

## The Triumph of Social Privacy: Understanding the Privacy Logics of Sharing Behaviors Across Social Media

ZOETANYA SUJON<sup>1</sup>  
University of Arts London, UK

Current scholarship positions privacy as something that is networked and complex, shifting away from ideas of privacy as individualized and control oriented. Drawing from a small sample of in-depth research using media diaries, interviews, and a small survey ( $N = 270$ ) of London, United Kingdom, residents 18–37 years of age, this research examines the tensions between privacy and sharing culture as lived experiences, revealing three themes. First, privacy matters, and second, respondents identify their experiences of sharing and understandings of privacy in more traditional privacy terms: as an individualized right focused on control, pointing to a disconnect between sharing culture and concepts of privacy. Third, respondents describe their sharing behaviors as clearly shaped by privacy logics, almost entirely driven by social rather than institutional privacy. These social privacy logics are made visible through “private sharing,” “public friends,” and the depersonalization of shared public content. These evolving ways of navigating sharing culture point to the apparent triumph of social privacy over institutional privacy, but they also reveal a platform failure to make institutional privacy coherent in respondents’ lives.

*Keywords: social media, sharing culture, social privacy, institutional privacy, public friends, private sharing, depersonalization*

At first glance, privacy and sharing are conflicting principles, positioned on opposite ends of the spectrum, each demanding different and contradictory behaviors. Very few people would share information on social media that they would like to keep private, and yet, participating in sharing culture is also a common requirement for social interaction. This tension between privacy and widespread sharing practices complicates an already contested concept. Many, such as Scott McNealy (Sun Microsystems CEO), claim

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Zoetanya Sujon: z.sujon@lcc.arts.ac.uk

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that we “have zero privacy anyway” (cited in Cohen, 2012, p. 7) and that privacy no longer matters, or at the very least, has evolved toward openness and a privacy-eroding public-by-default orientation. Social media have invited everyday permissiveness around constant sharing of personal information, often to the benefit of social companies that use “the logic of data accumulation” and “surveillance capitalism” to capitalize on personal data (Zuboff, 2015, p. 75).

Personal data include a wide range of content, from the easily visible user-generated content (e.g., status updates, photos, social media profiles, links, hashtags, comments, browsing behavior, clicks, likes, single sign-on features across mobile apps and websites) to an increasingly wide range of less visible content (e.g., metadata, geolocation data, shadow profiles, Web searches, details of devices used along with algorithmically derived data such as a user’s sentiment or mood). All of these data are owned and manipulated in complex ways by mega-platforms, in an era in which privacy appears to be withered by both mass sharing and mass global surveillance, all apparently commonly accepted by ordinary people.

Ideas of privacy are also shifting away from 20th-century control-based notions of privacy, defined, for example, by Westin as “the claim of individuals . . . to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others” (cited in Fuchs, 2014, p. 156). More recent theories frame privacy as shaped by “public intimacy” (Lambert, 2013) and see multiple, overlapping conceptions of “networked” privacy (Cohen, 2012; Marwick & boyd, 2014).

Despite the overwhelming complexity of the digital environments and platforms making up sharing culture, evidence suggests that privacy does matter to most, even if accompanied by some uncertainty over what privacy means today, how to protect it, and what privacy policies actually do. In this article, I address the tensions between shifting privacies and sharing culture as everyday, lived experiences. For the conceptual foundation, I provide a brief review of current literature and research, detailing the shift in understandings of privacy as an individualized right based on control, to something more social, more embedded, more public, and more networked. In addition, this research notes the marked distinction between the importance of “social privacy” as related to friendship-oriented and reputational privacy concerns, and “institutional privacy” as related to the use of largely invisible personal data by social media platforms, governments, and other third parties (Raynes-Goldie, 2010, 2011, 2012). Original empirical evidence contributes to a better understanding of privacy and sharing as lived experiences, not necessarily aligned with the literature. In particular, I asked

*RQ1: What does privacy mean for 18- to 37-year-old London, United Kingdom, residents, who are accustomed to sharing personal information across digital platforms?*

*RQ2: And how do people understand and experience the tensions between sharing culture and privacy?*

To answer these questions, I asked seven people to keep diaries of their sharing practices over a week, followed by an in-depth interview about their experiences and sharing behaviors. Building on themes emerging from diarists and their interviews, I developed a survey, using the same sampling criteria (18- to 37-year-old social media-using London residents;  $N = 270$ ). Several interesting themes became apparent. First, privacy matters, particularly social privacy. Second, youthful practices around privacy protections and

negotiations show evolving behaviors around what it means to be public and how sharing behaviors are shaped by privacy logics. These shifts include a rise in "private sharing," which marks different sharing behaviors with "public friends" and with those maintaining closer ties to sharers. Respondents also share less personal information, sharing more depersonalized content, where visible content is stripped of personal thoughts, feelings, or experiences. Despite these notable shifts in how respondents navigate their personal connections in sharing culture, an overwhelming majority of respondents referred to control-based ideas of privacy, primarily toward social rather than institutional terms. Rather than suggesting that this means networked privacy is inaccurate and institutional privacy does not matter, I argue that institutional privacy requires new concepts better able to capture the complexities of networked personal data. Respondents care about privacy, but the sociolegal language around the copyrights, use, ownership, and the economics of often invisible personal data do not fit with their lived experiences of privacy.

