Facebook and Psychology:
Use and Misuse of Social Networks

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Acknowledgements

- Research & travel funding

- University of Central Oklahoma
  - Office of Research and Grants
  - College of Education & Professional Studies
  - UCO Foundation

Introduction

- Social networking sites are one of the most popular ways that people communicate with their peer

- Users of social networking sites tend not to think about the consequences of the amount of information that they post

- Facebook has over 300 million registered users

Problem Formulation

- Employers and administrators can easily access information that is posted online

- Students who don't use privacy settings can be searched by anyone who cares to do so (i.e. potential employer or admissions administrator)

Study

- Designed to evaluate the level of privacy that Facebook users employ

- If the privacy settings are not being used then then their level of unprofessional content is analyzed


Method

- Using personally created Facebook accounts, the researchers searched the names of undergraduates

- Those students who had Facebook accounts were categorized into two groups: Public and Private

- Those accounts that were public were explored and various data were collected

Method

- Data was collected on the content that was deemed unprofessional

- Each photo was scanned for evidence of overt sexuality, alcohol use, drug use, sexism, or racism

- Comments posted on the front page were examined to find profanity

Participants

Facebook Account Status

Private 26%

No Account 50%

Public 24%
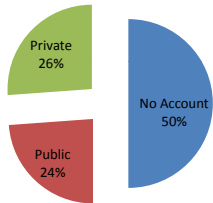
Results

Revealed Info	Total (n=135)	Females (n=93)	Males (n=42)
Birthday	93.3%	95.0%	90.0%
Hometown	65.9%	68.0%	62.0%
Relationship status	82.2%	86.0%	74.0%
Political views	45.9%	44.0%	50.0%
Religious views	57.8%	58.0%	57.0%
Sexual orientation	68.1%	68.0%	69.0%
Personal photograph	95.6%	97.0%	93.0%
Field of study	49.6%	49.0%	50.0%
Home postal address	7.4%	2.0%	19.0%
Email address	38.5%	33.0%	50.0%
IM address	24.4%	23.0%	29.0%
Mean # friends	301.9	323.5	238.1
(Range)	(0-1715)	(0-1715)	(0-1644)
Mean # photo albums	6.7	8.5	2.9
(Range)	(0-70)	(0-33)	(0-70)
Mean # social groups	22.6	24.8	17.9
(Range)	(0-160)	(0-68)	(0-160)

Questionable content	Total (n=135)	Females (n=93)	Males (n=42)
Alcohol use	35.6%	39.0%	29.0%
Drug use	3.0%	3.0%	2.0%
Overt sexuality	41.5%	43.0%	43.0%
Profanity	11.9%	14.0%	22.0%
Racism	3.0%	0.0%	13.0%
Sexism	4.4%	4.0%	6.0%

Of the 135 students who had public profiles, 46.6% had questionable content on their profile.

Gender Differences

- Females had a significantly higher number of photo albums
  - $F_{[1, 134]} = 8.10$, $p < .05$

- Males had a significantly higher level of publicly posting their home address
  - $F_{[1, 134]} = 13.02$, $p < .05$

- Males also had a significantly higher level of racism
  - $F_{[1, 134]} = 10.31$, $p < .05$

Conclusions

- With the level of information that the public is privy to it is more important than ever to censor it

- Privacy settings should be employed as a measure of protection from onlookers

- Setting privacy settings so that content can only be viewed by friends is the safest way to maintain animosity in a world where privacy is limited

Questions?