Privacy Concerns with Computer Mediated Communication in

Interpersonal Relationships

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Social networking has been around for many years, as face-to-face communication (F2F or FtoF). It is through the popularity of the internet today that make users more concerned with privacy within their relationships in communication mediated communication (CMC). The Internet generation consists of people who are comfortable putting their lives online, conversing on the Internet, emailing, updating statuses, writing on each other's Facebook walls, and having many friends, whether they know them from the off-line world or only from the online world. Using social networking websites allow users to exhibit voyeurism and exhibitionism. People like to express themselves, and they are curious about other people.

The terms Facebook and Twitter, which are popular social networking sites today, have been around for many years. A Boston Daily Globe article from August 24, 1902, titled, 'Face Book The New Fad,' described a party game where revelers sketch out cartoony caricatures for fun (Wortham, 2009). In 1942 The Washington Post published an article titled "Think Before You Twitter" about gossiping, and in 1903 published an article referring to the first "pocket telephone" (Wortham, 2009).

Many people use Facebook as a method of primary communication, rather than using the phone, face-to-face or even email communication. Interpersonal communication now extends to the Internet. Who needs email when you have a Facebook wall? Besides reconnecting with friends and making new ones, users create events and join fan pages and groups. According to Facebook (2010) they have over 500 million active users, and an average user has 130 friends on the site.

Virtual communities can bring users closer together to form relationships, and users are seemingly not concerned with privacy, but want to feel connected and make new "friends."

Facebook users have tools available to protect their privacy, as users can restrict the accessibility of their profiles using a variety of means, particularly by restricting full profile viewing to their Facebook "friends" or friends of friends and networks. Facebook users must determine how to reveal, or conceal, their private lives within a public forum. Despite the inherent dangers of high levels of self-disclosure on Facebook, users continue to disclose large amounts of personal information on a publicly accessible network. Social networking sites (SNSs) prior to Facebook, such as Friendster and MySpace, had users who were not acting as their true selves, they were playing roles. Cassidy (2006) explained how there could be underage girls pretending to be older, virgins pretending to be vixens, F.B.I. agents pretending to be adolescent girls, and the list goes on.

When Facebook began in 2004, Facebook users were required to have a valid college e-mail address (first at Harvard, then it slowly expanded and today anyone can join), most were students, and many were willing to post their e-mail and home addresses, their cell-phone numbers, and their sexual orientation (Cassidy, 2006). Most Facebook users worried more about wasting time than about their privacy or security concerns. This trend arguably continues today, since many users are not concerned with their privacy; many users consider their friends to be real friends, and believe it is not harmful to post revealing personal information.

Willingness to self-disclose to others leads to increased understanding in relationships and builds intimacy, in F2F and online relationships. Jourard (1971) defined self-disclosure as making ourselves transparent to others through our communication. When we tell others information about ourselves helps them to see our uniqueness as a human beings. Reciprocity of self-disclosure between individuals is based upon trust, and it is only when an individual sees another as trustworthy that the disclosure will undertake the risk of disclosing themselves to the

receiver (Jourard, 1971). Self-disclosure regularly occurs on SNSs, including Facebook with many users posting a range of photographs that can depict a wide variety of images, flattering or not.

Literature Review

Frye & Dornisch (2010) examined how intimacy and perceived privacy may predict levels of comfort with disclosure, and how they may be moderated by levels of trust and frequency of technology use. Participants reported on the degree to which they would feel comfortable discussing over 30 topics using 10 different communication tools. The authors found that privacy of the communication tool was related to disclosure comfort only for intimate topics (p. 1121). The authors hypothesized how people disclose information may play just as large of a role as what they disclose as it does to whom they disclose information. This may predict the degree of how much people are willing to reveal information. In addition to looking at this association between perceived privacy and disclosure, the authors explored the possible role of what people disclosed. According to the researchers although people have always had a choice in how they disclose information (e.g., via letter, in-person, or over the phone), the authors found that privacy concerns were more important to less frequent technology users, and topic intimacy mattered most to participants with low levels of trust.

