

Chapter 28

Communication Privacy Management and Mediated Communication

Debra L. Worthington
Auburn University, USA

Margaret Fitch-Hauser
Auburn University, USA

ABSTRACT

Communication privacy management theory (CPM) was originally developed to explain how individuals control and reveal private information in traditional social interactions. It has since been extended to a number of contexts, most recently to evolving communication technologies and social networking sites. CPM provides a set of theoretical tools to explore the intersection of technology and individual privacy in relationship management. This chapter introduces CPM; privacy is defined, the three primary components and eight axioms of CPM are reviewed, and their application to mediated communication contexts are outlined. Areas for future research are presented.

INTRODUCTION

Sandra Petronio (1991) introduced communication privacy management theory (CPM) to explain how individuals control and reveal private information. While it was originally developed as an organizing principle for understanding disclosure in traditional social interactions, it has since been extended to a number of contexts, most recently to evolving communication technologies and social networking sites, including online blogging (e.g., Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2010; Child, Petronio, Agyeman-Budu, & Westermann, 2011), Facebook usage (e.g., De Wolf, Willaert & Pierson, 2014; Waters & Ackerman, 2011), and Twitter and Short Message Service (SMS) (e.g., Cho & Hung, 2011; Jin, 2013; Patil & Kobsa, 2004). CPM provides a set of theoretical tools to explore the intersection of technology and individual privacy in relationship management. Below privacy is defined, components of communication privacy

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7601-3.ch028

management theory and their application to mediated communication are outlined, and areas of future research are presented.

BACKGROUND

Both a dynamic and dialectic process, the notion of privacy suggests that individuals regulate boundaries of disclosure, personal identity, and temporality (Palen & Dourish, 2003). More specifically, it refers to our ability to manage when, how, and the extent to which our personal information is revealed to others (Westin, 1967).

When discussing the intersection of technology and privacy, people often focus on technical issues associated with technology use (see, for example, Boyles, Smith, & Madden, 2012). In reality, individuals focus significant attention on managing privacy in their online digital lives. CPM provides a means to better understand and explain how individuals use and communicate in online and mediated communication contexts (Child & Petronio, 2011).

COMMUNICATION PRIVACY MANAGEMENT THEORY

Originally developed for interpersonal contexts (Petronio, 1991), research associated with CPM initially focused on social and interpersonal interactions in areas such as family and health communication. (e.g., Petronio, 2006; Petronio & Caughlin, 2005; Petronio, Jones, Morr, 2003).

Petronio (2007) describes CPM theory as “an evidenced-based, applied theory construct to be translatable into practices” (p. 219). The CPM system rests on three elements – privacy ownership, privacy control and privacy turbulence. Eight axioms predict privacy practices (Petronio, 2013). The first two axioms are associated with privacy and the ownership of personal information. Axiom 1 proposes that individuals believe in private ownership of their personal information and in their ability and right to share or protect that information from others. Axiom 2 predicts that when access to private information is granted to others, those gaining access become co-owners of the information, taking on the trust and responsibility that comes with co-ownership.

Axioms 3 – 6 are associated with privacy control. Petronio (2013) described privacy control as the regulating engine for determining the conditions of providing or denying access to private information. Thus, not only do individuals believe they are sole owners of their personal information (i.e., Axiom 1), but they also believe they alone control their personal privacy, even when that information is shared with others (Axiom 3). At the same time, how information is shared is based on the privacy rules individuals develop (Axiom 4). Core and catalyst criteria influence decisions on how and when rules are invoked. Core criteria are the most stable and predictable guidelines for privacy choices, while catalyst criteria result in privacy rule changes based on motivation and risk assessments.

Axiom 5 addresses how, once access to private information is shared with others, the original owner continues to maintain control by continued coordination and negotiation of privacy rules associated with third-party access (Petronio, 2013). However, ownership rights can be challenged when individuals manage multiple, often inter-related, privacy boundaries (e.g., can information revealed by a friend be shared with another mutual friend) (Petronio, 2002). Confidants fall into two categories – deliberate confidants purposely ask for information (e.g., bank employee and customer), while reluctant confidants receive

8 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/communication-privacy-management-and-mediated-communication/214566

Related Content

Artificial Neural Network Research in Online Social Networks

Steven Walczak (2018). *International Journal of Virtual Communities and Social Networking* (pp. 1-15).

www.irma-international.org/article/artificial-neural-network-research-in-online-social-networks/235457

A Taxonomy of Censors and Anti-Censors Part II: Anti-Censorship Technologies

Christopher S. Leberknight, Mung Chiang and Felix Ming Fai Wong (2012). *International Journal of E-Politics* (pp. 20-35).

www.irma-international.org/article/taxonomy-censors-anti-censors-part/73698

Frugal Living for Our Collective and Mutual #Bestlife on a Distributed and Global Electronic Hive Mind

(2019). *Electronic Hive Minds on Social Media: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 77-120).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/frugal-living-for-our-collective-and-mutual-bestlife-on-a-distributed-and-global-electronic-hive-mind/228551

Varieties of Networks and Their Characteristics

(2020). *Applied Social Network Analysis With R: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 184-194).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/varieties-of-networks-and-their-characteristics/251365

Social Media Content Analysis and Classification Using Data Mining and ML

Sambhaji D. Rane (2023). *Research Anthology on Applying Social Networking Strategies to Classrooms and Libraries* (pp. 197-207).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/social-media-content-analysis-and-classification-using-data-mining-and-ml/312921