

# Online Social Networks in a Post-Soviet State: How Hungarians Protect and Share on Facebook

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## ABSTRACT

As Facebook has become global, users from different cultural and socio-political contexts have joined the site. We present a case study investigating how both current and historical political events, as well as the migration from a local social networking site to Facebook, impact Hungarians' privacy attitudes on Facebook. We report the results of 19 semi-structured interviews of Hungarian Facebook users, focused on behaviors, motivations, and attitudes.

Our results uncover a stark generation gap in Facebook privacy attitudes, with the youngest generation expressing little concern about personal information or intimate photos, whereas users older than 30 explain that they and their peers rarely share information on Facebook. Members of all age groups agree that political opinions should be kept off Facebook, but the motivating factors differ between generations. We also highlight how users' dissatisfaction with iWiW, the local social network, can be contrasted with the high degree of trust they have in Facebook.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.1 [Information Systems]: Models and Principles

## General Terms

Human Factors, Security

## Keywords

Privacy, Social Networks, Facebook, Cross-cultural, Hungary.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The world is on Facebook, with over 750 million people sharing personal information, uploading photographs, and communicating with friends, acquaintances, and strangers [8]. While social media facilitates communication, the sharing of personal information can have far-reaching consequences, including both regret [23] and substantial social embarrassment [9].

As Facebook continues to grow throughout the world [8], new users come to Facebook with different values and perceptions based on their cultural experiences. More than a decade ago, the idea of Internet users as a globally homogeneous mass was

debunked through ethnographic fieldwork identifying a cultural element of online activities [17]. Within this cultural context to the Internet, it seems reasonable that users' decisions about sharing or protecting their information on Facebook may also reflect the norms and values of their culture, as well as both the general history and domain-specific experiences of a country.

In this paper, we report the results of 19 semi-structured interviews of Hungarian Facebook users. We discuss users' privacy attitudes and motivations, as well as themes that emerged by placing user behavior within the context of a tumultuous half-century of Hungarian politics and an online social networking culture predating Facebook. A European country of approximately 10 million people, Hungary's 45 years of secret police and communist rule during the Soviet Occupation ended only in 1991, when today's undergraduates were born. The past two decades of political see-sawing have come to a head with the recent rise of a radical right party [7] and large protests in Spring 2011 [18]. With this rich historical and political backdrop, Hungary provides a vantage point to make sense of ways in which social media usage can be shaped by these hidden forces.

Recent years have also proven eventful in the sphere of Hungarian social networking. iWiW (roughly pronounced "ee-veev"), a Hungarian social networking site that had been extremely popular, rapidly gave way to the Hungarian-language version of Facebook. This change is notable for the sites' contrasting approaches to sharing information. iWiW was culturally homogeneous and invitation-only, yet lacked site-wide privacy controls; information posted on iWiW was generally visible to all other iWiW members.

Between a domain-specific evaluation of social networking in Hungary and an overview of the country's history, we hope to unveil how cultural and historical forces potentially influence users' privacy decisions. In Section 2, we explain the history of social networking in Hungary, summarize Hungary's political history from the end of World War II to the present day, and discuss related work on intercultural privacy behaviors. We describe the methodology for our interviews and profile our participants in Section 3.

In Section 4, we relate salient themes from these interviews. We then draw connections between Hungarian socio-political history and current Facebook privacy practices in Section 5. Among the most important themes was a stark generation gap in which both young and old interviewees felt that the older generation was more reluctant to share on Facebook. Both young and old users considered politics too sensitive to post, but the reasons for this behavior differed between generations. While attitudes towards "the government" varied, participants overall expressed a high degree of trust in Facebook and a low degree of respect for iWiW.

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## 2. BACKGROUND

As users of social networking sites make decisions related to posting and distributing their personal information, photographs, and connections, a complex series of preferences and customs underlies an equally complex series of decisions. To better understand how users decide to share or restrict personal information, it is thus necessary to better understand the customs, social constructs, and historical antecedents that might be influencing these systems. As people adapt to new communication media, early behaviors become customs. Therefore, we survey the history of social networking in Hungary in Section 2.1.

However, considering a particular culture's Internet behaviors in isolation ignores the wider, societal issues that influence users. As Miller and Slater argued, people join the global Internet as identifiable members of their own culture [17]. When examining Internet behaviors, understanding a society's psyche is necessary, and a society's psyche is inextricably linked with its history. To this end, we examine the complex 20<sup>th</sup> century of Hungary's history in Section 2.2 before discussing related work on cross-cultural privacy behaviors in Section 2.3.