### **Conceptual Framework: Shifting Privacies and Sharing Cultures**

Instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise have invaded the sacred precincts of private and domestic life; and numerous mechanical devices threaten to make good the prediction that "what is whispered in the closet shall be proclaimed from the house-tops." (Warren & Brandeis, 1890, p. 195)

Warren and Brandeis' (1890) classic article outlines privacy as a right, and sets out a theory of privacy based on "restricted access" and individual control of information. Notably, Warren and Brandeis published their seminal work in response to the "unacceptable intrusion of photography in the private sphere" as often enacted by story-hungry newspapers keen to publish increasingly personal details (Fornaciari, 2014, para. 7). At the turn of the century, publishing photographs in newspapers with massive, national audiences pushed boundaries around what was private and what was public. Photography enabled the relatively easy capture of what had previously been private or invisible, and then made that information visible to mass newspaper audiences. Warren and Brandeis, like many of their peers, felt deep uneasiness around the changing boundaries between public and private. Similar to social media today, photographs in the late 1800s allowed private information to be almost effortlessly captured and easily shared with large public audiences. This historical insight points to long-standing challenges in the experiences and expectations of privacy, particularly around new technologies, sharing practices, and public communication.

At the turn of the 20th century, Warren and Brandeis (1890) defined privacy as the right to be let alone, to be free from interference. Rights to privacy continued to develop as negative rights, and have been further enshrined in Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948) and in Article 8 of the Human Rights Act (1998), as well as many other treaties and conventions. Understanding privacy as a set of rights for individuals makes privacy "inherently personal," where legal codes and policies focus on controlling "interference" and access to the private realm (Solove, 2007, p. 760). Rosenzweig (2012) calls these "antique" theories of privacy because no users will ever be in "complete control" of their data (p. 344; cf. Marwick & boyd, 2014). This loss of control is amplified by the intersections between sharing culture and the growth of massive information capitalists, such as Google and Facebook, who practice mass data accumulation under a new regime of "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2015, p. 75). For example, in the United Kingdom, 77% of adults have at least one social media account

and “99% of 16–24-year-olds use social media” (Ofcom, 2016, p. 177) and “more than three-quarters of active adult Internet users” use social media and 91% of these have a Facebook account (Ofcom, 2018, p. 53), which leads many to suggest that “oversharing” is normalized and expected (Brake, 2014). As boyd (2010) suggests, “privacy and publicity continue to get mashed up in new ways” (para. 82). Within the vast literature on privacy, most seem to agree that privacy has changed and requires rethinking to better reflect the world we live in. However, what this rethinking should include involves extended debates about what privacy is, how it has changed, and what people think of it now.

Yet, there are also many enduring issues among those debating the correct rethinking of privacy. Communitarian and pluralistic views of privacy, for example, also focus on the complexity of privacy, suggesting that privacy provides social value through individual protections and for maintaining social control (Solove, 2007). Solove (2007) argues that privacy is “a plurality of different things” sharing “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing” (p. 756; cf. Clarke, 2014; Papathanassopoulos, 2015). Related to this plurality, Nissenbaum (2010) developed “contextual integrity of privacy” as a framework for understanding the “finely calibrated systems of social norms, or rules, that govern the flow of personal information in distinct social contexts (e.g., education, health care, and politics)” (p. 3). The contextual integrity of privacy helps explain and protect the great number of individual variations determining what is private, as well as the impact of location, circumstance, and relations on those determinations. Nissenbaum (2004, 2010) argues that violations of the contextually specific flows of personal information, such as the acceptability of sharing medical information with a doctor as opposed to an employer, is also a violation of privacy. For Nissenbaum, contextual integrity provides a construct for understanding the networked flow of personal information as well as changing rules and notions of privacy.

Part of Nissenbaum’s aim is to understand the challenges to privacy in the networked contexts so characteristic of digital environments. boyd (2012) offers DNA as a compelling example of “networked privacy” (p. 348). Genetic information, like social and personal data, contains personal data not only about individuals, but also about entire families—mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, children, grandchildren, and those children yet to arrive. Nissenbaum and boyd provide convincing arguments for understanding privacy as much more than an individual right. Personal information is deeply relational and digital environments contribute to the collapsing contexts of that relationality, making personal content easily shared beyond the intended audience (boyd, 2012, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2014). In the same way that genetic information is about familial groups and even cultures, personal information is also networked through social and Internet-based media.

Although Nissenbaum’s contextual integrity accounts for the unique contexts used to define lived and everyday experiences of privacy, Raynes-Goldie (2010, 2011, 2012) offers a helpful, more user-oriented distinction between *social privacy* (privacy from peers, family, employers, and other people) and *institutional privacy* (privacy from algorithms, platforms, companies, governments, and other institutions that collect personal information). Social privacy thus refers to social and/or public visibility, as well as the flow of information to humans. Institutional privacy, on the other hand, refers to visibility or data collection by unknown and faceless entities. Thus, whereas sharing personal information socially can have a tangible short- or long-term impact on someone’s life, sharing information with institutions is far less likely to be perceptible (cf. Brake, 2014; Mayer-Schönberger, 2011).

