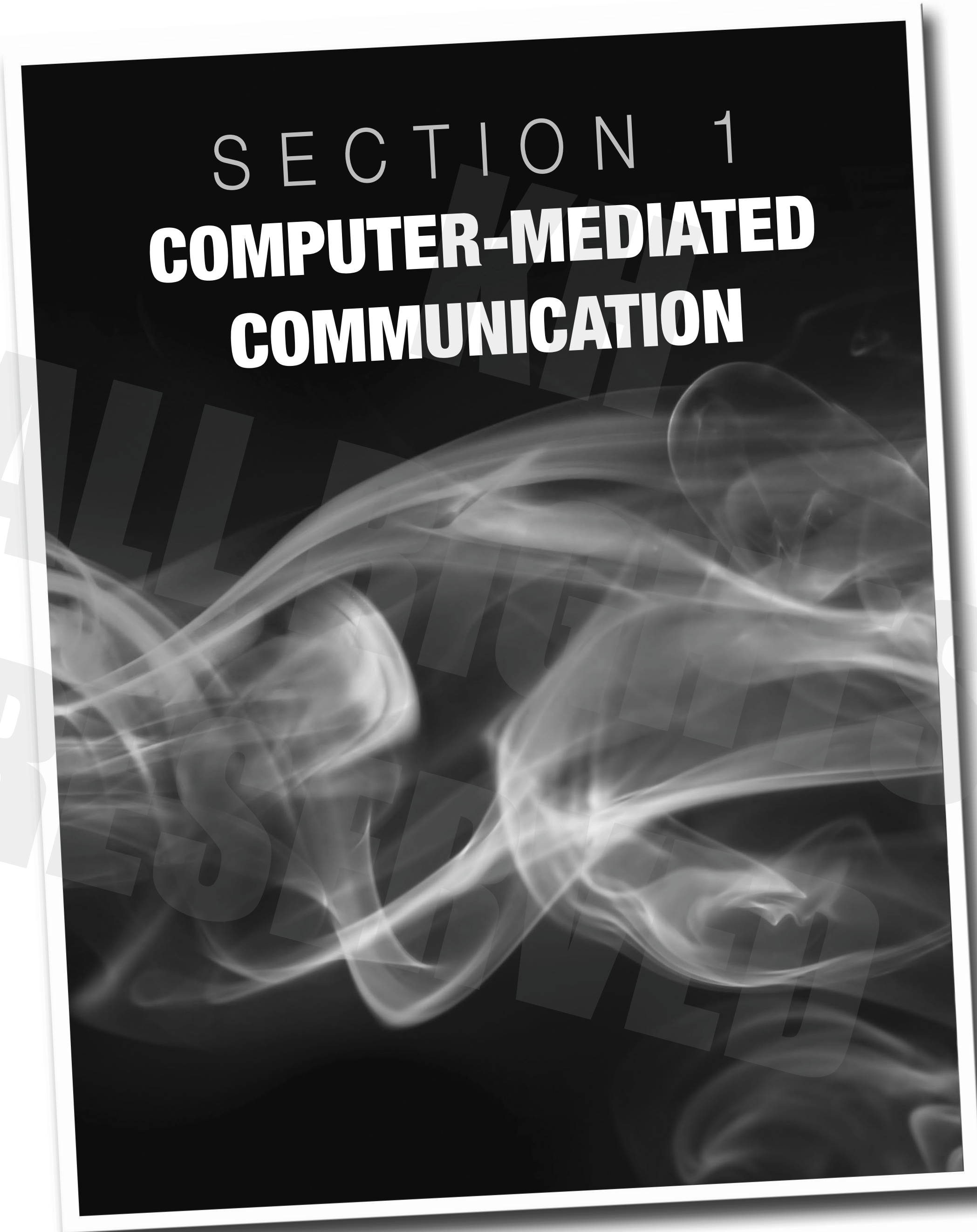
SECTION 1
COMPUTER-MEDIATED
COMMUNICATION

The computer-mediated communication (CMC) context focuses on communication that occurs using computer technologies as the medium to convey messages. Accordingly, CMC scholars examine mediated communication across personal computers, Internet technologies, video/audio recordings, mobile devices, and wireless technologies. Some major areas of research in CMC include cyberbullying, chat rooms, texting, online support groups, blogging, email, social networking sites, and podcasting. This chapter focuses on three important areas of CMC research: (1) online dating, (2) Facebook, and (3) Internet privacy. First, Jennifer Gibbs (Rutgers University) examines the dating scene in online personals to answer the question: How can online daters be more successful in meeting a potential romantic partner? Second, Ashley Hanna and Joseph Walther (Michigan State University) examine how Facebook communicates to receivers by answering the question: What perceptions do people form after viewing Facebook profiles? Third, Sandra Petronio (IUPUI) reviews communication privacy management research to answer the question: What are we giving up and what are we risking when we disclose our private information online? With CMC and online communication increasing exponentially through mediums such as Facebook, Google +, Skype, Twitter, Youtube, iPAD/Droid apps, and even plain "old" email, it is ever important to understand the messages we send through computers. These research programs will help you navigate your Facebook profile choices, online disclosures, and online dating profiles. Only time will tell how computer mediated technologies will continue to change after the publication of this chapter!

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ONLINE DATING

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When I began studying online dating in 2003, I had no idea it would turn into an ongoing research program with such importance for the field of communication. It all started when two of my friends and fellow graduate students at USC, Nicole Ellison and Rebecca Heino, invited me to collaborate with them on a project on online dating. It made sense as we all had interests in new technologies and how they were changing the way we communicate. At the time, the World Wide Web was relatively new and there was little scholarship on online communication, and even less published research on Internet dating. I also had a personal interest in this topic, as I had met my husband on Match.com back in 1998, when very few people had ever tried online matchmaking. I've heard it said (and I fully agree) that research is "me-search," and the best research topics tend to be ones that are rooted in your own personal experience and passions. This is so because studying something about which you have particular knowledge and insight generally leads to more informed research, and choosing a topic that excites you provides motivation to drive and sustain your interest in the research.