Frye & Dornisch (2010) surveyed over 200 people, with the majority being female. The authors posted ads on Craigslist and used lists of online psychology studies. The researchers asked ''how people tell others about themselves, using different forms of communication'' (p. 1122). Participants were then directed to a website where the study was posted (p. 1122). The researchers discovered when people have high concerns for privacy their attitudes can be positively altered with appropriate message framing and communication. Trust moderated the

role of topics in their self-disclosure, and the authors found that participants with higher levels of

trust tended to report levels of comfort with disclosure that were not sensitive to the intimacy of

the topic under consideration (p. 1125).  Participants who had lower levels of trust may have had

concerns that their disclosures could be used against them. The authors also found that gender

moderated disclosure patterns as it relates to contextual differences in disclosure comfort

(p.1125).  Females were found to be more sensitive to privacy concerns, while males appeared to

be more sensitive to topic intimacy concerns. The authors suggested that a possible explanation

for females' greater sensitivity to privacy concerns may lie in differences of experience utilizing

various communication methods and how many people they interact with on a daily basis.

Frye & Dornisch (2010) noted some limitations to their study and concerns, including the

fact that the data was collected online. This methodology makes many more willing to disclose

information, but it may also raise the possibility that participants could have misrepresented

themselves in their responses. The findings of this study raise a number of possibilities

for future research. This study focused on the role of trust as a stable personality trait, rather than

as a personality trait that can display variability across contexts or interaction partners.  The

current study did not ask participants to think of a particular interaction as they reported their

comfort in disclosing information on various topics using various tools. People may tend to

interact with particular partners using specific communication tools. For example, some people

may have a set of instant messenger friends and a set of telephone friends (p. 1126). Future

research should examine disclosure patterns with the same partner across topics and tools.

Additionally, the current study asked participants to report about their comfort with disclosure,

rather than their actual patterns of disclosure. Frye & Dornisch (2010) suggested that research

needs to address comparisons among the various kinds of self-disclosure among communication

tools including computer mediated communication (CMC).

Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn and Hughes (2009) investigated Facebook users' awareness of

privacy issues and perceived benefits and risks of utilizing Facebook.  In September 2006,

Facebook introduced the "News Feed," which tracks and displays the online activities of a user's

friends, such as uploading pictures, befriending new people, and writing on someone's wall.

Although none of the individual actions were private, their aggregated public display on the start

pages of all friends outraged Facebook users, who felt exposed and deprived of their sense of

control over their information. Subsequently, Facebook introduced privacy controls that allowed

users to determine what was shown on the news feed and to whom.

Debatin et al. (2009) explored privacy violations on Facebook and how users understand

the potential threat to their privacy, awareness of privacy issues, their coping strategies and their

experiences. The authors conducted an online survey in the spring 2007 which was administered

to almost 120 college undergraduates at a large mid-western university.  They used a

convenience sample and eight participants (two male, six female) from the online survey

respondent pool were selected for open-ended in-depth face-to-face interviews, which were

conducted June 2007 (Debatin et al, 2009). The online questionnaire consisted of over 35

multiple-choice questions, and the survey respondents were asked questions regarding Facebook

habits, including the amount of time with an account, how often the account was checked and the

average amount of time spent on Facebook each use. The researchers also asked other specific

types of personal information they revealed in their profile, and user awareness of privacy

settings.

The study found that over 45 percent of respondents said they restricted access to their

Facebook profile because they are generally cautious or because they had heard "some

concerning stories" (Debatin et al, 2009).  Over 80 percent of respondents reported that

Facebook helps them interact with friends and other people.

The authors predicted that Facebook users have a limited understanding of privacy

settings in social network services and would likely make little use of their privacy

settings. They found the vast majority of Facebook users (91%) claimed indeed to be familiar

with Facebook privacy issues and were also likely to restrict their profiles (77%) through privacy

settings (Debatin et al, 2009).  The majority of users reported to be familiar with privacy settings

and protect their profiles. Almost 70% of the respondents indicated that they had changed the

default privacy settings and about half reported that they restricted their profile so that ''only

friends can see it'' (Debatin et al, 2009).

