year olds attributed their concern to the fact that they were nearing graduation, the workforce or graduate school. As a result, the audiences of greatest concerns were highly relevant to users' present stages in life.

Did users who showed concern about their impressions actually engage in impression management on social networking sites? A deeper analysis highlights some interesting points for discussion. Recall that individuals engage in impression management when they adjust their behavior toward an audience in an attempt to control the impressions that audience may form. Impression management behavior is characterized by perception, (Schneider, 1981), audiences (Goffman, 1959) and control (Schlenker, 1980). All three components were present in participant comments and anecdotes, but further inspection revealed that users may emphasize certain facets of impression management more than others.

First, rather than desiring to convey calculated impressions, users primarily wanted to avoid secondary impressions. Almost all users expressed a goal of not being misunderstood or having their words misconstrued. They rarely ever mentioned wanting to convey calculated impressions. Of all 73 participants, only three adults and six college students shared a desire to convey calculated impressions. Second, rather than controlling their behaviors, they controlled their privacy settings. Participants did not actually change their behavior; they simply changed what certain audiences could see. This may suggest that college students do engage in impression management on social networking sites, but that they are motivated by different goals than those previously studied.

Based on the data of this study, the researcher discovered that college students do manage their impressions on social networking sites. However, students' goals for impression management might not be as clearly defined as they have been in previous studies. Among adults

and the 18-22 age group, there was significantly less prevalence of wanting to convey certain traits or particular skills, two goals that have become firmly placed constructs in the study of impression management (Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981; Schneider, 1981). Instead, students expressed a goal of not wanting to be perceived in an inaccurate way that differed from who they really are.

Why might this shift in goals exist? Perhaps social network users were deterred from conveying calculated impressions because of the difficulty of controlling how others think. Expanding on reasons why users do not consciously manage calculated impressions, several cited the unpredictability of knowing how audiences might perceive them, due to prejudices, grudges or snap judgments. Only a handful of users claimed to actively and consciously manage their calculated impressions. The majority of participants who managed their impressions shared a goal of not wanting to be misrepresented or misperceived. In addition, they felt they had more control when they presented themselves as they really were (i.e. self-presentation theory), instead of trying to convey calculated impressions.

How does this affect how researchers study impression management theory on social networking sites? It might mean that social networking sites are conducive to self-presentation goals but more difficult to use for calculated impression management goals. The conclusion that college students are poor impression managers might overlook the complexity of social network behavior and the influences of privacy, information disclosure and impression management attitudes.

5.3 The Influence of Age

5.3.1 Summary

Both college students and adults exercised at least some control over their content and their audiences. In line with Dwyer, Hiltz and Passerini (2007), who explored the various dimensions of the paradox of privacy, which examines users' high expectations of privacy on a

medium designed to maximize information-sharing and networking, the researcher observed that college students tended to rely on privacy settings more than adults to control personal content. When assessing audiences, college students were more concerned about parents and relatives visiting their pages and viewing their content while adults were more concerned about employers and undesirable friends. Both groups were uncomfortable with strangers contacting them, but the college-age group was noticeably more territorial when unintended audiences visited their pages than the adult group. Participants did not explain why they were more defensive about their pages. (See Table 5.6.1 for a comparison of students and adults' concerns and practices).

5.3.2 Implications

This study questions the conclusions of Hoofnagle et al. (2010,) who reported that usage of these sites had encouraged greater disclosure of information over time. Based on many adult responses, Hoofnagle's finding may not necessarily be valid for adults. Many adults pointed out that site usage made them more selective about what they disclosed and, in some cases, less likely to share content.

Is age really a factor in how social network users control their content and manage their impressions? The researcher discovered some minor differences in content control between age groups. The results of this study seem to support the findings of Madden and Smith (2010), who reported that young adults customized their privacy settings and limited unintended audiences more than any other age group. Many adults carried out the same functions, but not as regularly and with less complicated customization. It is possible that age may be a factor in how users control information disclosure. For example, college students may engage in activities that would be considered inappropriate if shared with others, so they have a greater need to customize privacy settings and monitor information about them shared by others. The fact that college

students and adults exist in different life stages might explain why both age groups differ in their concern for impressions and audiences.