Although you—as a college student who probably has many opportunities to meet people in your peer group—might not understand the appeal of going online and paying a web site in order to find a date, online dating has become a popular dating option for several reasons. First, young people are waiting until they get older to settle down and get married, and once one is out of school and in the workplace it becomes increasingly difficult to meet potential romantic partners. Second, many people are busy and spend much of their day in front of the computer, and the ease of browsing through profiles and corresponding with prospective mates at their convenience is appealing. Finally, the Internet has become a very social tool that plays a significant role in our lives—as evidenced by the rise of social media such as Facebook and Twitter—and thus using it for dating purposes is becoming seen as natural as well. Online dating is particularly attractive for groups such as gays, lesbians, and middle-aged heterosexuals (including those who are divorced or widowed) who may find it more difficult to meet people offline. But it has gone from a once stigmatized to a mainstream practice within the population more broadly. And it does seem to work: A survey commissioned by Match.

com found that one in every five relationships now begins online (Chadwick Martin Bailey, 2010), and a survey commissioned by eHarmony even found that 5% of all marriages in the U.S. today are the result of an eHarmony connection (Harris Interactive, 2009). Online daters' goals range from simply wanting to meet new people to wanting to get married, although it is fair to say that most are looking for some kind of romantic or sexual relationship.

More than just a fad or a popular trend, online dating is an interesting topic for communication scholars to study, since it requires individuals to form relationships with virtual strangers in a mediated environment in which they have less visual and contextual information and fewer social cues about one another. A number of communication scholars (including myself and my colleagues) have studied questions related to how online daters present themselves, form impressions of others, and establish relationships with potential partners. This chapter reviews our knowledge on this topic, focusing on the following question: How can online daters be more successful in meeting a potential romantic partner?

PRESENTING ONESELF ONLINE

Presenting oneself and assessing others in online dating can be challenging. When you meet someone face-to-face, you have many visual and social cues to provide clues about the person and their relationship to you. The way they are dressed, physical objects they are carrying (such as a book), and the physical location in which you meet may tell you about their background and interests.

You can read their body language and facial expressions to gauge their mood and how they feel about you. The other person can also use these cues to learn about you. But what about when you are just looking at a profile online? How should you present yourself in a way that is accurate yet garners attention? How do you know if someone is lying about their age, appearance, or marital status?

My colleagues and I have addressed such questions in our research. We have found that online daters navigate a tension between presenting an ideal self and an actual self (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). On one hand, they face pressure to portray themselves in the most positive, attractive light possible in their profile, in order to stand out and be noticed amidst hundreds of other profiles. On the other hand, there are competing pressures to create honest and accurate self-portrayals if one desires a romantic relationship, since the truth will eventually come out on an in-person date. The desire to view oneself as honest may also limit the amount of deception that takes place (Mazar & Ariely, 2006). In research with a national sample of Match.com users, we found that a full 94% of our respondents strongly disagreed they had intentionally misrepresented themselves in their profile or online communication, and 87% felt such misrepresentation was unacceptable. Despite these strong claims of their own honesty, they felt that other online daters routinely misrepresented aspects such as their physical appearance, relationship goals, age, income, and marital status (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006).

Since people are unlikely to admit to something as socially undesirable as lying in an interview or even in an anonymous survey, several of my colleagues decided to measure how much online daters lie in their profiles in a more objective way, by bringing them into a lab and comparing their actual age, height, and weight with what they had claimed in their profiles. They found that a majority had indeed misrepresented one or more of these features, but that most lies were minor—such as shaving off five pounds or adding an inch to their height (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). Although blatant deception is rare, online daters do tend to exaggerate and embellish the truth (Whitty, 2008). While this certainly happens offline as well, the online dating context offers certain features that allow for increased exaggeration and embellishment. First, users are anonymous and the information they have about one another is initially limited to the profile. Without a shared social network (in the form of shared friends and acquaintances) to temper misinformation, online daters are free to exaggerate their virtues in order to maximize their attractiveness (Fiore & Donath, 2004). They are also communicating asynchronously (at least initially), which allows them to engage in 'selective self-presentation' (Walther & Burgoon, 1992) by consciously controlling and editing their profiles to emphasize the positive and mask their negative attributes. This is not unique to online dating; we do this in other contexts, such as job interviews and writing a resume. Research has found that an online dating profile is similar to a 'resume' in which one tries to sell oneself to potential romantic partners rather than to employers (Heino, Ellison, & Gibbs, 2010).

Through qualitative interviews with online dating participants, we were able to explore this issue in more depth. We found that honesty online is complicated and that misrepresentation occurs in both intentional and unintentional ways (Ellison et al., 2006). First, online daters often portray an idealized or potential future version of the self, through strategies such as identifying themselves as active in a laundry list of activities (such as hiking, surfing, rollerblading) in which they rarely participate but which are in line with how they would like to see themselves. They may also describe themselves in euphemistic terms such as "curvy" or "average" rather than admitting they are overweight. Ellison and her colleagues conceive of the profile as a "promise made to an imagined audience that future face-to-face interaction will take place with someone who does not differ fundamentally from the person represented by the profile" (Ellison, Hancock, & Toma, 2012, p. 56). In this sense, the profile is like a 'psychological contract' that the online dater could be held to by potential future dates, and it is not considered deceptive as long as it *could* be true in the future.

