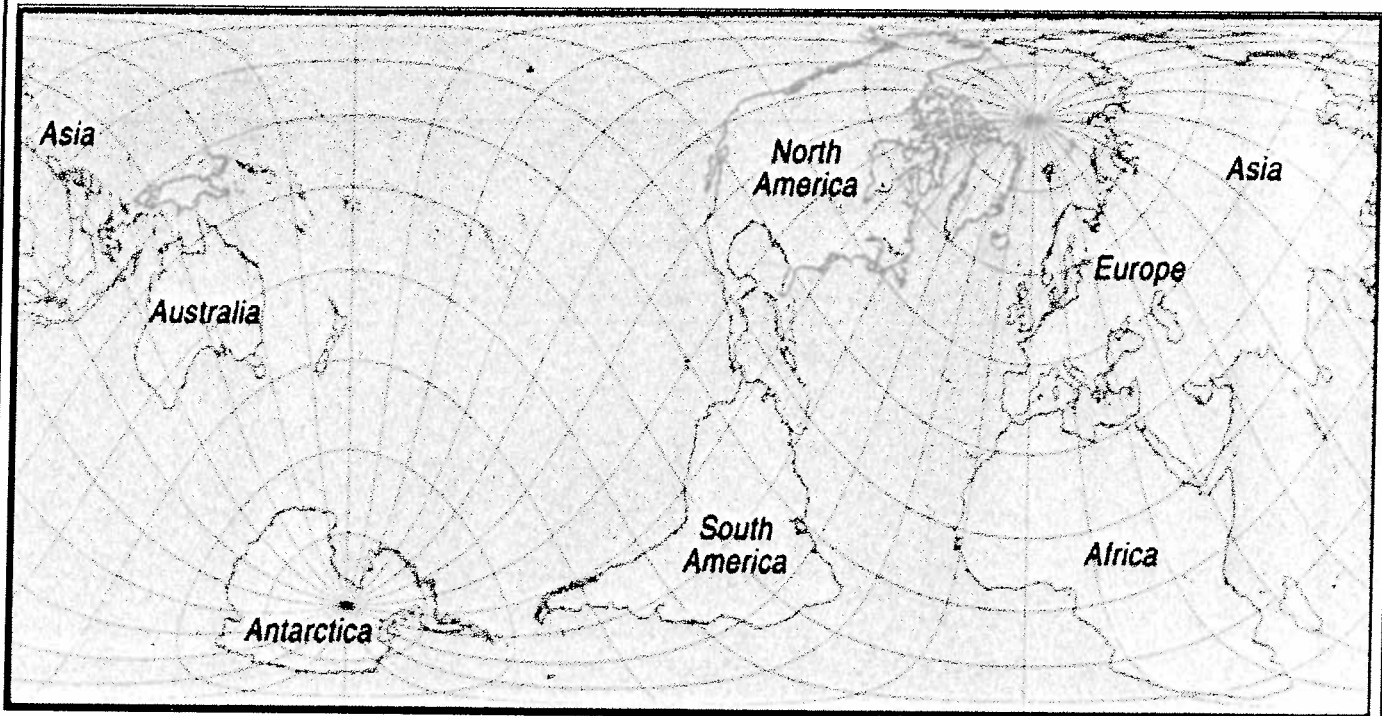


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ONLINE PRIVACY CONCERNS: GENDER DIFFERENCES AMONG HISPANIC UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Sathasivam Mathiyalakan, Winston-Salem State University
Greg Taylor, Winston-Salem State University
George E. Heilman, Winston-Salem State University
Sharon D. White, Winston-Salem State University
Jorge O. Brusa, Texas A & M International University
Pablo Camacho Gutiérrez, Texas A & M International University

ABSTRACT

This study examines the attitudes of Hispanic undergraduate college students toward online privacy and data security using a sample of students from a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in a southwestern U.S. state. The findings indicate that both males and females express high levels of concern about online privacy and data security, and that the level of concern for females is consistently higher than for males.

Neither males nor females consider Facebook particularly trustworthy in terms of protecting or using their personal information, and both expressed concerns about privacy issues. Males had more concerns than females about harm from Facebook's sharing of personal information with third parties. Females were less concerned about third party information releases but were more concerned with other invasions of privacy that might come from the public or those with free access to information through the social network. Designers and marketers can respond to female concerns by creating features and controls to limit access to sensitive information transparently. Developing privacy policies that limit possibilities for sharing information with third parties that could harm the user may alleviate some male fears.