### 2.1 A History of Hungarian Social Networks

In the span of a few years, the face of social networking in Hungary has changed dramatically. iWiW ("International Who is Who"), originally WiW ("Who is Who"), was the first major social network in Hungary upon its founding in 2002. At the vanguard of Hungarian social networking, iWiW influenced many Hungarians' expectations for this new medium.

#### 2.1.1 The Defining Features of iWiW

iWiW's monolingual interface is one of its defining features in the social network landscape. Except for a brief period in 2005 – 2006, iWiW has been offered only in the Hungarian language [11]. As a result, users of iWiW are nearly exclusively Hungarian citizens or ethnic Hungarians within the larger diaspora.

A further barrier to iWiW entry was a requirement that all members be invited to join. iWiW's system permitted only existing users to request invitations for their friends and acquaintances. Although invitation-less registration was opened to anyone in Spring 2011, the site remains monolingual.

While iWiW's monolingual interface and invitation-based registration system effectively constricted the size and composition of its user base, privacy settings on the site are very coarsely-grained. For instance, users can choose whether to share all of their photographs with "anyone" or "only friends." iWiW has neither an area of the site for setting general privacy preferences nor the ability to share only with subsets of friends.

#### 2.1.2 Facebook Emerges and iWiW Declines

Facebook's global popularity rose with its introduction of localized language interfaces in 2008. Facebook crowdsourced translation, allowed its users to cooperatively suggest and debate translations [2], including a Hungarian language interface.

Buffeted by the twin punches of competition from Facebook and resistance within its user base to interface changes, iWiW saw its usage numbers drop precipitously in 2010 and 2011. As reported by Internet measurement firm Alexa, pageviews on iWiW peaked as a share of global Internet traffic in Fall 2009, but by May 2011 had dropped approximately 80% from its peak [1].

### 2.2 20<sup>th</sup> Century Hungarian Social History

As a population's modern behavior is partially a synthesis of historical precedents, it is necessary to consider major Hungarian historical and cultural events of the past half-century to understand contemporary practices. In short, Hungary's 20<sup>th</sup> century history is saturated with political turmoil.

From 1945 to 1991, Hungary was occupied by the Soviets and under communist rule. Any conception of individual privacy in Hungary during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is incomplete without considering the subjugating effects of the Hungarian secret police upon a national conscience. Beginning in 1945 and persisting through the Revolution of 1956, the ÁVO (later ÁVH) was the secret police force that brutally effected policies dictated by the Soviet and Hungarian governments [15]. Clashes between protesters and the ÁVH were among the most notable moments of the failed 1956 Hungarian Revolution [20].

While the older generations in Hungary may remember the legacy of a secret police force's reign of terror, the fall of communism from 1989 – 1991 set off a political see-saw for Hungarian young adults [12]. Widespread protests in 2006 [16] led to the near-demise of one political party, and the radical right soon rose sharply in stature [7]. In 2011, tens of thousands protested proposed a media law and a new constitution in Budapest [18]. The sum of this activism, in concert with its historical antecedents, can illuminate attitudes and suggest explanations for how Hungarians of all ages treat their personal information.

### 2.3 Related Work

Although the literature on cross-cultural investigations of social networking privacy remains nascent, a larger body of scholarship has found culture to influence users' general privacy concerns on the Internet. Bellman et al. surveyed Internet users from 38 different countries, including Hungary, finding that cultural values were associated with different privacy concerns [3]. In their survey of 1261 internet users from five countries, Cho et al. also found that national culture significantly impacts users' privacy concerns [5]. Using surveys and interviews of high-tech workers in India and the U.S., Kumaraguru and Cranor also found culture to influence attitudes towards privacy [13].

Studies on cultural differences in social networking privacy have primarily employed surveys rather than ethnographic interviews. For instance, Krasnova and Veltri surveyed 491 Facebook users from the US and Germany to compare their privacy concerns and perceived benefits of social networking [14]. They found that Americans report a higher concern with privacy yet have lower estimates of the consequences of unintended disclosure. Wang et al. surveyed 924 social networking users in the U.S., China, and India, finding U.S. respondents to have a higher level of privacy concern than their Chinese and Indian counterparts [24].

Our work differs in methodology from previous studies of the cultural dimensions of social networking privacy by using semi-structured interviews to examine users' detailed attitudes and motivations, allowing us to unpack their responses in the context of historical and contemporary political events. Previous work utilizing interviews of social networking users was performed by Chapman and Lahav in the US, France, China, and South Korea to identify cultural differences in user's social networking goals, self expression, and behaviors [6]. However, they concentrated on how users share information, whereas we focus on privacy.