The significance of age in impression management is still unclear. Both age groups shared the same goal of avoiding secondary impressions, so age may not make a difference. There was, however, an interesting repetition of attitudes from both groups. Adults believed they were better impression managers than college students; college students believed they were better impression managers than high school and middle school students. Not one participant believed that younger groups might understand or exercise proper judgment when posting content on social networking sites. In this case, age might play a minor part in how social network users perceive the behavior of other age groups.

5.4 Limitations

The similarity of backgrounds among participants may be a limitation in this study. The 18-22 group comprised university students residing in the same college town. This was a limitation because the college students in this study were representative of only a narrow group of young adult users ages 18 to 22. Furthermore, the majority of adults in this study were highly educated. Approximately 40% had obtained graduate degrees, 54% had obtained bachelor's degrees, and 7% had completed some college. The high education level among older participants might account for tech-savvy characteristics that might not be present in the wider group of adult social network users. Their backgrounds, however, were more varied. Some had children, some were working, some were originally from other towns and some were still in school.

The size of the focus groups may have created another limitation. The smallest session contained six participants and the largest sessions contained thirteen participants. The researcher was not able to divide larger sessions into two groups, so participants' speaking time was limited in those sessions. The average size of the groups was nine participants. Sessions were as short as

one hour and as long as one-and-a-half hours. Students were more reluctant to speak in larger sessions, but adults were still very opinionated in sessions of all sizes. These limitations were not severely problematic, however, mainly because participants offered very similar ideas, regardless of the size of their session. The smaller groups were able to elaborate more, but many users shared similar views.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers should conduct detailed surveys to determine the relationship between age and impression management on social networking sites. One useful approach might be to examine how fluctuating audiences for young adults may affect their impression and privacy management over time. Fluctuating audiences refers to frequently changing peer groups, such as peers in middle school, high school, college and the workplace. Researchers could use what has been discovered about audiences and content from this study to see how young adults change their self-presentation and impression management behaviors as they grow older. Morris and Millen (2007) already have conducted a preliminary study on participants who recently had graduated from college and entered the workforce. Future researchers may learn more about how young adults regulate information and impressions online while they undergo social change in the real world.

This study more clearly defined the relationship between knowledge of risks and concern over information disclosure and impression management. The fact that risks were so frequently mentioned in this study seems to support the findings by Hoofnagle et al. (2010), who found that 42% of young adults 18-24 were more concerned about privacy currently than they had been five years earlier because they knew more about the risks. A future study should investigate why knowledge of risks seems to be increasing among younger age groups, contrary to earlier studies. It could be that social network users are becoming more sophisticated in their judgment and

understanding of consequences. It is also possible that users are growing more cautious as they learn from their mistakes and gain experience using social networking sites.

The 18 to 22 age group expressed interesting attitudes about certain audiences. For example, the majority of students cared very deeply about their professors forming negative impressions of them. This concern carried onto social networking sites, which would explain why so many students enacted stricter privacy settings for professors who were their friends on social networking sites. But during the researcher's defense of this study, the committee, which comprised three professors, were surprised that students would express a great degree of concern for professors' impressions. A future study should investigate why the 18 to 22 group felt so defensive or limiting toward certain audiences.

This study highlighted several situations in which young social network users had posted content that backfired and caused them to have to deal with unforeseen consequences (e.g. *theconnor*'s negative tweet about his new job). An interesting study for future researchers should examine the personal characteristics of Internet users who post risky content. Risky content may range from statements that result in school suspension or job dismissal, to photos or videos that attract investigation from police or legal authorities, to any content that instigates drama or bickering with other individuals. Among middle school children, high school teens, college students and young professionals, are certain groups more likely to post risky content? Are risky content posters simply impulsive? Or do differences in personality traits and risk aversion exist among different age groups? A study that addresses these questions would be both compelling and timely.

This study uncovered an important observation about perceived self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is characterized by an individual's perceived ability to use technology or perceived

ability to control privacy. For example, it is likely that college students perceive themselves to be savvy social media connoisseurs; as a result, they believe they have more self-efficacy using social networking sites. On the other hand, older adults perceive themselves to be novices when using new technology; consequently, they believe they have less self-efficacy when using these sites. Recall that college students greatly emphasized accountability and personal responsibility when posting content. This emphasis was absent in the adult group. Perhaps, this tendency to stress accountability may be linked to one's perceived self-efficacy.