Misrepresentation also occurs as an attempt to circumvent technological constraints of the site. For example, online daters often "fudge" demographic information such as their age by subtracting a few years in order to avoid being "filtered out" of searches. Many online dating sites allow users to perform searches on basic demographic criteria, such as age, height, weight, and geographic location. Since many users tend to perform searches using natural breakpoints (e.g., 35), it is common practice for those a few years older (36, 37, or 38) to list their age as 35 on their profile in order to appeal to a wider audience. They justify this by saying they tend to look younger or date younger people, and they often regard this as socially acceptable as long as they disclose their real age early on in their correspondence (Ellison et al., 2006). This is confirmed by an analysis of Match.com profiles, which found that spikes occurred at certain (more desirable) age points that were much higher than would be expected by chance. For example, there were a disproportionate number of 29-year-old female users, eight times higher than the number of females aged 30 to 34 (Epstein, 2007).

Finally, online daters may unintentionally misrepresent themselves due to the limits of their own self-knowledge. We call this the "foggy mirror" effect, in which individuals represent themselves on the basis of an inaccurate self-concept that may not correspond with how others see them (Ellison et al., 2006). That is, they may not be able to accurately describe themselves because there are blind spots in their self-concept, or things about themselves that they don't know. As one of our interviewees put it, "sometimes you will see a person who weighs 900 pounds and—this is just an exaggeration—and they will have on spandex, you'll think, 'God, I wish I had their mirror, because obviously their mirror tells them they look great.' It's the same thing with online" (Ellison et al., 2006, p. 13). Thus, users often unintentionally misrepresent themselves out of lack of awareness of themselves and how others may perceive them.

ASSESSING OTHERS AND FORMING RELATIONSHIPS ONLINE

Meeting people through online dating is fraught with uncertainty. There is usually no shared social network, and rather than meeting through a friend or an acquaintance, users are interacting with virtual strangers. They thus face privacy risks in disclosing intimate information. Given the relative anonymity and ease of deception online, it is important for online daters to assess and vet the credibility of potential partners in order to verify their identity claims. This is more difficult since there are fewer traditional identity cues and less immediate feedback (Gibbs, Ellison, & Lai, 2011), but online environments do allow for a variety of information seeking strategies, which refer to ways in which we seek information about others (Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon, & Sunnafrank, 2002).

Although less information is available from nonverbal and social context cues, online dating participants do scrutinize the cues that are present and use them to form impressions of others. As a result, small cues may become exaggerated or take on greater importance. For example, a profile with a typo or a misspelling may be rejected based on the assumption that the profile creator is lazy or uneducated (Ellison et al., 2006). As Walther's (1996) hyperpersonal effect predicts, online daters have the tendency to idealize potential partners on the basis of limited cues, and they fill in the gaps by building up a fantasy persona that may be inaccurate and unrealistic. This may explain why the longer communicators wait to meet in person, the more likely their first meeting is to end up in rejection (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007).

The process of verifying identity claims online is known as "warranting" (Walther & Parks, 2002). Warranting involves establishing a reliable link between an online persona and a "corporeally-anchored person in the physical world" (Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, & Shulman, 2009, p. 232). Generally, messages generated by others carry more weight than information we report about ourselves (which is easier to manipulate). Support for the warranting principle has been found in several experiments that found other-generated claims about qualities such as one's attractiveness and extraversion are more compelling than self-generated claims in social network sites (Walther et al., 2008; 2009; Utz, 2010).

A few sites exist, such as truedater.com, where online daters can write reviews of their online dates and caution others against fake profiles or users to be avoided for other reasons. But, for the most part, online dating participants cannot rely on other-generated accounts to warrant their identity claims. They can, however, engage in tactics such as "showing" rather than "telling" (Ellison et al., 2006); for example, it is more credible to demonstrate one's sense of humor by writing a clever, witty profile than by simply stating "I am hilarious" in an otherwise dull profile (Gibbs et al., 2011). Our research found evidence that online dating participants used a variety of tactics to reduce uncertainty and verify the credibility of potential partners, by gathering information from both online and offline sources.

These tactics—classified as passive, active, interactive, and extractive (Ramirez et al., 2002)—include comparing profiles on multiple web sites or saving emails to check for consistency, checking public records such as white pages, and "Googling" people to warrant their online claims. Some of our participants even went as far as to perform home property value searches, drawing on the rich stores of personal information accessible online. The most common strategies, however, were interactive and involved asking direct questions of the other person. Those who used more strategies to reduce uncertainty about others tended to disclose more personal information about themselves, perhaps because such "detective work" reduced their privacy concerns and made them more comfortable revealing intimate information to strangers they met online (Gibbs et al., 2011). Such individuals were also likely to have a higher sense of self-efficacy (or confidence in their own abilities) and more Internet experience.

Assessing others online is also complicated by the level of choice available, or what is known as the "paradox of choice." Having access to a large pool of eligible dating partners is convenient and affords users a great deal of choice, but this choice can also be paralyzing and lead to poor decisions. Online dating models vary from sites like Match.com that allow users to browse through all user profiles and choose whom to contact to sites like eHarmony, in which users go through extensive personality tests and are then matched up with others according to scientific algorithms that assess their compatibility. Both models provide a great deal more choice of potential dating partners than most individuals encounter in their offline lives. Related to the notion of expanded choice, my colleagues and I (Heino et al., 2010) observed a prevalent "market" metaphor in how online dating participants talked about their experiences. Our interviewees talked about online dating as "people shopping" and used terms like "sales pipeline," "catalog," and "supermarket" to describe the process. They described viewing profiles as resumes and mentally accounting for embellishments of others, as well as trying to sell themselves. Our interviews revealed that the market metaphor encouraged a mentality in which people became more picky and rejected profiles on the basis of trivial criteria, such as privileged demographic fields (age, height, weight), rather than getting a holistic sense of the person; and that they regarded others as well as themselves as commodities or products to buy and sell, with an emphasis on "relationshopping" (shopping for a mate) rather than "relationshipping" (getting to know someone and developing a relationship). As one male put it, "the downside of it is, I think, that the expectations are very much of a consumer—that sort of instant karma expectation, expecting a connection with less effort" (Heino et al., 2010, p. 440).