The literature on Hungarian social networks focuses on the cultural elements of membership. Imre has examined the conflicts inherent in the development of social networking in post-Soviet states, focusing on iWiW in Hungary [10]. She introduces the idea that iWiW's post-communist, national character is seemingly at tension with the democratic potential of global social networks. Our work examines how this character impacts privacy attitudes.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

We gathered data through 19 semi-structured interviews in an urban area of Eastern Hungary. The interviews investigated research questions constructed through exploratory conversations while the first author lived in Hungary for 8 months.

#### 3.1 Major Research Questions

Based on the extent to which the Hungarian political landscape changed with each generation, ranging from Soviet communism to an era in which the radical right has come to power, one of our primary research questions was whether Facebook privacy attitudes were influenced by a participant's age. We also investigated what other factors impact their social networking privacy practices.

Given the transition to democracy two decades ago contrasted with the contentious political atmosphere that persists, we also hoped to learn the extent to which political views are shared on Facebook. Furthermore, we aimed to learn what types of information Hungarian users consider too private for Facebook.

We finally aimed to learn why the migration from iWiW to Facebook occurred and how it affected users' attitudes towards sharing information on Facebook, if at all. We furthermore wondered whether Facebook's position as a global network, as compared to iWiW's network of only Hungarians, encourages users to keep more information private or share more information.

#### 3.2 Participants

19 individuals took part in semi-structured interviews in May 2011 in Eastern Hungary. We recruited participants primarily using email distribution lists and organizations' Facebook groups, with further participants recruited through snowball sampling.

Participants range in age from 18 to 43 and include 9 females and 10 males. All ten participants younger than 24 years old are students. Of the 9 participants age 24 or older, 8 are members of the workforce and 1 (Nimród) is a medical student. Participants have been assigned common Hungarian names as pseudonyms, which are presented alongside demographics in Table 1.

17 of the 19 participants use Facebook at least once a day. Szandi uses Facebook twice a week, while Pál logs in whenever he receives a message. 9 participants' Facebook accounts were approximately 1 or 1.5 years old, 6 participants' accounts were 2 or 2.5 years old, 2 participants' accounts were 3 years old, and the remaining 2 participants' accounts were 4 years old.

17 of 19 participants have also used iWiW. 1 participant (Pál) uses iWiW more frequently than Facebook, while 4 participants have deleted their iWiW accounts. The remaining 12 participants use Facebook as their primary social network.

Participants were interviewed in their choice of either Hungarian or English by the first author, a fluent speaker of both languages. Since English proficiency has only become more common with the youngest generation, the majority of older interview subjects

chose to conduct the interview in Hungarian, while students who had studied English for years often chose English.

**Table 1.** Participant pseudonyms with age and gender. Interviews conducted in English are noted by a “\*”.

Name	Age	Gender	Name	Age	Gender
Adrienn*	18	F	Károly*	24	M
Balázs*	19	M	László	25	M
Csilla*	19	F	Magdolna	28	F
Dóra	20	F	Nimród*	30	M
Emese*	20	F	Olivér	31	M
Fruzsina	20	F	Pál	35	M
Gábor	21	M	Réka	38	F
Huba	22	M	Szandi	43	F
István*	23	M	Tünde	43	F
János*	23	M	-	-	-

#### 3.3 Interview Protocol

Interviews, ranging in length from 22 to 50 minutes, were conducted one-on-one and audio recorded. At the end of the interview process, we listened to the audio recordings and took detailed notes. These notes were reviewed for trends, and the ideas for the themes reported emerged from these trends.

Since participants chose whether to conduct the interview in Hungarian or English, it is important to note language's potential impact on the interviews. As the first author is a fluent yet non-native Hungarian speaker, a bilingual, native Hungarian speaker revised the interview questions for usage and subtlety of meaning. Although the level of English fluency was quite high for all subjects interviewed in English, questions were clarified in Hungarian in the handful of cases when a participant seemed confused about terminology.

During the interview, we first asked participants about their general techniques for communicating with friends, family, and colleagues. Afterwards, we probed participants' use of Facebook, including how they first learned of the site, the frequency of their Facebook use, and their most common Facebook activities. We next asked about their history of iWiW usage and opinions of both sites.

To investigate whether the national character of iWiW [10] persisted in Hungarians' use of Facebook, we next asked participants what defines them as Hungarian and whether they had “liked” anything particularly Hungarian on Facebook. Afterwards, we asked participants how they would feel about 13 different types of relationships (family member, neighbor, the government, etc.) seeing their activities and information on Facebook.

We followed these questions with a discussion about privacy attitudes on Facebook, including whether they had any privacy concerns, what types of information they consider too private to post on a social network, and whether they had regretted any posts. To investigate differences between generations, we next asked if they considered their privacy attitudes typical of their age group, and whether younger and older age groups had the same of different attitudes. The final questions of the interview examined

the user's attitudes towards photographs, their current privacy settings, and their rationale for choosing these settings.