The authors found the main reason students say they use Facebook is to stay in contact

with friends, students reported joining Facebook in a ritualized way, as a rite of passage (Debatin

et al, 2009).   Participants said they signed up around the time they started college, upon hearing

about it from peers and under pressure from them. This study indicated that while the majority of

Facebook users report having an understanding of privacy settings and make use of their privacy

settings, it is also apparent, however, that they may have a skewed sense of what that exactly

entails. The perceived benefits of online social networking outweighed risks of disclosing

personal information (Debatin et al, 2009).   Most users do not seem to realize that restricting

access to their data does not sufficiently address the risks resulting from the amount, quality and

persistence of the data they provide. The authors suggested safer use of SNSs would require a

dramatic change in user attitudes to be more responsible and be an informed user with a high

level of computer literacy, not just in the technical but in the sociocultural and ethical sense, as

well (Debatin et al, 2009).

Boyd and Ellison (2007) examined the history, cultures and differences with SNSs. The

authors define social network sites (SNSs) as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1)

construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other

users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and

those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may

vary from site to site" (p. 211). The authors stated that privacy is also implicated in users' ability

to control impressions and manage profiles on SNS sites.

The authors analyzed a variety of SNSs within social contexts. They found that public

display of connections is a crucial component of SNSs. A "friend's" list contains links to each

Friend's profile, enabling viewers to traverse the network graph by clicking through the Friends

lists. On most sites, the list of Friends is visible to anyone who is permitted to view the profile,

although there are exceptions. The authors noted that scholars have a limited understanding of

who is and who is not using SNSs, why, and for what purposes, especially outside the U.S.

(Boyd and Ellison, 2007). More ethnographic research on populations would further aid

scholars' ability to understand the long-term implications of SNSs.

Tufekci (2008) investigated the mechanisms of privacy by sampling over 700 college

students, the vast majority users of Facebook and Myspace, to negotiate boundaries between

public and private. The author found little relationship between online privacy concerns and

information disclosure on online social network sites. Students manage unwanted audience

concerns by adjusting profile visibility and using nicknames but not by restricting the

information within the profile. The author examined relationships between disclosure and

privacy concerns and fear of unwanted audiences, and examined general online privacy concerns in SNSs to analyze specific disclosure levels with privacy concerns. Unlike most previous research, Tufekci (2008) did not restrict the survey to Facebook but rather, examined behavior on Myspace.

The research was conducted in a midsized public research university in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. To gauge general online privacy concerns, the author asked the participants, "How concerned are you with online privacy?" The researcher found low levels of disclosure of political views, romantic status, sexual orientation, phone number, and classes with age. It seems that the younger students are more political, more comfortable with sexual orientation, more motivated for publicity, and more willing to give up their privacy. Tufekci (2008) found students may try "to restrict the visibility of their profile to desired audiences but are less aware of, concerned about, or willing to act on possible 'temporal' boundary intrusions posed by future audiences because of persistence of data" (p. 33).

The researcher found that the true concern with both privacy and trust is temporal in nature, and many participants in SNS studies are unaware of the interaction between current concern for visibility on SNSs and the possibility of future consequences (Tufekci, 2008). The author noted that problems with information technology are here with us to stay, and there are no simple solutions. We as a society want to disclose and draw the boundaries between public and private, disclosure and withdrawal, and past choices and future possibilities (Tufekci, 2008).

Lomicky and Hogg (2010) examined the role of computer-mediated communication (CMC) during social movement activities in 2006 at a university for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing. Protesters at Gallaudet University, the nation's only liberal arts university for the

Deaf, shut down the Washington, DC, campus for three days early in the 2006 fall semester

because of opposition to leadership at the school. CMC's role in social activism shares common

characteristics, whether at the level of civic engagement, social movement activism, or with a

single-issue conflict. The researchers focused on aspects of the mobilizing structures component

of social activism, which involves the mechanism that enables people to organize and engage in

collective action.

