

May 10, 2017

Mark Zuckerberg  
CEO, Facebook  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

As organizations that work to promote the healthy development of youth, and also ensure fair marketing practices and protect the privacy of individuals, we urge Facebook to publicly release the full internal document, reported in *The Australian*, describing how Facebook collected and analyzed psychological information on high school students, college students, and young users. We are concerned about how this information might be used by marketers and others to take advantage of young people, tapping into their emotions and unique developmental vulnerabilities for profit. There are also serious health and ethical implications of using such research findings to target youth.

According to *The Australian*, Facebook presented research to an advertiser, demonstrating that it collects sensitive data regarding young user's emotions and "mood shifts." The research detailed how Facebook can analyze sensitive user data in real time to determine how young users are communicating emotion, and at which points during the week they are doing so. This research was conducted without users' knowledge, which raises ethical concerns.<sup>1</sup>

We are aware that Facebook has released a statement to the effect that this research deviated from Facebook's protocols and that the company does not engage in the kind of targeting reported by *The Australian*. Yet Facebook's statement on the matter does not resolve issues of concern about the commissioned analysis, its purpose and what it says about Facebook's actual advertising practices.

The only way to fully address those concerns is to publicly release the internal document and related materials, accompanied by a more detailed explanation from Facebook of what was intended, what happened and the company's actual practices. We ask that Facebook release any research it has conducted worldwide related to the use of biometric measures to understand how young people respond to its various content and applications (such as Instagram, mobile and 360 video, and geo-location services). For example, in what ways does Facebook use sentiment mining tools to gather and analyze communications by and among its adolescent and young adult users? In what ways does Facebook work with its advertiser clients to provide research data for marketing to youth? How do expressed moods correlate with responsiveness to advertising? These are just a few among many questions that release of the internal document, along with contextual explanations from Facebook, would help answer. As reported, the document is simply far too concerning to keep concealed.

As you know, Facebook has become a powerful cultural and social force in young peoples' lives. The practices revealed in this report suggest that Facebook and its advertisers are taking unfair advantage of teens. The company owes a full explanation to the public about its practices.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Levin, Sam. (2017, May 1). Facebook told advertisers it can identify teens feeling 'insecure' and 'worthless' (2017). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/01/facebook-advertising-data-insecure-teens>.

Berkeley Media Studies Group (United States)

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (United States)

Center for Science in the Public Interest (United States)

Center for Digital Democracy (United States)

Children and Consumerism program, Alana Institute (Brazil)

Consumentenbond (Netherlands)

Consumer Action (United States)

Consumer Federation of America (United States)

Consumers Union (United States)

Consumer Watchdog (United States)

Föreningen för digitala fri-och rättigheter (The Digital Freedom and Rights Association) (Sweden)

Elektronisk Forpost Norge (Electronic Frontier Norway) (Norway)

Electronic Privacy Information Center (United States)

European Digital Rights (EDRI) (Europe)

Instituto Beta: Internet & Democracia (Brazil)

Intervozes - Coletivo Brasil de Comunicação Social (Brazil)

Norwegian Consumer Council (Norway)

Núcleo de Estudos em Tecnologia e Sociedade da Universidade de São Paulo (NET-USP) (Brazil)

OpenMedia (International)

Open Rights Group (United Kingdom)

Privacy International (International)

Public Citizen (United States)

SonTusDatos (Artículo 12, A.C.) (It's Your Data, Article 12) (Mexico)

Trans Atlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD) (European Union-United States)

UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity (United States)

U.S. PIRG (United States)