### 3.3.1 Limitations

Our interviews are not intended to be a representative sample of all Internet users in Hungary, but instead delve into the mindset of a small number of Hungarian users with the intent of thoroughly understanding what factors influence their privacy attitudes.

While participants' self-reported usage of Facebook and self-reported attitudes provide the foundation of our results, we also rely on interviewees' perceptions of how their friends and acquaintances use Facebook. Inherently, users cannot make completely accurate conclusions about the behaviors or attitudes of others. However, their perceptions of others are valuable in reflecting the influence of culture and history on decision making.

## 4. RESULTS

We report major themes that emerged from the 19 interviews in boldface. Quotes from participants interviewed in Hungarian are given in English translation. Quotes from English language interviews are given verbatim, retaining any mistakes.

### The "younger generation" has few privacy concerns

Most interviewees under the age of 30 explained that they enjoyed sharing information, photographs, and posts with their Facebook friends. Nearly all of these users noted that they used the "friends only" privacy feature. However, when asked whether the "younger generation" has the same attitude towards privacy as their own age group, 18 of the 19 interviewees indicated that the younger generation's attitude was more lax. The sole dissenter was Adrienn, who at 18 years old was the youngest participant.

Interviewees felt that younger people shared too much. For instance, Emese (20 years old) complained about the younger generation not using privacy settings, whereas Fruzsina was one of many participants who lamented that the younger generation shares nearly everything. László explained, "Teenagers share too much about their private lives on Facebook. They share lots of pictures and posts on Facebook dealing with sex and alcohol problems." Balázs explained, "I don't like my sister to use FB. I mean I've seen a lot of young child who's signing into FB but they didn't reach the 13 years... They're posting almost everything, their private stuff."

Many participants mentioned that young girls often post revealing photos. Nimród lamented, "If you check the profile photos, if there is a 15 year old girl, it's nearly a covershot from Playboy or something like that. I don't know, maybe the values changed a lot and if you want to be famous you must be a singer, an actor, or porn star, playmate, a reality show winner." When discussing inappropriate posts by his Facebook friends, István added, "There's a website devoted to [inappropriate Facebook posts] in Hungary... especially young girls posing in questionable manner."

A number of participants framed this debate in terms of morality. Near the beginning of his interview, Károly volunteered that "the attitude of the younger people is destroying the society because the girls are making those obscene pictures about them in the mirrors and they think that it's cool and sexy and they are trying to get the attention of the males... The girls are not even 15 years old or 18 years old and they are making this and they think this is right." János, among others, echoed Károly's disdain of "mirror shots."

The oldest interviewees felt particularly strongly that younger people share too much. Pál said, "Unfortunately [the younger generation is] different. They carelessly put up information; they share everything." Réka, who has a teenage daughter, said, "My 17 year old daughter, she's ok, but her age group doesn't know how to live...They share everything, while I only share important things."

### The "older generation" has strong privacy concerns

All four participants age 35 or older felt they and their friends were very cautious about sharing information on Facebook. Although Réka considered herself to be fairly open, she didn't think her friends were equally willing to share information. She said, "I have some acquaintances with Facebook pages, but they only use them to see others' photos...They share nothing in return." The older generation also felt that the potential for problems on Facebook was very serious. For example, when asked what she doesn't like about Facebook, Szandi said, "People need to watch out for themselves. They must remember that [Facebook] is not a game."

These four participants noted that few Hungarians much older than them use Facebook. Tünde referenced communist times when she said, "[Older people] are perhaps frightened about information about themselves. [Moderator: Why?] It's possible that they feel the impact of the old era more strongly."

Nimród, who is 30 years old, noted that not sharing is part of the culture. He said, "Let's stick with that I don't like to share a lot about myself. I mean, in Hungary, it's common not to share very much... I think I'm sharing only my name and a photo about my face if someone wants to find me... It has been always part of Hungarian culture, maybe because of the history that when the Russians were here and the communism. There were good stuff but the bad stuff was that your neighbor could write a note about yourself and you could end up in the prison, so I think this comes from [our] parents' mind."

The younger interviewees supported this opinion. All participants younger than 35, except for István, felt that people older than them shared much less information on Facebook; István had no Facebook friends older than him. Adrienn noted that the older generation is "more protective or secretive," while Dóra mentioned that her mother's age group is more careful and posts less.