ADVICE FOR ONLINE DATERS

Based on what we know about online dating, how can online daters be more successful? The research on misrepresentation in online dating suggests that in order to be successful, online daters should strive to present themselves in a positive and attractive yet still honest and accurate light. As in offline situations, such as job interviews and first dates, it is helpful to think carefully about how you present yourself in your profile; first impressions count for a lot and are hard to change. Since many people are not always aware of how others perceive them, a good strategy is to ask a friend or a family member to read over one's profile and give input. Many online dating sites provide tips, and we found that online daters often engage in their own recursive process of assessing others and then applying the rules to their own self-presentation (Ellison et al., 2006). For example, one may become disillusioned with profiles that only include one or two (unrealistic) photos, and then make an effort to post multiple photos of oneself in a variety of situations to portray oneself more accurately. Despite the prevalence of at least minor misrepresentation (e.g., fudging one's age or accentuating one's appearance) in online dating, honesty is still the best policy. Gibbs et al. (2006) found that online daters who were more honest and disclosed more personal feelings and information were more likely to consider themselves successful in achieving their goals; and Baker (2005) also found that being open and honest in one's self-disclosures was one of the factors in developing successful long-term relationships. Given that others are often not completely honest in their profiles, however, it is important to find ways to "warrant" others' identity claims by looking for multiple photos, asking questions and checking for consistency, or Googling them. Don't wait too long to meet in person, since it is easy to build up a fantasy persona based on limited cues that may not be completely accurate. Finally, emphasizing "relationshopping" may provide more choice and convenience in selecting potential partners, but online daters should not neglect the "relationshipping" aspect and expect to have an instant connection with little effort. Online dating has real advantages in providing a portal or an initial introduction to individuals who may never meet otherwise, but it is just the first step. Finding the right person requires making good choices (and being able to identify which criteria will make one a good partner) initially, but the bulk of relationship development occurs offline, beyond the online dating site itself.

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WHAT PERCEPTIONS DO PEOPLE FORM AFTER VIEWING FACEBOOK PROFILES?

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For many college students, it seems that the World Wide Web has always existed (Beloit Mindset list, 2011). You probably use the Web to shop and study, and to entertain and inform yourselves. You may also use *social network sites* on the Web as an important communication tool with which to manage your social relationships. Joinson (2008) defined social network sites (SNS) as web sites that "provide users with a profile space, facilities for uploading content (e.g., photos, music), messaging in various forms, and the ability to make connections with other people" (p. 1027). The most popular SNS is Facebook.com (Alexa.com, 2011), with over 750 million active users worldwide (Facebook.com, August 26, 2011). While Facebook helps people make and sustain these connections, the structure and content of the messages people post on Facebook also shape people's perceptions of us in subtle and interesting ways. Some of these influences on perceptions come from the messages that profile owners deliberately place on their profiles. Other influences come from Facebook's underlying computations about users' activities. Yet other influences come from what one's Facebook friends do, say, or picture. This chapter reviews what recent research has found with respect to *what perceptions people form after viewing Facebook profiles.*

Individuals use Facebook for a variety of purposes, from viewing photos of friends and family members, to sharing awareness about and coordinating upcoming social events, to checking the relationship status of a new acquaintance. Research has identified seven key purposes of Facebook use (Joinson, 2008). First, users employ Facebook for *social connection,* that is, to maintain existing relationships. You may use Facebook to communicate with a friend who is studying abroad or to reconnect with a friend from elementary school. Second, users *share identities* on Facebook by connecting with others who hold similar interests and beliefs. When fans of a sports team "like" a team's profile page online, they signal something about themselves and their similarity to other like-minded people. Third, Facebook serves a *photograph* function when users upload and view each other's pictures. Previous generations have little photographic traces of their college days (since dad owned and used the old camera), but digital cameras and Facebook have made college life an ongoing photo-documentary (Mendelsohn & Papacharissi, 2011). Fourth, people utilize Facebook for *content gratifications* that involve applications such as games and quizzes. These applications provide an opportunity for users to interact with each other and to develop shared interests. Fifth, Facebook serves a *social investigation* function, such that users gather information about people they have gotten to know offline, or do not know well offline. Someone might look up the profile of the attractive student who sits next to him in class, for instance. Sixth, users go *social network surfing* by following the connections or links (i.e., Facebook friends) between their own friends and their friends' friends. Seventh, Facebook serves the function of *status updates* through which users disclose information to their friends or gather information from their friends about their friends. One may use Facebook to announce that she has a new job, or to discover that a friend has recently become engaged, did great on a test, or broke up a relationship.

But how does using Facebook affect the perceptions we maintain about the people whose profiles we see? A growing amount of research studies have found that forming impressions about other people by looking at various aspects of their Facebook profiles leads to certain kinds of information processing patterns and judgments that are somewhat unlike impression formation patterns elsewhere.

In some ways, Facebook resembles other venues where we control what we say about ourselves. People who see what we put online, and only what we say about ourselves, seem to get a pretty accurate view of who we are (Back et al., 2010; Gosling, Gaddis, & Vazire, 2007). The things that Facebook users deliberately say about themselves and how they arrange their profiles (when they indicate their music, book, TV, and movie preferences, fan groups, and other voluntary disclosures) reveal not only the things they like, but glimpses into their own personalities as well. Profile owners who alphabetize their interests may reveal their preference for organization, while users who do not share a phone number or address seem to signal a preference for privacy. Gosling and colleagues refer to the clues about one's personality that come from the way people go about arranging their possessions—in this case, their virtual possessions, or profile space—as *behavioral residue.* That is, the ways that people went about doing things leaves clues about the ways they think and feel. In Gosling et al.'s studies, independent observers (i.e., strangers) rated Facebook users' personalities. Those ratings were compared to personality ratings that the profile owners completed about themselves, and, additionally, to ratings of the profile owners that were provided from the profile owners' offline friends. The independent observers looked at Facebook profiles that reflected both the owners' intentional statements as well as their "behavioral residue"; observers also looked at a random sample of the profile owners' photographs. They then rated the profile owners on each of the Big Five personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. The researchers found that the group of observers rated profile owners pretty consistently among themselves. Moreover, the observers' personality assessments of the profile owners were accurate, in that they matched with the assessments by the profile owners and their friends on each of the profile owner's personality dimensions, except for the personality dimension of emotional stability.