The authors surveyed over 600 CMC users who said they were in some way engaged in

the university conflict. Their findings reinforced the escalating role of CMC in activism with the

respondents using, trusting, and depending most on CMC for information about the conflict.

Blogging was at the forefront of the subjects' communication activities; it emerged as a

communication tool important to the deaf and hard-of-hearing subjects (Lomicky & Hogg,

2010).

Subjects depended on blogs more than any other CMC activity to communicate about the

conflict, and the authors found that the students trusted blogs more than any other source of

information. The authors found that a decline of support for traditional media in terms of use and

trust for conflict information, although respondents reported that interpersonal communication

was important to them as information about the conflict was being exchanged. CMC also affects

the organizational structure within social movements by diluting the importance of hierarchy.

This study suggested that private CMC is impinging on face-to-face interaction, and public CMC

increasingly is encroaching on the public square (Lomicky & Hogg, 2010).

Okdie, Guadagno, Bernieri, Geers, and Mclarney-Vesotski (2010) examined how

impressions formed via computer-mediated communication (CMC) differ from those formed

face-to-face (FtF).  The authors examined impressions formed via each communication mode

while controlling for the other. Over 130 participants in this study interacted with a partner twice: once FtF and once CMC. When controlling for each communication mode, participants interacting FtF, and formed more positive impressions of their partner than they did using CMC.

Each participant filled out the same set of dependent measures twice, following each interaction. At each assessment, participants were asked to base their responses on the most recent interaction. The researchers found FtF communication compared to CMC is rich with social cues and reduces ambiguity. Those interacting via CMC were more self-aware than those who interacted FtF, which is consistent with the idea that interacting via the computer increases individuals' self-awareness (Okdie et al., 2010). The authors suggested future research should examine which elements of CMC cause the most impact and which are more likely to affect processes such as interpersonal sensitivity and overall perceptions of the quality of the interaction.

Walther, Van Der Heide, Tong, Carr, and Atkin (2010) explored a sequence of effects pertaining to the influence of relational goals on online information seeking, the use of information and arguments as relational management strategies in computer-mediated chat, and the intrapersonal attitude change resulting from these processes. The authors found people with negative relational goals used the Web to seek information for discussions more than affinity-goal participants. Individuals expressed affinity-disaffinity through arguments, agreements, and disagreements with partners' preferences, which led to changes in their own attitudes.

The authors surveyed over 90 undergraduate students using a 7-interval Likert-type scale. The authors asked questions about how the use of multiple online channels affects interpersonal goals and vice versa. They found, as their hypotheses suggested, that implications of the potential to seek information online for use in interpersonal dialogue transforms a relationship.

The participants responded to questions via an online chat. The authors found that mass-mediated information is perpetually, opportunistically, and even surreptitiously available to users before or during CMC conversations (Walther et al., 2010).

The study explored the chain of how relational goals affect online information seeking and mediated conversations. Using some of the communication media of our time, electronic conversation behaviors affect attitudes interpersonally or intrapersonally, even when those behaviors were knowingly undertaken for interpersonal purposes (Walther et al., 2010).

Hargittai (2007) examined differences between people who use social network sites and those who stay away from them. Based on data from a survey administered to a diverse group of young adults, the author researched predictors of SNS usage, with particular focus on Facebook, MySpace, Xanga, and Friendster. A person's gender, race and ethnicity, and parental educational background are all associated with use, but in most cases only when the aggregate concept of social network sites is disaggregated by service. Additionally, people with more experience and autonomy of use are more likely to be users of such sites. The author found participation based on SNS user background suggests that differential adoption of such services may be contributing to digital inequality.