Participants confirmed that there are older Hungarians with Facebook accounts, but these individuals rarely post. Balázs related, "My father never posts really personal pictures about himself or personal information. He actually never posts anything. Because, I don't think that he's scared, but he's more safe. This is the difference between the young and the old. [Moderator: Then why does he use Facebook?] He only uses [Facebook] for chat and to see pictures about his friends and send friend requests and stuff, But [he] never posts anything." Magdolna considered multiple possibilities of why she sees few posts from her older friends on Facebook. She explained, "I think older people use Facebook less, or maybe not less, but instead Facebook stalk people and don't share information themselves."

Emese, herself 20 years old, noted an age at which sharing practices change. When discussing whether older peoples' privacy attitudes are the same or different, she explained, "I think that people in their 20's don't really care, but like people in their 30's and above that, I think they do change their privacy settings..."

Older people...want to keep their data to themselves." Gábor and János also concurred that, in Gábor's words, the older generation "has more restrictive privacy settings than young people."

Csilla also felt her older acquaintances had restrictive privacy settings. She said, "I find that most of the people who are of an older group than me are just kinda much less approachable. Like they block every data, every information of themselves, except their name, except their avatar picture... I guess they just feel a strong sense to privacy 'cuz they've got used to it."

### **Older users consider photographs to be particularly private**

A number of participants mentioned Facebook photographs as one of the key ways in which older Hungarians differ from the younger generation. Older interviewees stated that they and others of their generation didn't like to post photographs. Younger interviewees corroborated this opinion based on their Facebook friends' actions.

When asked about users older than him, Olivér (31 years old) claimed that they shared "at most one photo, from which their friends or acquaintances can recognize them." When we asked him about his own practices regarding photos, he said, "Previously I didn't have any photos up on Facebook, but now I uploaded one. But just one, not a lot." When asked if she likes to post pictures of herself, Réka responded, "Pictures of me, not so much. I have posted some, but not all that many." When asked the same question, Pál said, "No, I don't see the value in it. I have 2 pictures on Facebook so that people can know it's me." Pál also felt that things the tax collectors could use against an individual, including pictures of luxury autos, should not be uploaded since he had heard of government inspectors searching iWiW.

Older users similarly did not like the idea of others tagging them in photos. When asked if he liked it when others tagged him, Pál said, "If someone did this without asking me, I'd be digusted. This would violate my rights." Szandi was thankful that none of her friends had tagged her, saying, "Luckily I haven't yet had a friend who shared a photo that I didn't know about."

Gábor, 21 years old, related an anecdote about his mother chastising him for posting a photo. He said, "I uploaded a picture of my girlfriend kissing me and my mom said, 'My God, what is this? How could you put this on Facebook?'"

The 30 year old Nimród summed up the practice of the older generation, saying they "share less than my generation. They have only a few photos. [Moderator: Why?] Because they are not used to documenting their life. For us, it's normal."

### **Political views should be kept off Facebook**

After romantic relationships, political views were the second most frequently mentioned type of information that's "too sensitive to be posted on Facebook" (8 of 19 participants). For instance, when asked what's too personal to share on Facebook, Tünde responded, "What I wouldn't get into, what I'd leave out, well, I'd say my political affiliation. In addition, very, very personal information." When discussing things her Facebook friends should not have posted, Emese mentioned "not really terrible things but things that like other people can read and be offended. It wasn't really terrible. [Moderator: What was offensive?] The use of [bad] words, or politically." István added, "I don't really like people posting any extreme ideas, like political or whatever."

Fruzsina also mentioned that she considers political views personal.

Bad situations involving politics and Facebook were discussed at length by three participants. Dóra expressed that she's "afraid to write things that are not politically correct, when my opinion differs from the prevailing attitude." When later asked if she regrets any posts on a social media site, Dóra explained, "Yes, one time I was on [a right-wing Hungarian political blog], where I either commented or 'liked' a picture I found pretty. I later realized that searching Google for me would reveal my comment, that I visited that site... which I regretted a bit since [the site] is fairly radical and nationalist, which would be seen negatively by many people."

Gábor related a story in which information on a social network was used for political purposes. The second of Gábor's reasons for switching from iWiW to Facebook was that "regarding iWiW, a major Hungarian political event occurred in which the Hungarian police purchased different information for official use, and I found this revolting. I have some acquaintances who were taken for interrogation because they knew some people who were considered dangerous to national security based on their political beliefs. So I said goodbye, I don't want iWiW, and I deleted my profile." He later mentioned "strong political things (right wing things, crazy nationalistic stuff) and propaganda from the current administration" alongside pornography as things he thinks his Facebook friends should not have shared.

Huba also regretted posting about politics. He explained, "I posted political videos from YouTube... In a democracy, the idea would be that anyone could share their opinion. But I have some acquaintances who lost their jobs for this reason, for not having the same political opinions as their employers."