College students who were confident in their ability to use social networking sites may believe they have greater control over their content and how it can be used. As a result, they echo the idea that an individual is at fault if he or she posts inappropriate content on social networking sites. In the words of one student, "you should know better." Adults, on the other hand, may not have reached the same comfort level using social networking sites as students. Less perceived self-efficacy may account for greater hesitation and self-censorship among this age group. This link would explain why the 18 to 22 group stressed accountability if peers posted content that led to negative consequences. The greater an individual's perception of control over technology, the more accountability he or she assigns to him- or herself.

Future studies should examine perceived self-efficacy among social network users. How do they feel about their ability to control their content and audiences? How do they feel about their ability to control or manage their privacy? How much control do they feel they have on social networking sites? How comfortable are they using technology? In the same way that this study revealed slight differences between college students and adults, the researcher imagines that future social scientists would discover different mechanisms among social network users of

various ages and perhaps between more novice or more experienced social network users regardless of age.

5.6 Conclusion

The results suggest that at least some users reference a desire to manage their impressions, but the extent to which impression management is a highly important aspect of the social networking world is uncertain. Impression management, as it currently exists, might not fully explain online behaviors of adult social network users. With regard to some users' inappropriate postings on social networking sites, it seems media scholars ought to be less worried than other authors have suggested. Social network users have at least some knowledge and concern about the risks of posting questionable content that might be accessed by unintended audiences. Many users, especially college students, have had negative experiences and accepted them as learning experiences to improve their judgment. The younger generation is, in fact, taking steps to exert as much control as they deem fit on their content and audiences. The importance they place on impression management, however, is still unknown.

Table 5.6.1. Differences between college students and adults' concerns and practices

	Information Disclosure	Content Control Tools	Audiences of Concern	Impression Management Tools
Students	Risk of unintended uses	Privacy settings	Parents, families, professors, children, non-friends	Tighter privacy settings
Adults	Benefit of stronger relationships	Self-censorship	Employers, coworkers, undesirable acquaintances	Looser privacy settings

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your name? _____
2. What is your gender? ___ Male ___ Female
3. What year were you born? _____
4. Please select the highest education level completed:
 ___ High School
 ___ Some College
 ___ College / University
 ___ Graduate School
5. What is your occupation/major? _____
6. How often do you use social networking sites?
 ___ Several times a day
 ___ Once a day
 ___ Every other day
 ___ Every few days
 ___ Once a week
7. How often do you use Facebook™?
 ___ Several times a day
 ___ Once a day
 ___ Every other day
 ___ Every few days
 ___ Once a week
 ___ Never

8. How often do you use MySpace™?

Several times a day

Once a day

Every other day

Every few days

Once a week

Never

9. Besides Facebook™ and MySpace™, what other social networking sites do you use?

10. How often do you use these other sites?

Several times a day

Once a day

Every other day

Every few days

Once a week

APPENDIX B INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Good evening. My name is Kayla and I'm a journalism graduate student at the University of Florida. This is my videographer, Jonathon. Thank you all for coming. Today we are having a relaxed discussion about how you share information and approach privacy on social networking sites. I am not here to tell you what you should or shouldn't do or to give you my opinions. Your perceptions are what matter. There is no right or wrong answer; you can disagree with each other, and you can change your mind. I want you to feel comfortable saying what you really think.

Discuss Procedure

Jonathon will be videotaping today's discussion so that I don't miss anything you say. As you know, everything you say here is confidential. No one will see this discussion except me, Jonathon and my assistant transcriber. It's important that everyone feels free to say what he or she thinks and to share his or her experiences, so I'll ask everyone here to promise that you will not share with anyone outside this group anything that someone says here. Does everyone understand why that's important? Does everyone agree to this ground rule?

So everyone has agreed not to tell anyone else specific things that were said in this discussion. I need to remind you, however, that even though I'm sure everyone intends to keep that promise, it's possible that someone might forget and mention something you say to people outside this group. So please be aware of that if you're thinking of saying anything you wouldn't want people outside of this group to know.