In addition to what Facebook users indicate about themselves, purposefully or less intentionally, there are other sources of information that affect observers' impressions of Facebook users. Some of these information sources are automatically generated by Facebook's underlying computation system. One of these clues is the automatic display Facebook provides indicating how many Facebook friends an individual has. In traditional, offline relating, people tend to maintain some kind of relationship with about 150 people, while the number of Facebook friends one has may be considerably greater (see for review Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008).

In a recent study, researchers sought to determine if a person can appear to have too many friends, that is, whether others doubt the authenticity of a person with too great a number of people linked as a Facebook friend (Tong et al., 2008). If an individual appears to waste time and gratuitously "friend" other people, observers may actually think less of someone apparently exhibiting such superficial behavior than they do of more moderate levels of friending. The study involved an experiment that showed one of several different versions of Facebook profile mock-ups to a number of different college students. The only difference between these versions of the profiles was the number of friends that the Facebook system seemed to say that the profile owner possessed: about a hundred, three hundred, five hundred, seven hundred, or nine hundred. As the number of friends increased, there was a general trend in perceptions of the profile owner's level of extraversion, although this increase leveled off after 500 friends. The most stark finding was on the subjects' judgments of the profile owner's "social attractiveness," a measure assessing how much a subject can imagine being friends with someone, having a social conversation with someone, or seeing that person in a subject's social circle. Social attractiveness was greatest when a profile owner appeared to have about 500 friends. Profile owners with less than 500 friends were less socially attractive. Likewise, profile owners with more than 500 friends also were seen as less socially attractive than the 500-friend apex.

In addition to what one indicates about his or herself on Facebook, and what the system reveals about one's network, the characteristics and messaging actions of one's network also affect how others perceive Facebook users. Additional research has examined how the comments and appearances of one's friends affect how one is evaluated by observers.

One's Facebook friends contribute to individuals' Facebook wall, and append comments to users' status updates. A research study asked, "are we known by the company we keep?" and it explored how one's friends' comments on one's Facebook wall affect perceptions of the profile owner's social attractiveness (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008). Because a friend's comment on one's wall is displayed alongside that friend's photograph, the same study looked at how good looking or bad looking one's friends are affects observers' perceptions of how physically attractive the profile owner is. This experiment also involved Facebook profile mock-ups, which showed subjects one of several different sets of wall posting statements ostensibly contributed by two of the profile owner's friends. One set of statements stressed the profile owner's positive social behavior, for example, "I just gotta say you rock!!! u were the life of the party last night. all my friends from home thought you were great!" The other set of statements reflected negative social behavior, such as, "WOW were you ever trashed last night! Im not sure Taylor was that impressed." The comments had a significant effect on viewers' evaluations of the profile owner. When positive messages appeared, observers rated the profile owner as more credible and more socially attractive than when the negative comments were displayed.

The effects of one's friends' physical attractiveness, as shown in the pictures that accompanied wall postings, had a significant effect on the profile owners' attractiveness. Although some previous research predicts a contrast effect—one looks better by contrast when one's picture is displayed next to people who are worse-looking—the opposite effect pertains to one's Facebook friends: The better looking one's friends are, the better looking a profile owner appears to be, too.

Yet a third experiment sought to find out which has a more potent effect on observers' perceptions of Facebook profile owners—the information that the profile owners indicate about themselves, or the statements that their friends post about them. This research drew on a relatively new theory of computer-mediated communication known as warranting theory (Walther & Parks, 2002). Warranting theory addresses concerns that people have about the authenticity of what people say about themselves online, a concern that has troubled chat room users, online dating site subscribers, and others on the Internet who need to establish whether what people say about themselves online is actually true or not. The term *warranting* refers to a connection. In this case, it is the connection between how people present themselves online and what they are really like offline. Because people often suspect that others distort their self-descriptions and tend to self-aggrandize, it may be hard to figure out how real people's self-descriptions might really be. The basic premise of warranting theory is that people put more faith in information about a person when it seems that the person it is about could not have manipulated it him- or herself. That is, the more immune information is from tampering by the person it refers to, the more true people perceive it to be.

One application of warranting theory suggests that people are less likely to trust information that individuals provide about themselves and more likely to trust information provided by third party sources. This is consistent with warranting theory because what others say about an individual is relatively less open to that individual's manipulations. These principles apply to Facebook because, as we discussed above, Facebook pages feature information that individuals provide about themselves (having less warranting value) as well as information generated by third parties or Facebook friends (having greater warranting value as far as other observers may be concerned).

An experiment tested which had more influence on observers' impressions: the information that Facebook profile owners said themselves, or what their Facebook friends said about them (Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, & Shulman, 2009). In one version of the experiment, a Facebook page was made up so that the profile owner provided indications that his favorite activities were socializing and going out with friends. Yet his Facebook friends' wall comments asked why he hadn't come out the last few weekends, and if he was still locked away studying. In another case, a Facebook owner's self-statements suggested she was not very attractive. She claimed she was trying to lose weight, and her favorite quotation was "Judge not a book by its cover," but her friends' wall comments indicated that they thought she was hot. One friend said that the profile owner's pictures made it clear that she was the better looking of the two of them. When observers viewed these and other test stimuli, more often than not the friends' comments were more influential in affecting observers' perceptions than what the profile owner had suggested about his or her own characteristics. Warranting theory appears to offer a useful perspective on how people weigh conflicting information about Facebook users, when information from the users or from their friends doesn't agree.