Nimród has also experienced trouble related to politics. He responded to our question about what makes him Hungarian by saying, "I'm proud of my language or literature or music, but in general I'm not proud of being a Hungarian because we are always telling that we are heading towards the European nations and we do it only paper, but nothing changes in the peoples' mind in general. [Moderator: What needs to change?] To be more open, or to skip the hatred. I don't know if you're familiar with the political views and stuff around me, because I always try to avoid them, but I cannot." When later asked if he had seen posts by any of his Facebook friends that he felt they should not have posted, he immediately identified political messages.

### **Trust of the government varies widely**

When asked how they would feel about "the government" seeing their activities and information on Facebook, responses in all age groups were polarized. 6 participants (Adrienn, Fruzsina, István, János, László, and Szandi) didn't have a problem with the government seeing their information. Balázs thought it could be good or bad, whereas Réka felt she had no choice in the matter, rendering the question moot. She said, "If they would like to monitor someone, they have the devices to do it."

Szandi was typical of the assenting group, explaining, "I think I have nothing to hide from the government. My feeling is the government wouldn't be interested in my opinion. I don't worry that this government would be interested in the kind of things I say." Fruzsina qualified her opinion by expressing, "In truth, it wouldn't bother me if the government saw [my information], but that's dependent on who's in power."

However, the other 11 participants would not grant the government access to any of their information, with Dóra even laughing at the question. Huba said, "This would bother me a lot. [Moderator: Why?] Because I feel that they're very nationalistic, and I feel that the government so far hasn't tolerated if someone expresses their opinions.... Those who loudly say their opinion, it can always be held against them...In Hungary, there was socialism, communism, not democracy. For a very long time, they monitored people, they prepared reports about them."

### **Participants were less concerned about governments, police, schools, or workplaces actually monitoring their Facebook**

Although 11 participants expressed a strong aversion to the abstract notion of "the government" seeing their information on Facebook, only 7 people expressed any degree of concern when asked, "Are you worried that the government, police, your university or workplace, or other countries' governments are watching Facebook?" 7 additional participants indicated that this type of monitoring was either currently possible or already occurring, yet they were not bothered by this monitoring.

Although it may seem contradictory for someone to stand strongly opposed to the abstract notion of "government" seeing their information yet not be bothered by the idea that the government and other officials might be monitoring Facebook, participants had pragmatic reasons for their opinions. For instance, although Huba strongly opposed the government seeing his information, he said, "Honestly, [monitoring] doesn't bother me because I don't do illegal things...In truth, I'm not hiding anything." Károly added, "Well, it should bother me, but [it doesn't bother me] because I'm a good person, I have nothing to hide."

Although Károly was opposed to the government seeing his information since it might impact free speech, he responded to a question about whether he had any concerns by saying, "Not really, because if you have [any sense], you won't share anything truly private on this site." Although Réka earlier indicated significant discomfort with the government seeing her information, she felt that "if they want to monitor someone, they have 100,000 ways to do it. [Facebook] is just one of many."

János felt that Facebook changed his relationship with government, saying, "If [officials are] registered as users, I think they have the same rights as me on Facebook. In real life, that's another matter... I am a citizen of this country, so they have authority over me to a certain degree, so I'm responsible to them in a way. It's different while on Facebook; we're technically almost on the same level."

Only 4 participants (Dóra, Gábor, István, and Szandi) expressed a good deal of concern that any of these groups was watching Facebook, while 3 others (Balázs, Olivér, and Tünde) expressed some level of concern. Olivér and Szandi were primarily concerned about their workplace watching, whereas Dóra thought this idea was reminiscent of Kádár, the longtime leader of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Gábor was concerned that any political organizing he might do would be watched. However, István's concern came from his own practices. He said, "Well, if I am interested in someone, I would first look on Facebook."

### **Users trust Facebook, the company**

When asked how they'd feel about Facebook, the company, seeing all of their information, 14 users felt Facebook should have full access to their information. For comparison, when asked

about romantic partners, 18 participants expressed that they should have full access; when asked about parents, 15 participants similarly granted full access.

Balázs explained, "They provide me Facebook, so they can do anything they want. It's like I'm in their house." Csilla added, "I think I wouldn't block anything from them because it's their site." János agreed, "I am using their software, so I think there should be a level of trust between the company and the users."

However, 16 of the 19 participants have not read, or are unaware of, Facebook's privacy policy. Two individuals remember reading some of the policy, while only István thinks he might have read it. Huba captured the general sentiment, explaining "I don't think anyone, even the people who wrote the policy, have read the whole thing." Notably, Hungarians who are interested in inspecting the privacy policy face a much higher barrier than English speakers; there is no Hungarian language version of the privacy policy.

