Enhancing Privacy on Social Networks by Segregating Different Social Spheres

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Our Goal

Learn:

- What types of groups users create when forced to group friends on social networking sites
- From whom users restrict information
- What types of information is restricted
Social Networking Websites

- Web-based services that allow individuals to create personalized profiles and communicate with others on the network in the variety of ways
- Becoming a major part of teenage life.
Facebook

- The second largest social network on the Internet created in 2004.
- Users create personalized profiles that display their real names, date of birth, education, and other personal information.
- Privacy is an issue.
- By default, all of a user's friends can see his/her full profile.
- Posting of private or possibly embarrassing information.
- ‘Facebook Stalkers’ - users who use Facebook to follow and stalk other users.
Friend Grouping Feature

- Recent feature on Facebook that allows a user to create groups of friends and restrict certain information to them.

- Problems:
  1) Not advertised
  2) Not mandatory
  3) Little customization of settings
Our Study

- 20 Study Participants- Males and Females 16-18
- Pre-Survey- Participants share their prior experiences with Facebook’s grouping features
- Application- Participants group ‘friends’ on Facebook using our sample application
- Post-survey- Participants give feedback about the experience
Our Application

- Interacted with a user’s profile without changing it
- Mirrored Facebook's privacy and grouping interface.
- 39 different privacy settings that can be restricted
- “Mandatory”
Application: Creating a Group

Create a Group

Current Groups:
Test

This is the menu for creating a new group, it shows existing groups and allows for the creation of a new group.
Application: Setting Privacy

Group Chosen: Test

Click a box to allow group members to view information. Blank checkbox means that the group cannot see the information.

Edit Preferences:
- Sex
- Birthday
- Hometown
- Political Views
- Religious Views

Submit

The Information here is Opt-In instead of Opt-Out, so all this information is invisible to ‘friends’ in the first place.
Results

- 35% of study participants were familiar with Facebook's current grouping feature
- 25% of participants have used it
- Most of the volunteers created similar groups.
- 30% of our test participants created multiple groups.
- Certain privacy settings were restricted often among test participants.
- “Smart” privacy restriction
Commonly Restricted Settings

Information restricted from groups created by research participants

- Home phone number - restricted from 81% of groups
- Address - restricted from 55% of groups
- Political Views - restricted from 48% of groups
- Interested in - (Sexual orientation) restricted from 45% of groups
- Tagged videos - (Videos featuring you) restricted from 42% of groups
Conclusions

- Users want to show different personas to the people they interact with
- Preset user groups should be available
- Privacy customization should be increased
- Viewable information should be “opt-in” rather than “opt-out”
- Grouping and privacy features should be mandatory to protect users
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