Like Nissenbaum's contextual integrity, Marwick and boyd's networked privacy provides models better suited to the mediated spaces and relational practices people engage online. Yet, privacy is also important for individuals. Cohen (2015) elaborates on the connection between "self-hood" and privacy (p. 7, Chapter 5), crucial for the capacities of individuals to separate from the public world. It is through this process and in the experience of privacy that people are able to build capacities for reflection, thinking, forming opinions, creating, and preparing for civic and social engagement. This tradition positions privacy as a necessary and fundamental component of active citizenship (Habermas, as discussed in Papanassopoulos, 2015, p. 1), of self-hood, and provides the grounds for "human flourishing" (Cohen, 2012, p. 3, Part 5). In this sense, privacy is not merely about individual rights, and is instead "a societal or common value that must be upheld in order to protect 'democratic substance'" (Rauhofer, 2012, p. 357; cf. Clarke, 2014). Thus, although privacy does have a collective element, more attention has been paid to the rise of sharing.

Sharing is "the defining concept of today's age," and John (2016) describes sharing as "the constitutive activity of social media. It is the umbrella name given to the myriad of activities we carry out online" (pp. 52–53), although it is distinct from the "sharing economy" platforms selling microwork, goods, or services (e.g., Uber, Airbnb, crowdsourcing, or peer production; cf. John, 2016). In contrast to the sharing economy, sharing culture refers to a diverse range of actions and behaviors, including the widespread circulation of information, images, and user-generated content to both known and unknown networks. John argues that social media and social network sites began using "sharing" in the 2005–2007 period and can include "communicative" or "distributive" kinds of sharing.

Many have critiqued the sharing economy as not really being about sharing, arguing that instead companies like Airbnb and Uber are profitmaking companies, capitalizing on and often exploiting workers through a sharing rhetoric (Feldman, 2012; Fuchs, 2014). These critiques are especially relevant in terms of the "free labor" used to create user-generated content on most social media sites, in exchange for the sale of users' personal information and behavioral data that are sold to the highest bidders (Scholz, 2012; Terranova, 2003). These critiques of the sharing economy, along with many others, suggest that in contrast to many young people's prioritization of social privacy, the work of corporate and third-party data capitalists is a particular threat to privacy, albeit on an institutional level (e.g., Nissenbaum, 2010; Zuboff, 2015).

### ***Studies on Youth, Social Media, and Privacy***

Many highly influential technology leaders such as Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook's founder and CEO) and Eric Schmidt (CEO of Alphabet/Google) have proclaimed that privacy is dead and people no longer care about privacy (Weinstein, 2013). However, extensive studies including the one reported here, across Europe, the United Kingdom, North America, and elsewhere, suggest that the majority of youth think privacy is important. In contrast to not caring about privacy rights, youth go to great lengths to monitor and protect their social privacy (Blank, Bolsover, & Dubois, 2014; Lapenta & Jørgensen, 2015; Livingstone, Mascheroni, & Murru, 2015; Madden et al., 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2014; Rauhofer, 2012).

Within this field of research, and despite the increasingly networked nature of privacy, teens and young people, like their elders, continue to express a desire for control over their information, a feature

they deem as essential to privacy. For example, based on interviews and participant observation with 166 American teens, Marwick and boyd (2014) claim that many teens tend to talk about privacy in terms of control. boyd (2014) argues that teens must develop a whole range of skills—technological, social, interpersonal—to control their privacy, so even though they care deeply about their social privacy, it is difficult, demanding, and complex to maintain it.

Research in this area comprises an impressive body of evidence on the importance of privacy for young people. Teens, for example, engage in sophisticated tactics and techniques to control and protect their privacy (cf. survey results from the European Union claiming that 78% care about their privacy; Rauhofer, 2012; cf. boyd, 2014). Some of these privacy-controlling strategies include using aliases, deleting content, or “cleaning” social media content after it has been seen by those it was intended for (Raynes-Goldie, 2010). Other strategies include using “coded” content such as song lyrics only understandable to a select audience; subtweeting or tweeting about someone without naming them; deactivating accounts (Lapenta & Jørgensen, 2015); using ad hoc “privacy tools,” controlled groups, and content filtering; and establishing rules around social media interaction with family and friends (Hodkinson, 2015). Other studies find that teens limit “friends” to only known offline connections and create private profiles only accessible to carefully selected individuals (Livingstone et al., 2015). Thus, teens exercise many “access controls” and many “informal strategies,” demonstrating active control over their social media platforms and their own privacy.

Regan Shade and Shepherd (2013) conducted 14 focus groups with Canadian undergraduates, finding that although respondents felt cynical about their ability to protect their institutional privacy, many felt that “they were protected by obscurity” as their data were only one set among billions (para. 30). Lapenta and Jørgensen (2015) conducted 11 focus groups, totaling 68 respondents with young people, finding that respondents were well versed in social privacy, but were not so articulate about institutional privacy. Lapenta and Jørgensen note that this may be due to respondents feeling that terms and conditions were both unfair and unavoidable, so they had “no choice” but to accept them. Thus, although researchers do agree that privacy is important for young people, they also note significant barriers interfering with how young people act on this importance.

Following up on these behavioral barriers, Stutzman, Gross, and Acquisti (2012) argue that young people are simply unaware of the institutional structures supporting social media platforms. Based on an analysis of U.S. “profile data from a longitudinal panel of 5,076 Facebook users,” Stutzman and colleagues found significant changes in users’ sharing behaviors over time (p. 7). The longer users had used Facebook, the more they sought greater privacy by using more privacy controls and by sharing less with strangers. Although, Stutzman et al. did observe that users shared more with known or “connected profiles,” they also noted a rise in unintended audiences and “silent listeners” (pp. 24–30). These included Facebook, third parties, and advertisers, which were further obscured by constantly changing privacy policies, opaque terms and conditions, and largely invisible entities. Stutzman et al. demonstrate that institutional privacy is much more complicated and is deeply embedded in and obscured by social media infrastructures, making it much less understandable for respondents.