### **Facebook hasn't violated their privacy, while iWiW is amateur**

We asked participants whether they felt that Facebook had ever violated their privacy. 3 participants mentioned incidents they considered minor, 1 mentioned an incident that she considered serious, and 1 other had a vague memory of Facebook having done so, but he couldn't remember what it was. Csilla and István both felt like Facebook had somewhat invaded their privacy when they were tagged in photos for the first time. Gábor mentions that he had chosen his privacy settings incorrectly and at one point an ex-girlfriend saw his page. Magdolna mentioned that Facebook violated her privacy when making a photo album public, whereas Nimród said, "I don't remember what was it, but once I had to change something because I have realized that Facebook is using me without my permission, but I don't remember what [it was]."

Magdolna was the only participant to describe Facebook as untrustworthy, in contrast to what she perceived as the prevailing attitude in Hungary. Although she would allow Facebook access to her information, noting that they couldn't operate the site otherwise, she said, "I don't know to what extent Facebook takes part in data collection for the police. I think Facebook is more dangerous and less trustworthy than people think."

In contrast to Facebook's good reputation, numerous participants decried iWiW's privacy practices and unprofessionalism. For instance, Balázs explained his switch to Facebook by saying, "First my girlfriend started to use it and I said I'm not going to have a Facebook account because it's international and too dangerous. You know, everyone could find it. But once my friend told me that iWiW is a lot less safe than Facebook, so I switched. [Moderator: Why is it less safe?] Because one of my friends is a hacker and he hacked [iWiW] very easily." Huba similarly called iWiW "careless and numerous times untrustworthy." Dóra and Tünde both mentioned that Facebook is significantly faster than iWiW, while János felt that iWiW is "quite clunky compared to Facebook."

Emese was typical of the majority of users who was unhappy with iWiW's privacy practices, saying, "I actually have no idea about the privacy settings on iWiW. I know that, I think that last time I checked everyone could see everyone's profiles. You didn't have to be friends to look at their friends or information or pictures, so that should probably change." Of the 17 iWiW users, only Pál was familiar with iWiW's privacy controls. In contrast, 18 of 19 participants were familiar with Facebook's privacy controls, and

17 said they had changed their settings. The majority of participants said they chose the “Friends Only” setting when they first joined.

## 5. DISCUSSION

A large disparity in privacy attitudes between the young and old generations in Hungary was a major theme of the interviews. Older interview participants explained that their own sharing practices were quite restrictive and that they had substantial concerns about privacy, particularly regarding photos. Although most of the younger participants noted choosing the “friends only” privacy setting, they didn’t feel particularly concerned about sharing information or photos.

However, both old and young interviewees felt that the generation younger than them shares too much, whereas they felt that older Hungarians participate passively, sharing little information. While young Hungarians’ perceived behavior echoes the American teenagers Boyd and Marwick documented [4], sharing personal information while at the same time creating social norms to protect their privacy, older users’ passive role in Hungary is exceptional.

Considering the turbulence of communist times in Hungary, it is perhaps not surprising that many older Hungarians are reluctant to share too much information. Szandi captured the value older Hungarians place on communication when discussing her childhood. She said, “There were Úttörök and Kisdobosok [communist party scouting organizations for children], there was one party in the country, and parents didn’t let their children know their political beliefs... So as we grew up, you couldn’t say what you thought. We had to think about who we were talking in front of, and what we were saying. The defense we learned is that every sentence we uttered meant something else... [Today’s youth] put their opinions regarding politics, child-rearing, and school in public on Facebook... In what country did they grow up?”

Szandi’s expression of the caution and care with which Hungarians communicated during communist times may illuminate why older Hungarians share very little. If every discrete piece of information, every utterance, is draped with multiple shears of meaning and a sense of danger, it requires much more thought and reflection.

The legacy of secret police in Hungary also seems to stand strong in influencing the opinions of the older generation. As Nimród mentioned, older Hungarians don’t like to document their lives. Hungarian antipathy towards being documented is well founded given the history of secret police during communist times. ÁVO (later ÁVH) was a secret police force in Hungary that dominated many critical moments of the failed 1956 revolution [20], in which Hungarians rose up against Soviet occupiers. This era of fear and uncertainty of the secret police’s reign of terror is documented, for example, in the classic Hungarian film *A Tanú* (*The Witness*).

Given the fear experienced in their childhood, it is understandable why politics is a sensitive topic to older Hungarians. However, we found that younger Hungarians also feared discussing politics. This fear likely stems to some degree from the lessons of their parents’ generation, but also in large part from contemporaneous political events. With the rise of the Hungarian radical right in the last 5 years [7], intimidating political tactics have again become common. From major violence spurred by right wing protesters

during the 2007 and 2008 Gay Pride parades in Budapest [19] to 2009 murders of the Romani (gypsy) ethnic minority [21], to large protests in 2011 [18], fear and occasionally violence are again part of the political lexicon.