The author surveyed over 1,000 students by a paper survey, rather than an online survey. The participants were asked about their online behaviors. When asked how often they go online, the vast majority reported doing so several times a day (Hargittai, 2007). The author found that students who have at least one parent with a college education are significantly more likely to be Facebook users, while those who have at least one parent with a graduate degree are considerably less likely to spend time on MySpace.

The researcher's goal was to compare SNS users and non-users, and found several systematic differences in who chooses to spend time on such sites and who does not. The author found that most studies to look at SNS uses focus on one service only. The findings presented in this study suggested caution when generalizing findings from the use of one site to the use of other related services. Most importantly, the researcher found that aggregated SNS use statistics hide important differences concerning usage preferences within a diverse sample of users by specific sites (Hargittai, 2007). The fact that students select into the use of different services based on their racial and ethnic background, as well as their parents' level of education, suggests that there is less intermingling of users from varying backgrounds, which can be limiting on a number of levels (Hargittai, 2007).

<center>Discussion</center>

Relationships are caused by interactions and mutual understandings. Relationships are both social and personal, each side is constantly updating, thinking and communicating, until one discovers what the relationships means, or an affirmation occurs. The media and how we view the media contributes to our technology use, and how we form relationships in both the on and off-line worlds. Perception is not necessarily true of another's in any given relationship. Relationships can be compared to games and relationships are evaluated in a process, reconsidered, and the thought process leads to thinking about the future of the relationship (Rychlak, 1984). Social networks and relationships can also be seen as a pattern of behavior.

Little research has been done to evaluate the impact that computer-mediated technology has had on the theoretical view of relational closeness. With hundreds of social networking websites linking people together around the world, the research looks to suggest that the theory has evolved, eliminating layers in this global online world.

SNSs users, especially college students in the U.S., have high connectivity levels; therefore offline identities carry over to online behavior, and vice versa (Hargittai, 2007). This can be seen today with users constantly updating their status, or replying to event invitations on Facebook.  SNSs are also challenging legal conceptions of privacy. Hodge (2006) argued that the fourth amendment to the U.S. Constitution and legal decisions concerning privacy are not equipped to address social network sites. Boyd and Ellison (2007) asked, "Do police officers have the right to access content posted to Facebook without a warrant?" The legality of this hinges on users' expectation of privacy and whether or not Facebook profiles are considered public or private.

Although it may be common sense, a good rule of thumb is to not friend your boss or other people that could take offense to what you and your friends may be posting to your profile(s). Content on the internet never goes away; anything you say can and will be used against you (Kuchinskas, 2009). If you write something it's out there, and that's great if you want it to be, but you also need to be careful because everyone has access to it.  Just Google yourself, or search pipl.com, and see what you find. If you're ok with what you find then you're on the right track.

The balance of positive and negative exchanges within an interpersonal relationship must preserve a ratio where rewards outweigh the costs. This is essential for depth of self disclosure to form a foundation of a relationship. It is unclear whether the anticipation of future interaction can serve as the catalyst for continued interpersonal interaction, since creating friends within the Facebook network is defined differently than acquiring friendships face-to-face. Facebook members may not see any difference with what they disclose within either Facebook or face-to-

face in the off-line world. Therefore, they will view what they share on Facebook and their offline self-disclosures as the same.

As we live more frictionless lives, no longer struggling for physical survival, every thirst quenched, every appetite satisfied, every desire fulfilled, we can live in ever-increasing isolation because we no longer "need" people to provide for us, except psychologically. We can find whatever we need online. Individuals can participate in media (e.g. blogging, facebooking, tweeting, uploading videos of their dogs), but it is not a "real" experience, or is it? It is at best a surrogate for experiences, but it provides the illusion of participation.

A person can "meet" someone on a SNS such as Facebook and know everything about them before a F2F conversation ever takes place. The phenomenon of Facebook as related to privacy concerns needs further study. Future research should examine what features users are using to report factors such as making new friends, changing profiles, pictures, interpersonal attraction, and perceived similarity. Anticipation of future interaction both in the on and off-line world represents external influences which alters the way in which individuals present themselves to each other.

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