The findings presented in the preceding discussion may pertain most strongly to situations in which observers have little other information about the profile owners on which to base their perceptions. After all, these experiments featured unfamiliar observers looking at and rating the profiles of people who they did not know. While it is the case that some social browsing on Facebook involves looking at the profiles of people we do not personally know, or know well, it is also the case that most of the people one demarcates as a Facebook "friend" are people already known, to some extent, offline (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007; Joinson, 2008). The strength of these relationships varies. Long before Facebook, sociologist Mark Granovetter (1973) conceptualized our associations with other people as comprising strong ties or weak ties. Strong ties are connections people have to others with whom they a have close relationship; individuals who they spend time with, confide in, have an emotional bond with, and provide favors for. Being Facebook friends with your best friend is an example of a strong tie. Weak ties originally referred to people who one does not know directly, such as a friend of a friend. The Internet has "disintermediated" indirect ties—we can easily communicate directly with people we don't personally know—so now the term weak ties is used to refer to people in one's social network who are less familiar or intimate at the present time. Weak ties therefore include people one has not yet gotten to know too well (such as new acquaintances), or people with whom one is less close than formerly (such as friends who were close at some time in the past).

According to Ellison et al. (2007), weak ties allow a Facebook user to maintain a larger set of potential resources from whom to ask for information or other forms of help. Facebook may be especially conducive to weak tie relationships due to the relatively small effort required to maintain these connections online, compared to maintaining connections via traditional communication or one-to-one messaging systems. For example, the time and energy associated with congratulating a distant relative on a job promotion is greatly reduced on Facebook (e.g., posting a quick message on a Facebook wall or "liking" a job promotion status update) compared to offline (e.g., calling the individual or sending a card).

Whether an individual Facebook friend is a strong tie or a weak tie—well-known or barely-known to an observer—should have some impact on how much the material on the person's Facebook sites affect an observer's perceptions of that person. Yet even among people who know each other well, research has shown that information people present on Facebook can trigger perceptions of insincerity and hypocrisy under some circumstances. DeAndrea and Walther (2011) asked college students to identify one of their Facebook friends with whom they were relatively less familiar, who the students knew had some inconsistency on his profile between the way he presented himself on Facebook and the way he was to people who knew him offline. In addition, the researchers asked students to identify close friends who also had discrepancies between their Facebook profiles and their actual natures.

Students had no trouble finding examples for the researchers; it appears that everyone knows people whose Facebook personae and their offline personae do not quite match. Examples of these discrepancies included individuals whose profile pictures suggested they liked to party or who posed in sexually suggestive manners, whose real friends knew them not to drink or to be sexually active. The researchers also surveyed the students' perceptions about these friends with distorted self-presentations. When the person was less well acquainted with the student, the student rated the friend as more hypocritical and less trustworthy than when rating a close friend who had been equally as deceptive. It seems that we are more forgiving of our close friends for minor distortions in their online self-presentations, but when a friend is not a close friend, watch out for significantly more negative perceptions. This is especially important news since many people assume that Facebook friends already know each other offline, and because of that it may not matter what a person says online; they already know better because of their offline acquaintance. Not so; even when people know one another, their perceptions can be changed when they see each other presenting themselves in ways that deviate precisely from what they know of each other outside of Facebook.

The lessons and recommendations someone could draw from this research are in some ways easy to discern and in other ways more difficult to apply. One lesson seems clear: Individuals' efforts to convey who they are and what they are like via Facebook are not entirely up to them. People can be careful about what they say, and try to make as positive or desirable, or as personable an impression as they wish, but their efforts can only go so far. The residue of their online and offline behaviors, such as how they arrange their profile and how many friends they attempt to have, also affect what people think of them. Moreover, trying to enhance one's image in a less than truthful way can backfire; your friends know it when you're faking, and if your friends aren't close friends, you lose standing in their estimation when there is a gap between the Facebook you and the real you.

We would never suggest that someone should pick friends on the basis of how good-looking they are, even though the attractiveness of people's Facebook friends, as reflected on others' profiles or walls, affects others' perceptions of people's attractiveness. More reasonable advice might be not to "friend" other people indiscriminately. It seems reasonable to recommend grooming one's networks on occasion, combing out partners who have shown themselves to be sources of embarrassment, who like to tease or to give you a hard time about yourself even if it is all in fun, since others who see your profile might not understand the context or irony of their comments. People might ask certain friends not to be critical or negative in their wall postings or public comments. That's what private messaging is for.

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COMMUNICATION PRIVACY MANAGEMENT THEORY AND KNOWING HOW PEOPLE REGULATE TELLING AND NOT TELLING THEIR PRIVATE INFORMATION

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For the last 32 years, I have been working on the development, testing, expansion, and refinement of an evidenced-based theoretical perspective called *Communication Privacy Management* (CPM). Many colleagues have joined me in contributing to the empirical testing and application of CPM. At this point, we know a great deal about how people make decisions to control and manage their private information. In developing CPM, I intentionally created the theory to be translational in nature.

By translational I mean that the CPM theoretical perspective had to accomplish more than crafting a way to understand how people manage private information. There are several criteria necessary to meet the parameters of translating scholarship into practice. First, CPM theory had to be grounded in research. For every finding supporting the principles of this theory, there were contradictions to those principles. Those contradictions were important because they helped pave the way to new discoveries about what people were doing with their private information. Much research has been conducted over the years leading to a predictive set of axioms that give us confidence the theory tells us how people act and react to regulating private information (e.g., Petronio, 2010a). Second, CPM had to be interdisciplinary in scope. In other words, to be translational, this theory had to be relevant not only to the communication discipline, but also relevant to many other disciplines. In other words, CPM theory had to be developed so that people could use the principles in all the contexts in which people manage private information to better understand the patterns of choice. CPM has been successfully applied to many areas of relationships and family life (e.g., Afifi, 2003; Hawk, Keijsers, Hale, & Meeus, 2009; Matsunaga, 2009; Petronio, 2010b; Petronio & Jones, 2006; Petronio, Jones, & Morr, 2003; Serewicz & Canary, 2008). Many people have applied CPM to health communication issues (e.g., Bevan & Pecchioni, 2008; Helft & Petronio, 2007; Petronio & Gaff, 2010; Petronio & Lewis, 2010; Petronio & Sargent, 2011; Wittenberg-Lyles, Goldsmith, Ragan, & Sanchez-Reilly, 2010). More recently, the CPM perspective has been applied to understand online privacy issues, including cross-cultural comparisons (e.g., Azza Abdel-Azim Mohamed, 2010; Child & Petronio, 2011).