It makes sense that Hungarians in their early or mid 20s, shaped by these events, would fear being overtly identified with a political movement. Dóra’s regret of inadvertently publicly ‘liking’ a photo on a blog closely linked to the radical right [16], as well as Gábor’s story of acquaintances being arrested for political beliefs posted on iWiW, echoes past generations’ stories of political retribution. However, there is no longer a state-run secret police that makes people disappear. Whereas their parents were afraid to have any part of their life documented, young Hungarians are only particularly afraid to broadcast their political opinions.

The seeming contradiction of the small number of participants who assented to “the government” seeing their information on Facebook compared to the larger number who were not concerned about various officials “watching Facebook” is wrapped in subtleties. We first must consider why participants like Fruzsina and Szandi assented to “the government” seeing their information on Facebook. Since both of their answers rely on the *current* government seeing their information, it seems likely that their assent is more a matter of political opinion than abstract sentiment.

Participants’ nonchalance towards officials potentially monitoring Facebook seems to be a function of the large degree to which users filter what they post, as well as the sense to which they feel irrefragable. The vast majority of our interviewees both used Facebook’s privacy settings and also took care to not post private information. For example, Csilla and Károly both expressed that any intelligent user knows not to post personal information. Magdolna exemplifies the high degree to which participants trust their friends to respect similar norms, explaining that “my friends are my friends because they’re the types who wouldn’t share compromising photos.” A number of users, even those who opposed the abstract notion of the government seeing their information, expressed that they have “nothing to hide” and thus aren’t concerned about monitoring.

Although we had initially hypothesized that the legacy of iWiW’s national character [10] might result in Hungarians preferring to share information with other Hungarians on Facebook, we found no evidence of this behavior. Our participants said that they are not any more likely to interact with strangers on Facebook who are Hungarian, even those that ‘like’ the same things (food, music, language) that define the participant as Hungarian.

Facebook’s high stature in Hungary, particularly relative to iWiW, seems to result from a number of factors. Of our 19 interviewees, 17 have used iWiW. However, 4 of these participants have deleted their iWiW accounts whereas 12 of the remaining 13 use iWiW only sporadically. Beyond Huba and Gábor’s stories about iWiW’s technical shortcomings, users have an overall impression that iWiW is slow and amateur in comparison to Facebook. For instance, media coverage of the Hungarian-language Facebook in 2008 echoed this sentiment, with one article saying, “If Facebook is a Bentley, then today’s iWiW is a 10 year old Trabant,” comparing iWiW to a car reviled for being of shoddy quality [22].

Participants’ poor experiences with iWiW set the bar low, so Facebook’s relatively professional appearance perhaps falsely

reassured participants that the data security woes and pervasive threat of hackers that plagued iWiW are absent from Facebook. The myriad of privacy options they have also seems to convey a sense of protection, in contrast to iWiW's paucity of choices.

However, US users similarly transitioned from poor experiences in social networking (e.g. MySpace) to Facebook, yet they are often skeptical of Facebook's trustworthiness. It's thus important to consider the extent to which Hungarians have been exposed to news that might cast Facebook in an unflattering light. First of all, most Hungarians joined Facebook well after its initial growth. 15 of our 19 participants joined Facebook at most 2.5 years ago. Therefore, news stories about privacy issues on Facebook from over 2.5 years ago would have found no audience.

Language and international orientation also seem to play a role in Hungarians' trust of Facebook. Of the 19 interview participants, only 2 (Csilla and Magdolna) indicated that the majority of their Facebook friends post in English, stemming from their plurality of international friends. Balázs and Nimród note that their friends use Hungarian and English equally. 3 of these 4 internationally oriented users felt that Facebook had violated their privacy. However, only 2 of the 15 participants whose friends primarily used Hungarian felt that Facebook had ever violated their privacy.

Overall, the fear of being documented during communist times seems to influence older Hungarians' averseness to posting personal information, particularly photos, on Facebook. Meanwhile, recent political violence and the prevalence of extreme viewpoints seem to encourage younger Hungarians to keep political views off Facebook. Users' transition from the amateur, localized iWiW to the more professional Facebook, in addition to the lack of knowledge of privacy violations on Facebook, have left Hungarians trusting their newfound social network to a great degree. While Hungarians have joined the global network of Facebook, they seem to do so distinctly as Hungarians, with history, politics, and culture influencing their privacy attitudes and behaviors.

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