This review of scholarly work shows that contrary to popular thinking and media reports, many young people believe privacy matters, and that they actively engage sophisticated techniques to protect their social privacy, much more so than their institutional privacy. In addition, control-oriented ideas of privacy—where privacy is understood as restricting access and controlling content—are enduring and still dominate how respondents understand and articulate privacy.

### Method

Seven active social media users living in London (UK) between the ages of 18 and 37 years were recruited using snowball sampling to keep daily media diaries over a one-week period. Although respondents were not asked for their socioeconomic or educational background, people were selected with different educational backgrounds (some with or in university education, some without) and with different relationships to social media. See Table 1 for names and ages of diarists.

**Table 1. Age and Gender of Sharing Diarists.**

Age range (years)	Women (age)	Men (age)
18–19	Ava (18)	–
20–29	Matilda (22)	Julian (24)
	Jilly (25)	Henry (27)
30–37	Katy (36)	William (37)
Total	4	3

In their diaries, respondents were asked to track the social media they used and why they shared what they did (or did not) on the social media platforms important to them. Respondents were asked to define what privacy meant to them and to note anything interesting or surprising about their sharing behavior on a daily basis. On the seventh day, respondents were asked to review their diary and reflect on their sharing behavior and any observations they had about what they had done over the past week. This method, inspired by Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham's (2007) work on public connection, was designed to better understand not only what people think about privacy, but also how it fits with their sharing behaviors as lived experiences.

The resulting diaries were rich in content, and although the smallest was only 500 words, it included self-selected social media content, images, links, and screenshots including some reflective text. The largest diaries were closer to 7,000 words, some documenting the content and time of shared posts, as well as the thought processes leading up to each instance of sharing behavior. Each diary contained rich details identified by each respondent as relevant to their experience of sharing and privacy. The last day, when diarists were asked to reflect on the process as a whole, was particularly interesting. Almost all of the diarists felt that they had learned something valuable about their social media use during the week.

Following the diary stage, each diary was analyzed and each diarist was interviewed about his or her experience, noting interesting behaviors and any identifiable patterns from the diaries. Diarists

selected their preferred method for interviewing: Some were conducted face-to-face, some via instant messenger (e.g., WhatsApp or Messenger), and some were conducted over the phone. The goal of the follow-up interview was to clarify any questions inspired by the diaries and to get an in-depth view of the relationship between sharing and privacy as a lived practice.

Based on key themes emerging in the diaries and follow-up interviews, I designed and piloted a 10-minute survey focusing on people's attitudes and behaviors around social media, sharing, and privacy. The survey methodology was best suited for exploring, in an indicative way, the prevalence of themes emerging from the qualitative work (Gillham, 2000; Seale, 2012). The survey, including closed- and open-ended questions, was piloted by quantitative specialists, colleagues, and a small class of undergraduates. Like the sample of diarists, the survey sample included social media using 18- to 36-year-old London residents. Survey respondents were recruited through snowball sampling and advertisements were placed on social media including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The survey was also promoted across various Facebook groups and through a large central university's student union. Two incentives were offered: Those who completed the survey could enter a drawing for £50 Amazon and Pizza Express vouchers.

In terms of survey response rate and sample size, 404 people began the survey, 63 of whom did not meet the sample criteria and 71 of whom did not complete every survey question, leaving 270 eligible survey entrants. Considering the 63 respondents who were excluded from completing the survey, the completion rate was 79.1%. Setting aside the small sample size, it is important to note that this is not a representative survey and the results are not generalizable. Furthermore, it is impossible to determine the number of people who saw ads, e-mails, and social media posts to determine an accurate response rate. Given the range of techniques used to target the sample, it is safe to assume that the response rate was less than 25.0%.

In addition, there are several possible biases resulting from our methodological choices. First, respondents may have chosen to complete the survey because they were interested in privacy or social media, and results may reflect this bias. As is widely known with surveys, those with strong feelings about a topic are more likely to complete a survey than those who do not have strong feelings. Although many attempts were made to reach a wide range of 18- to 37-year-olds, the use of snowball sampling means that respondents also may have been more likely to come from academic or journalistic fields, reflecting the researchers' links and connections.

This research also drew from a narrow age group of young adults and excluded younger teens (see Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Hodkinson, 2015; Livingstone et al., 2015; Madden et al., 2013), middle-age adults, and the senior citizens (see Quan-Haase, Mo, & Wellman, 2018), and the role of life stage in social media use (see Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Anderson & Jiang, 2018). The choice of a London-based sample was intended to provide some regional coherence across a diverse cross-section of respondents with different relationships to and with social media, but it also means the sample was regionally narrow and specific to a large urban center in an advanced capitalist society. As a result, this sample excluded geographic variation and a wider context of use, both important factors in social media use and privacy (see Costa, 2018).

Despite these biases and limitations, this survey provides some insight into how some social media-using London-based adults understand privacy and negotiate sharing culture.

### Results

The diaries and follow-up interviews revealed vivid relationships with social media showing a deep integration in respondents' daily lives. All diarists used social media to communicate with the people who were important to them, and many also used social media to promote themselves or their work. Some used social media to relive shared childhood memories and to connect with others by sharing interest-specific videos, chats, and images. Some reported using social media first thing in the morning and as they went to bed at night. Like the evidence outlined in the literature review, this research found that control-based ideas of privacy were dominant and social privacy was much more important to respondents than institutional privacy. This was demonstrated by very few mentions of government, companies, or third-party data collection or surveillance in diaries and also in surveys. Nonetheless, data from all three methods revealed that privacy does matter. Privacy matters in terms of protecting the self, control, rights, self-hood, and also in terms of what social media appeal most and least. All respondents had much to say about privacy. Indeed, almost all of the diarists commented on how much they learned from their sharing diaries and noted the importance of privacy in their final reflections.