I want this to be a group discussion, so feel free to respond to me and to other members in the group without waiting to be called on. However, please try to make sure that only one person

speaks at a time. After we're finished, I need to transcribe our discussion, which means I'll want to type of word-for-word EXACTLY what everyone said. That will be a lot harder to do if several people are talking at the same time. The discussion will last approximately an hour and a half. Please silence your cell phones. There is a lot I want to discuss, so at times I may move us along a bit. There are restrooms in the back and food on the table. Feel free to go to the restroom or help yourself to food, but I ask that you be as quiet as possible so the discussion can continue.

Questioning Route

Question Type	Question	Concept
Opening	Tell us your name, your major/what you do for a living, and the last movie you watched.	Introduction
Introductory	What is your favorite social networking site?	Social Networking Sites, General
Transition	Tell us why you started using Facebook TM /MySpace TM /social networking sites.	Social Networking Sites, General
Transition	How often do you browse or look at others pages and posts? How often do you yourself post content?	Social Networking Sites, General
Key	What kinds of things do you usually post or say on these sites?	Information Disclosure
Key	How many of you have had the experience where you thought about posting something but didn't? (M: Look for nods, ask those people). Could you tell us about that experience? (M: Ask if not mentioned) What prompted/influenced/caused/made you 'hold back'?	Information Disclosure
Key	Now I want to ask about a different kind of experience. Has anyone had an experience in which someone else posted something about you that you wished they hadn't posted? (M: Look for nods, ask those people). Could you tell us about what happened? (M: Ask if not mentioned)	RQ1

	<p>What made you uncomfortable about that posting? What did you do about it? How important is it to you that you control the information that is said or shared about you? Does anyone else have an experience of this kind?</p>	
Transition	<p>Of all the information that could be shared about you on a social networking site, what kinds of information are you comfortable with other people seeing? What kinds of information are you most uncomfortable with other people seeing? What are some kinds of things you'd NEVER post yourself or you'd NEVER want someone else to post about you?</p>	Information Disclosure & Audiences
Key	<p>Who do you think visits your profile page the most? Who else do you think visits your profile page, at least occasionally?</p>	Audiences
Key	<p>I want to talk more about the people who visit your profile page. Has anyone had an experience in which someone you weren't expecting to see your page actually saw your page? (M: Look for nods, ask those people). Could you tell us about what happened? Anyone else?</p>	Audiences
Key	<p>Do you care who visits your page? How important is it to you to be able to control who visits your page?</p>	Audiences
Transition	<p>Some of you have already talked about privacy as an important issue in how you use social networking sites. So I'd like to ask you all now to define privacy. (After a few have answered), does anyone have any other different definitions of privacy that you want to offer?</p>	Privacy
Key	<p>There are lots of different groups of people now using social networking sites. How similar or different do you think other groups might be from you in terms of the way you manage your privacy?</p>	Privacy, RQ3

Transition	Suppose that you were meeting someone for the very first time. You did some digging and you were able to view their entire profile page. To learn more about them, where do you look first?	Impressions
Key	Profile pages can say a lot about a person. How much effort do you put into managing your profile page?	Impression Management, RQ2
Key	Let's talk more about how you manage your profile page. When you make changes to your page, who are you thinking about as the audience for that page? How important is the audience when you manage your page?	Impression Management, Audiences, RQ2
Key	Have you had any experiences in which someone got the wrong impression about you from something you posted on your profile page, or maybe something that a friend posted about you, such as a comment or a tagged photo or video? (M: Look for nods, ask those people). Could you tell us about what happened? How did you respond?	Impression Management, Audiences
Key	In recent years, more schools and employers have been visiting people's profile pages. What reasons do you think they might have for looking up prospective students or employees on social networking sites? What do you think about this practice? Should organizations continue this practice? Why or why not?	Impression Management, Audiences, RQ1, RQ2
Key	How much privacy do you think you ought to have on social networking sites? How much privacy do you think you actually have on social networking sites?	Privacy
Key	How important is it that people who learn things about you through social networking sites form the kinds of impressions that you want them to? In other words, how much of a problem do you think it is if people develop an inaccurate or negative impression of you based on what they see on a social networking site?	Impression Management

Transition	(M: Give a summary of what we talked about and the purpose of this session) What else should we have discussed about social networking sites and privacy issues? Did I cover everything?	
Ending	I'm going to be doing several more of these focus groups. Do you have any advice on how I can improve the process or the questions for later groups?	

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH



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