Third, CPM theory had to succeed in applications that: (1) change dysfunctional practices (e.g., Petronio, Reeder, Hecht, Ros-Mont Mendoza, 1996—program for child sexual abuse), (2) determine interventions so that behaviors can be modified in productive ways (Helft & Petronio, 2007, training medical residents), and/or (3) identify successful practices to use as models (Child, Petronio, Agyeman-Budu, & Westermann, 2011, identifying blog-scrubbing patterns). Currently, CPM has met the expectations of a translational perspective and continues to grow.

While there are many different areas in which to explore the CPM perspective, this chapter gives an overview of how we can better understand communication privacy management in online environments guided by the following question posed by the editors: "*What are we giving up and what are we risking when we disclose our private information online?*" The answers to this question are situated within active attempts at managing private information. Clearly, there are circumstances where unauthorized people, businesses, or some entity intentionally violates our privacy and security. Individuals may not be able to always control those situations; they may only attempt to repair their privacy boundaries to once again regain jurisdiction of their information. But, in the scheme of privacy issues, these extraordinary circumstances happen less frequently than you might think. They are sensationalized to make you feel you are always at risk. To some extent you are, but you have more control than you might think. How you manage your information is therefore more critical to understand to preempt unwanted privacy breakdowns.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION BY UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION PRIVACY MANAGEMENT

The Communication Privacy Management perspective gives several tools to understand privacy management problems and regulation processes in any context, not just online. All the tools discussed below have evolved from research and subsequent adjustments to the theory. We can trust that these steps reflect what happens with privacy management. Our mission in this chapter is to think about applications to online environments. The first step is to examine the way privacy management works from a CPM perspective. The second step is to delve more deeply into how the CPM perspective answers the questions about online privacy management behavior.

Consider this situation:

> **The other day, John wrote a blog to a friend. His family is having a hard time financially and he was telling his friend, Rachel, that his father might lose his job. John worried that he would have to drop out of school. He told Rachel that he thought maybe it was as much his Dad's fault as it was the economy that he might be laid off. He felt angry and confused about his feelings toward his Dad, he disclosed to Rachel. But, he told Rachel that since this was so personal he did not want other people to know about what he told her. He also told her that in his family, things like financial issues were taboo and no one was supposed to talk about them outside the family. After he finished writing his blog and sent it he recalled that his Dad had recently mentioned he started to look at his son's blog. He wasn't sure what to do.**

Let's understand the axioms and principles of CPM predicting privacy management behaviors to diagnosis John's experience and privacy dilemma.

CPM Framework. There are two components that help build scaffolding for the CPM perspective. *First,* to make it easier to envision how the privacy management system functions, CPM uses a privacy boundary metaphor to mark the borders around the private information. Before John shared the information with Rachel on his blog, he was keeping these thoughts private and secure within his own personal privacy boundary. Everyone has these boundaries around information that could potentially make them feel vulnerable. *Second,* it is important to recognize that like most people, John had a need to share his feeling; consequently he revealed it to Rachel. Giving access to this personal information that is considered private allows us to see some of the complications people face with managing private information. Thinking about this behavior and the potential ramifications illustrates that privacy management is complicated by the fact that people need to be autonomous and separate from others. At the same time, they need to be social and connected to others typically through sharing private information. The CPM perspective, through the use of a privacy management system, is constructed to help us see how people navigate having both autonomy and relationships with other people regarding revealing and concealing private information.

CPM Management System. There are six axioms or predictions for how the privacy management system works according to CPM (Petronio, 2002, 2010a). *Axiom #1* states that people believe they own their private information and it belongs to them individually. Individuals believe they are the original and rightful owners of the information. In other words, people are the "original owners" of their information. This axiom tells us that ownership of information defines what is private and is presumed by people in the way that John presumed he had the right to decide in whom to confide. The condition of ownership impacts the second axiom.

Axiom #2 states that when people make a decision to grant access to others (disclose or give permission for others to see private information), they define those privileged to know as "authorized co-owners" of their information. When access is granted, the privacy boundary around that information metaphorically changes. Since the information has been shared the personal privacy boundary transforms into a dyadic privacy boundary signifying a co-owner has been made privy to the information. Co-owners given information by original owners are seen as authorized because the original owner selects and permits them to know the owner's private information. They did not overhear the information by accident, they did not pry into someone's business, nor did they steal the information. Instead, they were chosen by the original owner.

However, becoming an "authorized co-owner" carries some weight of responsibility. The original owner expects the co-owner to take care of his or her private information restricting access to anyone the owner thinks might make him or her vulnerable. In CPM terms, this is called the principle of "fiduciary responsibilities." In other words, knowing someone's private information makes you responsible for that information and what happens to it after you know. Although not everyone who is told private information understands this assumption about responsibility, the fact is, everyone disclosing believes that "authorized co-owners" should get that point. For our example, this assumption means that John likely believes that Rachel will not disclose John's feelings he discussed on his blog concerning his family's financial troubles and his concerns about his Dad.

Axiom #3 states that because people believe they own their private information, they justifiably feel that they have the right to maintain *control* over their private information. This is true even after people give others access to their information. The big question is how do individuals accomplish that control? The next axiom gives us direction.