Keywords: *Social Networking, Hispanic Serving Institution, Privacy, Security, Transparency, Internet*

1. INTRODUCTION

Efforts to capitalize on social media investments depend greatly upon people's willingness to share information that will be valuable to third parties. Researchers and site operators are very interested in understanding concerns about privacy since they can substantially reduce user willingness to share and thus reduce the value of social networking sites. Many previous studies have shown that females tend to have more privacy concerns than males and hide or withhold potentially valuable content accordingly (Hoy and Milne, 2010; Thelwall, 2012; Staddon et al., 2011; Fogel and Nemas, 2009). Some have also shown demographic differences in social media use and preferences, including ethnicity (Heilman et al., 2013; Lenhart et al., 2011; Madden et al., 2013). Hispanics were small subgroups in many of these studies. To date, there have been few if any reports of Hispanic behaviors and attitudes on social media privacy. Among New York residents, such concerns have caused a dramatic decrease in the willingness to allow public access to lists of friends on the Facebook social networking site since 2011 (Dey, Jelveh, and Ross, 2012). The objective of this research was to investigate gender differences in online privacy concerns among Hispanic undergraduate students.

Facebook is the largest social networking site in the United States in 2014. It allows anyone 13 years or older to participate free of charge. The site encourages users to connect with others and produce valuable content that can be sold to advertisers and other third parties. Facebook use has been found to be positively associated with three measures of social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2007). In particular, it increases bonding within groups, bridging between groups, and maintaining historical associations. This study also finds that usage interacts with psychological well-being. Those with low self-esteem and low life satisfaction tend to benefit most from Facebook use. In a later study (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, 2011), social information seeking connection strategies improved perceptions of social capital. Seeking connections among close friends or strangers did not improve these perceptions. Another study found Facebook use positively related to life satisfaction,

social trust, civic engagement and political participation (Valenzuela, Park, and Kee, 2009). Others have found declines in face-to-face communication skills and loneliness associated with excessive use of technologies including social media (Turkle, 2011).

Perhaps surprisingly, the digital divide does not seem to keep youth from accessing social media (Ahn, 2011). Nor does racial and ethnic status influence social media use (Chou et al., 2009). However, online social networks are segregated racially. Efforts to increase physical interactions between races in college students have not successfully reduced this segregation (Mayer and Puller, 2008). It should not be too surprising that these segregated groups observe different types of behavior. In fact, just 56% of black youth aged 13-17 report mostly "kind" online interactions on social network sites compared with 78% of Latinos and 72% of whites (Lenhart et al., 2011). These differences motivate studies of students within Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI). Based on the results of these studies, it seems reasonable to postulate that attitudes towards social network privacy may be different within these communities than would be found in settings that are more diverse.

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of Hispanic undergraduate students attending a HSI regarding Internet and Facebook privacy issues. In addition to reporting on student attitudes toward online privacy issues, the paper also presents an analysis of differences in privacy attitudes between male and female Hispanic students.

2. SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Drawing from the literature, a survey instrument was created to assess student attitudes related to a variety of online and social networking (specifically Facebook) issues. The survey included a section to collect demographic information, followed by sections to collect information on student attitudes related to computer knowledge, computer anxiety, Internet use, and various aspects of Facebook use. Of particular interest in this paper are the survey sections related to attitudes regarding Internet and Facebook privacy. All the attitude questions were measured on 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

3. SAMPLE

The survey was administered to a cross-section of students at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Southwestern United States. The students were enrolled in introductory level business core courses that were also open to non-business majors. Each student received an e-mail invitation to participate in the online survey. Although no financial incentives were given to the students for completing the survey, some instructors offered bonus points for participation.

118 students responded to the survey invitation. 106 of the responses were complete and usable. Responses from non-Hispanic and graduate students were removed, leaving a total sample size of 94.

4. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the demographic categories for the 94 Hispanic undergraduate students included in the analysis.

The average Age category is 2.63 for males and 2.18 for females. The males are significantly older ($p=.012$).

The average Class category is 2.73 for males and 2.80 for females. The difference is not statistically significant. The sample consisted of 37% juniors, a larger percentage than the other classes.

The average self-reported GPA category is 3.47 for males and 3.34 for females. The difference is not statistically significant. These values correspond to an average GPA of approximately 2.9.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics	Categories	Number (n=94)	Percentage
Gender	Male	44	46.8%
	Female	50	53.2%
Age	Under 18	1	1.1%
	18-22	69	73.4%
	23-26	15	16.0%
	27-30	2	2.1%
	Over 30	7	7.4%
Class Standing	Freshman	13	13.8%
	Sophomore	21	22.4%
	Junior	35	37.2%
	Senior	25	26.6%
Self-reported GPA	Less than 2.000	2	2.1%
	2.000 - 2.499	18	19.1%
	2.500 - 2.999	28	29.8%
	3.000 - 3.499	32	34.0%
	3.500 or higher	14	14.9%
Major	Accounting	20	21.3%
	Business Administration	33	35.1%
	Economics	9	9.6%
	Finance	7	7.4%
	Management	5	5.3%
	MIS	3	3.2%
	Marketing	9	9.6%
	Double or triple major	1	1.1%
	Non Business	7	7.4%

5. RESULTS

5.1 Attitudes toward Internet Security

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with six questions related to privacy and data security concerns related to their Internet use (Tuunainen, Pitkänen and Hovi, 2009). Responses were measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. A summary of the statements and responses is presented in Table 2.