In terms of sharing, themes emerged from the sharing diaries that were supported in the follow-up interviews and surveys. In addition to the importance of privacy to most, three themes emerged, all of which articulate common privacy logics across social media, made visible through sharing behaviors that help respondents navigate between the opposition between privacy and sharing. The first of these includes what diarists referred to as "private sharing" and also "public friends," articulating a particular pattern of affiliation and highly specific kinds of sharing and kinds of friends. The second theme includes a tendency toward depersonalizing content. Many diarists and survey respondents made claims that what they share is not personal. This marks a common strategy distinct from those identified in the literature reviewed above. It is also notable that in addition to limiting personal details, respondents were very aware of the people in their networks, often reflecting on what kinds of content would be interesting or relevant for their networks and tailoring content to the audiences they had in mind. Finally, taken together, respondents painted a picture of reconfiguring friendships, affiliations, and ways of being public, in line with the uneasy tensions between privacy protections and personal connections. Some of these tensions are resolved in the privacy logics of social media (e.g., Snapchat; Finstagram, a fake Instagram account "for the real self"; see Abrashi, 2018), which easily enable private sharing and boundary maintenance between public and private friends.

All of these themes work together and each reflects common features identified by respondents in their diaries, interviews, and survey responses. It was clear that respondents embraced sharing culture, writing rich and detailed diaries with many reflections on how much they enjoyed the process of thinking about sharing, privacy, and their relationships to and with social media. Survey respondents also had much to say about privacy, about why it is (or is not) important, and about their behavior and attitudes toward social media.

### ***Privacy Matters***

Similar to findings reported in the literature, many of the diarists identified control of personal information as central to their understanding of privacy. Others said that privacy meant being "Internet free! What a weird world that would be" (Jilly, 25-year-old diarist), or that "privacy doesn't really exist" (Henry, 27-year-old diarist), or that privacy is "being able to express yourself freely and without fear" (Matilda, 22-year-old diarist).

Regardless of how they defined it, all diarists talked about privacy as important to them, although this did not always sit well with respondents' views of sharing. For example, Ava, an 18-year-old diarist, repeatedly communicated the importance of privacy to her social media use and sharing behaviors. Yet, despite this emphasis, Ava wrote in her diary that

Maybe people shouldn't be so private as it's sort of a put off. As humans we want to learn from each and get to know one another and how else would we know anything about people's interests if sharing on social media wasn't a thing. I think without it, we'd be way less connected and as a result, we would be unhappy.

Ava explained this further in the follow-up interview: "Sharing is about human connection and privacy can limit that." For this diarist, privacy is important but is also framed in opposition to "human connection."

Survey respondents also said privacy mattered to them. When asked to rate how important privacy was to them, 88.5% of the 270 survey respondents said that privacy was important or very important to them. One respondent claimed, "Privacy builds an individual. Privacy plays a major role in differentiating your individuality from the society" (Survey Respondent 24, age range 20–24 years). Although only a minority of others referred to building the self in this way, this connection between privacy and self-hood is significant, emphasizing Cohen's (2015) argument about the importance of privacy for human flourishing.

However, when asked to think about what privacy is and what it means to them, diarists and survey respondents emphasized traditional ideas of privacy. Survey respondents identified different defining principles for privacy; yet, the majority of definitions included "control" or some close variation. Although only 12.0% ( $n = 33$ ) used the word *control* when asked what privacy meant to them, many talked about privacy in terms of actions or ideas relating to control. For example, survey respondents most frequently used terms to infer some kind control around access, such as "not revealing," "limiting," "allowing," "restricting," "deciding," and "not being watched." In addition, control of personal information and over personal profiles was the key privacy issue for 24.0% of survey respondents.

Perhaps more strikingly, 24.0% of respondents understood privacy as a "right," 5.0% understood privacy as being about safety, and 1.5% defined privacy in relation to freedom or being free. Others frequently used terms to refer to privacy as a process, such as being "able" or having the "ability," "choosing," or as something that can be possessed as an "individual." Visibility was also important, with many survey respondents referring to being seen or being watched. Twenty percent spoke about privacy as relational, referring to privacy in terms of other people, both known and unknown.

In contrast to popular opinion, only 3.0% felt that privacy no longer exists in today's society (Weinstein, 2013). Henry (27-year-old diarist) provided one such example, writing, "If you have a computer, you have no real privacy." It was also clear that the primary concern for diarists and survey respondents was social privacy rather than institutional privacy. When asked, "What is privacy to you?" only 5.0% of respondents talked about government or states as a threat to privacy, 4.0% mentioned companies or corporations, and only 1.5% mentioned surveillance of any kind. In the post-Snowden era, the absence of these mentions is quite surprising; yet, it does support research pointing to the importance of social rather than institutional privacy (Raynes-Goldie, 2010, 2011, 2012; cf. boyd, 2012).

