Contextual Identity: Freedom to be All Your Selves

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Contextual Identity
Be who you want, when you want
Multiple identities abound!
Colleen Lachowicz
Snoop Dogg (Snoop Lion)
All your identities in one big identity

"Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity."

- Mark Zuckerberg, *The Facebook Effect*

"If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place."

- Eric Schmidt, interview on CNBC
“Facebook is a community where people use their real identities. We require everyone to provide their **real names**, so you always know who you're connecting with. This helps keep our community safe.”

Mr. Burns is not pleased
A real world example

Bobbi Duncan

Taylor McCormick

Outed when the choir director added them to a public Facebook group, Queer Chorus
Fuck you, Google

I use my private Gmail account to email my boyfriend and my mother. There’s a BIG drop-off between them and my other “most frequent” contacts.

You know who my third most frequent contact is? My abusive ex-husband.

Which is why it’s SO EXCITING, Google, that you AUTOMATICALLY allowed all my most frequent contacts access to my Reader, including all the comments I’ve made on Reader items, usually shared with my boyfriend, who I had NO REASON to hide my current location or workplace from, and never did.

source: www.fugitivus.net/2010/02/11/fuck-you-google/
catalyst: Google Buzz/Reader/Contacts integration
Twitter Direct Messaging Failures

sources: twitter.com/dmfail, wikipedia.org/wiki/Weinergate

catalyst: typing '@' instead of 'd'
What's in our privacy toolbox?

- Cryptography [RSA, AES, Diffie-Hellman]
- Contextual integrity [Barth et al.]
- Access control [Bell, LaPadula]
- Anonymizers [Dingledine, Marlinspike]
- Blockers [AdBlockPlus, Disconnect.me]

Our tools are necessary but not sufficient.
Access control: state of the art?
Changes are hard to track

source: http://mattmckeon.com/facebook-privacy/
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Be who you want, when you want

How do we get there?
Call to action

Study mental models
What makes up online identity?

- topics you like
- devices you own
- devices you borrow
- devices you lend
- sites you never visit
- sites you often visit
- sites you visit once
Call to action

Study identity management techniques
Multiple browsers
Multiple devices
Multiple profiles
Alternate identities
Privacy mode

We may want to clear my browser history before we go any further here.
Challenge
People value community
Challenge
People want their data everywhere
Popemobiles make it hard to share
Hey, W2SP.

Think different.
Room for imperfect solutions

- Obscurity can be enough
- Embarrassment reduction
- Troll avoidance
- Mistake recovery
How can we make things better?

- Question our own notions of identity, privacy and publicity
- Write software for how users *are*, not how we wish them to be
Open questions

- How can we design privacy and sharing to be less brittle, more flexible?
- How can we balance desire for spontaneous interaction with the need for privacy?
Works in progress

- **Blushproof** [with David Keeler]
- **Cookiemonster** [with David Dahl]
- Behavioral segmentation [Mozilla UR]
Questions?