Both males and females tended to agree with all the statements (mean scores > 3.00). Males indicated a slightly stronger level of concern with Internet data protection and security than females, although the differences were not statistically significant. For the remaining five questions, related to issues of worry about data security and identity theft, female responses were higher than males. On the first question (worry about privacy and data security on the Internet), females indicated a significantly higher level of concern than males.

5.2 Attitudes toward Facebook Privacy and Data Security

Using a second set of questions, respondents are asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with five statements about Facebook privacy and data security (Tuunainen, Pitkänen and Hovi, 2009). Responses are measured on a 5-point scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. A summary of the statements and responses is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 2: INTERNET PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY CONCERNS

Question	Mean Response Males	Mean Response Females	Statistically Significantly Different
I worry about my privacy and data security while using the Internet	3.68	4.10	p=.038
I worry that if I use my credit card to buy something on the Internet, my credit card numbers will be obtained/intercepted by someone else	3.57	3.82	n/s
I worry about people online not being who they say they are	3.30	3.64	n/s
I feel that identity theft could be a real privacy risk	4.09	4.26	n/s
I worry that if I use the Internet with my mobile phone and someone steals it, he/she could find out some of my personal information or data	3.39	3.90	p=.030
I'm generally familiar with data protection and security while using the Internet	3.91	3.86	n/s

TABLE 3: FACEBOOK PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY CONCERNS

Question	Mean Response Males	Mean Response Females	Statistically Significantly Different
I feel that the privacy of my personal information is protected by Facebook	2.43	2.72	n/s
I trust that Facebook will not use my personal information for any other purpose	2.30	2.88	p=.005
I feel comfortable writing messages on my friends' walls	3.34	3.62	n/s
I worry about my privacy and data security while using Facebook	3.09	3.62	p=.020
I worry that I will be embarrassed by wrong information others post about me on Facebook	3.14	3.38	n/s

These items in Table 3 address two different concepts. The first two items address respondents' attitudes toward Facebook itself. The last three items address their attitudes regarding their use of Facebook.

Looking at the first two items, neither males nor females seem to believe Facebook is particularly trustworthy with respect to its protection and use of personal data (means < 3.00). Females tend to be more trusting of Facebook than males on both questions, especially in the area of Facebook's use of their personal information for other purposes, where the male scores are significantly lower than the female scores ($p=.005$).

Looking at the last three items related to the respondents' attitudes regarding their actual use of Facebook, both males and females tended to agree with all the statements (scores > 3.00). The responses almost seem paradoxical. The students generally feel comfortable when they post things to others' walls in Facebook, but then express a concern about privacy, security and embarrassment over what others post. On all three items, female scores were higher than the male scores. The females expressed a significantly higher level of concern about privacy and data security while using

Facebook than males ($p=.020$). As discussed in the previous section, females had expressed significantly more concern about Internet security and privacy as well.

6. SUMMARY

This study examines the attitudes of Hispanic undergraduate college students toward online privacy and data security using a sample of students from a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in a southwestern U.S. state. In addition to assessing students' attitudes toward online privacy and security while using both the Internet and Facebook, the analysis also tests for the presence of gender differences. The findings indicate that both males and females express high levels of concern about online privacy and data security, and that the level of concern for females is consistently higher than for males.

Regarding concerns with Internet use, both males and females express high levels of concern about their privacy and data security while using the internet. Females have significantly higher scores than males (agreed more) on questions addressing worry about privacy and data security while using the Internet and about data security if they have accessed the Internet via their mobile phones.

Regarding concerns about Facebook, neither males nor females consider Facebook particularly trustworthy in terms of protecting or using their personal information, and both expressed concerns about privacy issues while using Facebook. Males have a consistently lower opinion of Facebook than females, and females have a consistently higher concern about privacy and security than males.

One aspect of the gender differences may be useful to those designing and marketing social media. Males tend to be concerned about different aspects of privacy than females. Males have more concerns than females about harm from the site provider sharing personal information with third parties. Females are less concerned about third party information releases but are more concerned with other invasions of privacy that might come from the public or those with free access to information through the social network. Designers and marketers can respond to female concerns by creating features and controls to limit access to sensitive information transparently. Developing privacy policies that limit possibilities for sharing information with third parties that could harm the user may alleviate some male fears.

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AUTHOR PROFILES

Sathasivam Mathiyalakan earned his Ph.D. at the University of Kentucky. He is currently an Associate Professor of Management Information Systems at Winston-Salem State University.

Greg Taylor earned his Ph.D. at Texas Tech University. He is currently an Associate Professor of Operations Management at Winston-Salem State University.

George E. Heilman earned his Ph.D. at the University of Arkansas. He is currently a Professor of Management Information Systems at Winston-Salem State University.

Sharon D. White earned her Ph.D. at the Florida State University. She is currently an Associate Professor of Management Information Systems and chair of the Accounting and MIS Department at Winston-Salem State University.

Jorge O. Brusa earned his Ph.D. at the University of Arkansas. He is currently a Professor of Finance at Texas A&M International University.

Pablo Camacho Gutiérrez earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas - Austin. He is currently an Associate Professor of Economics at Texas A&M International University.