### ***Evolving Sharing Behaviors: Private Sharing and Public Friends***

Diarists wrote and commented on their thought processes around sharing, revealing evolving patterns of public affiliation, a reconfiguring of friendship connections, and emerging sharing behaviors. Ava, the youngest in our sample, wrote about private sharing, referring to the use of Facebook Messenger or direct messages on Instagram to share any content. For example, Ava explained,

When I do tend to share stuff it's privately as I don't feel comfortable sharing to the "public friends" as I don't actually know all of them, plus I don't know how they feel about certain things.

For this respondent, using public social media for private communication was a strategy for protecting her privacy and demarcating her affiliations between "public friends," who she was not comfortable sharing information with, and close connections who she trusted. For her, and as clarified in the interview, private sharing is a real-time activity enjoyed with friends, which helps carve out a safe space separate from the "public" world and public friendships on social media. Although private sharing only refers to social privacy, it does point to the emergence of a genre of personal connections that are both friends and specific embodiments of public association. In addition, Ava's observation about private sharing directly contradicts the public-by-default logics of Instagram, Twitter, and other social media platforms. In this way, a social privacy logic inspires a very particular sharing behavior.

Matilda, a 22-year-old diarist, described a related example when she wrote how she did not want people to know how she was feeling: "I wouldn't want all my followers to know I was bored." Instead of sharing with her public friends, Matilda Snapchatted a selfie captioned "Mood—Bored" to her friends privately rather than using the public "My Story" feature. Like Ava, Matilda justified her private sharing habits in terms of social privacy protections, practicing private sharing as a way to distinguish public friends from a closer group. Matilda also made repeated reference to Snapchat because it is "more personal" and "feels more 'real' and less staged" than television or other social media. Julian supported this, commenting,

Snapchat is more of a close friends thing. You have to actually add specific people and you have to be present to add them. It's very personal. And it's the way you share a story. It's different from Facebook or Instagram. . . . *Snap is for those little things you only share with friends.* (emphasis added; interview with diarist, age 24 years)

Survey respondents also talked about Snapchat as a platform for private sharing, as illustrated by Survey Respondent 257 (age range 20–24 years), who commented, “Snapchat is more like private conversations through photos and I would feel uncomfortable if these were made public.”

This identifies two points that have not yet received sufficient attention in the literature. First, our respondents’ see social privacy and even the contexts for public affiliation as composed of two kinds of friends: public friends and private friends. The use of this term, “public friends,” points to a reframing of friendship categories. The idea of public friends includes a wide category of personal and impersonal connections and relationships that have clear implications for social and institutional privacy. Second, respondents also discuss private sharing, which has not been named as such in the literature. Although private sharing appears to occur primarily through messaging services—which is a well-documented use of media—and Snapchat, it does suggest an evolving relationship to the public and of the negotiation between privacy logics and sharing behaviors.

In contrast, two public-oriented diarists—both facing major life transitions—reflected on their sharing practices as perhaps more enthusiastic than they should be given their new or approaching responsibilities. The first respondent, Julian, a 24-year-old diarist, had just begun the search for a “serious” job and observed, “Now that I am trying to become more professional, I am re-evaluating what it is that I will share. I think I will probably go back to being private.” The second, Katy, a 36-year-old diarist just entering parenthood, reflected,

I don’t give privacy as much consideration as I should, particularly when it comes to sharing photos of my son. . . . I am now considering changing my privacy settings across social media.

These respondents highlight the importance of life stage for understanding the role of privacy and privacy-managing strategies in sharing culture (see Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Although these examples provide small insights into the lived experiences of privacy, it seems that there is a tension between youthful and emerging adult practices. For younger users, private sharing marks distinctions between public friends and close friends, whereas older respondents are just beginning to question sharing practices in terms of maturing roles and life stages. Certainly, this raises a question for further research in terms of the impact of life stage on sharing culture and social media. Private sharing is one of many themes diarists identified and is used in tandem with other strategies such as “depersonalizing” sharing content and focusing on celebrities, public events, news, or other less personal information.

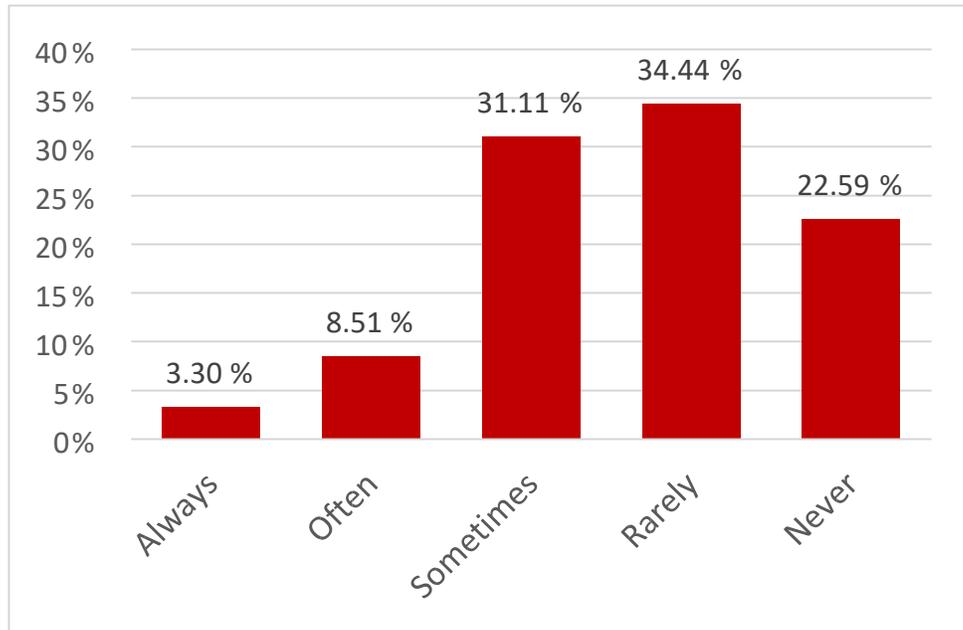
### ***Sharing Strategies: Depersonalizing Content***

Although all diarists wrote about connecting with people who were important to them on social media, the majority of the content they tracked in their sharing diaries had to do with work, school, celebrities, interest-related events, or other kinds of public facing content, which was not particular to their personal thoughts, feelings, or relationships. Most diaries contained few references to personal interactions or relationships. For example, despite a rich and detailed diary, Henry almost exclusively focused on his public work, making only one mention of his personal romantic relationship in his diary and only as a

contextual piece of information. Similarly, Jilly, a 25-year-old diarist, whose diary detailed active social media use and copious amounts of sharing, wrote about sharing an article on “single shaming in the 20s.” Jilly explained with obvious embarrassment that “I realized after sharing this, that basically I had broadcast my relationship status to all of my Facebook friends.” For this respondent, this article contained personal information, revealing her own relationship status, which she had not intended to share or “broadcast” to her own networks. Although Jilly described Snapchat as “more real and raw” than Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, she uses Snapchat in less private ways than other respondents. Jilly connects as much with celebrities on Snapchat as she does with friends. For Jilly, sharing on social media is a vibrant kind of social interaction. Snapchatting, in particular, is intensely social, more interactive, safer, and more genuine than other social media.

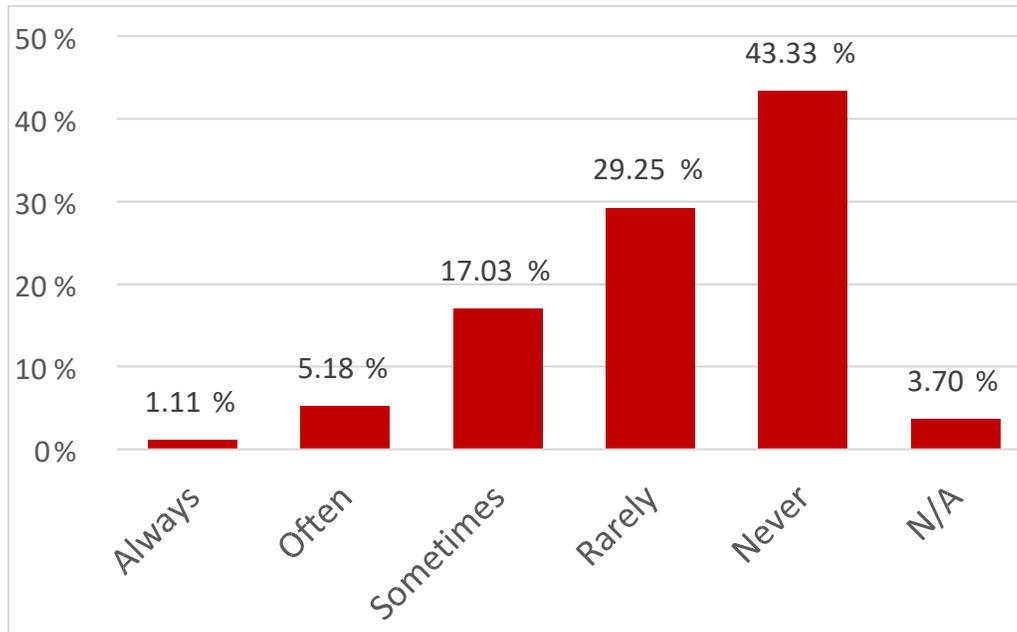
Katy (36-year-old diarist), on the other hand, wrote about sharing a #tube\_chat campaign on Facebook and Twitter “as I knew this was a story that was trending and I wanted to be part of the conversation.” In contrast to detailed personal data, Katy focused on popular content to engage a broader and more public network. Matilda (22-year-old diarist), an avid Snapchatter, also described her sharing behavior as “very basic and in my opinion if my privacy is breached it won’t affect my life . . . [as] I am very careful with what I share.” In this instance, Matilda’s sharing behaviors are structured around impersonal content, almost as a protective strategy. The focus on broad public conversations and care around content demonstrate two different approaches to depersonalizing content. Although many diarists woke up and went to bed browsing, posting, sharing, and linking on social media, almost all of them, like Matilda, expressed great care about the kinds of content they shared and who they shared it with. Matilda, like many other diarists, made sure nothing too personal was in the content she shared, stripping any posts with information about people in her life, her emotional state, or details of her private thoughts. However, these are social privacy logics rather than institutional ones.

This point also came out very clearly in the survey. One survey respondent captured this particularly clearly: “I do not share things that I feel are personal” (Survey Respondent 192, age 30–34 years). In addition, more than half (57.03%) of the survey respondents said that they never or rarely shared personal thoughts or feelings on social media, whereas 31.11% said they sometimes did, and the minority (11.81%) said they did so always or often (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Survey results by percentage indicating how often respondents shared personal thoughts on social media (N = 270).**

Survey respondents, like the diarists, were also much less likely to share information about their romantic relationships, providing further evidence of how respondents depersonalize the content they choose to share. Here, 43.33% said they never share details about their romantic relationships, and 29.25% said they only do so rarely (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Survey results by percentage indicating how often respondents shared details of their romantic relationships on social media (N = 270).**

Although it may be unsurprising, 66.43% rarely or never share details about friendships, family, or romantic relationships. In 2010, Gershon reported that for many young people, a romantic relationship was not considered legitimate until it had been publicly declared on Facebook, hence the idea that a relationship could only be “real” once the people in it had changed their relationship status on Facebook to publicly declare it to be “Facebook official.” It would appear that social media users have come a long way from this practice to one in which only 1.11% of survey respondents “always” declare their relationship status on social media.

Indeed, this theme also extended to how survey respondents understood the role of institutional privacy. For those survey respondents in the minority who did mention governments, corporations, or companies, many separated private and personal information from social media data and behavioral analytics completely. As one respondent explained,

I am aware that companies easily attain a history of my past purchases, my age and gender to direct targeted advertising toward me. *The reason I don't mind is that I don't define these details as private information.* (emphasis added; Survey Respondent 198, age range 30–34 years)

On one hand, this points to how commonplace confusion is about the use of personal data and privacy invasions, particularly in a post-Snowden era defined by institutional surveillance and data capitalism. On the other, it also points to a very specific idea of “private” or “personal” information as distinct and separate

from mass government surveillance, behavioral analytics, data capitalism, and other institutional uses of personal data. It is this understanding of personal data as completely distinct from privacy that I argue challenges canonical thinking of privacy in terms of data, and calls for a radical rethinking of institutional privacy.

### **The Triumph of Social Privacy and the Call for Further Research**

Many privacy advocates and public commentators lament what appears to be the large-scale erosion of privacy, particularly in light of mass surveillance, massive misuse of social media data as seen in the Cambridge Analytica events, and rapidly changing laws and policies (e.g., Google and the right to be forgotten, and the European Union and the General Data Protection Regulation). The role of social media as data capitalists masquerading as social networks appears unquestionable. However, this research and many other studies have found that privacy does matter even if it is social privacy that is more valued than institutional privacy.

One of the key questions emerging here is why institutional privacy is less valued. Although this research was based on a small sample and asked how people understand and experience privacy, I believe that there is enough evidence to point to one possibility. This possibility is that institutional privacy, although fundamentally about the use of private data and personal information, is not about privacy. Instead, the use of all of the largely invisible kinds of data associated with institutional privacy is mostly about the complex laws and policies intended to govern the use of personal data, as well as the monetization processes of those data. As such, institutional privacy needs to be rethought in terms of platform responsibilities rather than as individual privacy rights that must be personally managed. In this sense, the complex sociolegal frameworks and the economics of personal data use by platforms, governments, businesses, and third parties stretch far beyond the territory of individual rights. Identifying the differences between social and institutional privacy is helpful in that it allows a better conceptualization of the lived experiences of privacy. However, this framing also positions privacy as an individual responsibility rather than as a sociolegal framework to which data capitalists must adhere to respect individual rights.

In my view, this research is positioned within a well-developed field, and it is the continued echoes of social "privacy matters" throughout the field that call for a deep rethinking of privacy. Existing privacy vernaculars cannot do justice to the complexity of the economics of personal data, social media architectures, and ambiguous sociolegal frameworks. Although networked privacy does further the discussion, it does not yet seem to resonate with peoples' lived experiences of privacy in sharing culture, particularly as social and institutional aspects are flattened into one privacy framework. As such, this research documents some novel privacy logics and sharing behaviors, at least in how respondents describe them, but more important, it also points to an important contradiction in the lived experiences of privacy.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I have examined the body of research on privacy, examining a shift from traditional ideas of privacy as a right, as control, and as a negative freedom, to ideas of networked privacy involving contextual integrity and clear distinctions between social and institutional privacy. Certainly, "sharing" is

both constitutive of social media (John, 2016; John & Sützl, 2016) and deeply integrated in respondents' lives. The tensions between privacy and sharing culture reported here support existing studies on young people and privacy. Findings demonstrate that privacy matters, and that social privacy is more highly valued than institutional privacy (cf Madden et al., 2013). Although respondents articulated sharing as relational, public facing, and networked, this did not translate to their definitions or descriptions of privacy. Privacy-as-control dominated respondents' privacy metaphors and language, informing how respondents understood their sharing practice through "control of" and "access to" their social information. However, in terms of the literature, this work supports many of the empirical studies, but it does not support ideas of "networked privacy" as informing respondents' lived experiences of privacy and sharing culture, as it is just not a part of their privacy language.

Despite the obvious limitations of this small, regionally specific, nongeneralizable research, respondents thought carefully about how and what they shared and what privacy means is to them. Based on their rich responses, it seems that there are three central themes involving the role of privacy logics in sharing behaviors. First, as identified above, privacy matters, although the lived experiences of respondents do not align easily with changing privacy ideals. Second, respondents spoke of private sharing and public friends, pointing to a reconfiguring of friendships and evolving public affiliations. These practices likely help respondents navigate the complexities of social media, where sharing can be a threat to privacy, but is also the foundation for "human connection" (Ava, 18-year-old diarist). Finally, when asked about what they shared on social media, most diarists and survey respondents emphasized that they did not share personal information about their thoughts, feelings, relationships, romances, and connections. The depersonalization of shared content points to an emerging privacy management strategy as well as the privacy logics informing sharing behaviors. Finally, this research also raises the question of why social privacy continues to triumph over institutional privacy, calling for a rethinking of what privacy means and more platform responsibility for complex sociolegal privacy frameworks.

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