Axiom #4 states that the way people exercise control over their private information is through the use of privacy rules. In the example above, John stated a privacy rule. He told Rachel not to talk to anyone about the revelations he made in his blog. People develop privacy rules in a number of ways. They can learn privacy rules from their families since families have "privacy orientations" (Petronio, 2002; Serewicz & Canary, 2008). For example, some families are more open about private matters than others. In John's family, they clearly use rules that restrict the disclosure of private information about family issues, particularly finances. The development and implementation of privacy rules can be triggered by situations or motivations that call for new rules or adjustments to existing rules. As you see with John in this example. His need to talk about his feelings triggered a set of new privacy rules about family issues that were different than what he had learned in his family.

Axiom #5 states that successful and continued control post-access is accomplished through coordinating and negotiating privacy rules with authorized co-owners regarding third-party access. These negotiations revolve around decisions about who else may be privy to the information, how much others outside the shared privacy boundary know the information, and the extent to which co-owners have independent rights to make judgments about who else can know the information. In other words, the decisions include who knows, how much they know, if they know, and whether it is ok for someone else to tell them. In our story, John clearly stated his privacy rule for Rachel telling her not to tell anyone. He presumes she would follow that rule. However since his negotiation was conducted on-line, it may not have been clear that Rachel agreed to the conditions. John, likely assumed she did.

Axiom #6 states that while people believe that they have the right to control the management of their private information, privacy regulation can be unpredictable. Therefore, there is a likelihood that privacy turbulence will erupt that can ultimately lead to privacy breakdowns. Not all states of turbulence end in a complete privacy breakdown. Sometimes a turbulent state helps people realize that their privacy management rules are not working the way they want and they take action to change their expectations altering their rules. At other times, people may not pay attention or realize that there are signs of turbulence and the result is a complete privacy management failure or breakdown. In our story about John, there are several places where privacy turbulence could result in a problem. Can you determine where problems might erupt and how they might lead to privacy turbulence? Here are some clues: (1) family privacy rules; (2) John's privacy rules; (3) Rachel's judgments; (4) publicness of the blog; (5) access John's father has to the blog; (6) John's expectations about how others treat his private information.

PRIVACY TURBULENCE

In diagnosing the potential for privacy turbulence in John's case, one of the issues that potentially makes John's blog a problem is that he revealed negative feelings about his Dad and his father has access to his blog. Often people can preempt problems with co-ownership if they coordinate privacy rules with people authorized to know the information. "For most users, the creation of a blog establishes an online privileged community where granting access to the blog functions as an authorization to contribute thought, feeling, and evaluations with the online community" (Child, Petronio, Agyeman-Budu, & Westermann, 2011, p. 2019). In John's case, while he gave his father access, he likely did not think about that when he was venting his feelings. *This is one of the risks that has less to do with privacy settings and more to do with how we use the technology.* Blogs, in particular, often function as online diaries where we "talk through" our feelings. Disclosure research says that revealing can be helpful to us (Pennebaker, 1990). We need to talk some things out. Many times people face situations where they feel if they do not talk they might explode. Stiles (1987) tells us that conditions like this reflect the "Fever Model" of disclosure; we boil over if we cannot talk.

Nevertheless, the risks of disclosing are personal, involve a loved one, and compromise privacy for John in ways that are not easy to overcome. Making the situation more difficult is the fact that John blogged about a forbidden topic of family finances to someone outside the family. By doing so, he violated his parents' family privacy rules that collectively members are expected to follow (Petronio, 2010).

John was mindful of the family restrictions and told Rachel about these rules. People do try to negotiate privacy rules either before or after they disclosure or give access to private information with authorized co-owners (Petronio, 2002). This same behavior occurs in online communities (Child & Petronio, 2011). John not only stipulated his family privacy rules, he also articulated his own privacy rules in his blog to Rachel. He told her two things. First, he qualified the nature of the private information he disclosed telling her it was highly personal. Second, he told her how she was to regulate it as a co-owner of the information. However, we do not know anything further about the level of coordination between Rachel and John regarding his information. Although John made his rules clear, Rachel may not fully understand whether certain mutual friends could know what John told her. Sometimes people take many things for granted. If they feel comfortable having their friends know something they likely share the information with someone else. They might not worry about telling a mutual friend, as Rachel might with John's information. It is in these cases that privacy is often violated, and even though Rachel may be forgiven by John, John still has to live with the fall-out of the violation.

Interestingly, John's blog behavior also violated his own privacy. He used the assumption that he was talking to Rachel within a protected blog privacy boundary forgetting about the potential for his father and others to see these revelations he made. Research shows that people often make this kind of mistake treating public domain space as private (Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2010; Child & Petronio, 2011; Child, Pearson, Petronio, 2009; Petronio, 2002). John used criteria to select Rachel likely based on trusting her and was highly motivated to talk given his unhappiness about the situation. Nevertheless, since we see at the end of the story John has a realization that his father might see his blog message triggering feelings of anger and hurt, John is likely to attempt rectifying the situation.

In recent research, a study using the CPM perspective found that while there appears to be a wide variety of how people decide to disclose and manage their privacy on blogs, including whether they leave them permanently visible or retrieve them, there are certain patterns (Child, Petronio, Agyeman-Budu, & Westermann, 2011). There are certain conditions that are more likely to lead to "blog scrubbing," that is, times when people remove the messages from their blogs, as John in our story might consider (Child et al., 2011). Blog scrubbing represents times when people recalibrate the risk-benefit ratio of leaving the written message on the blog versus removing it and changing their privacy rules to accommodate the risk-benefit assessment. In John's case, it is likely he sees the risk too high to leave the message up because his father could see the message on his blog. It is possible that he will scrub the blog message. For example, one respondent stated that:

> **My friend was talking about illegal substances and I just became friends on my blog with little cousins. I wanted to be a good example to them, so I deleted it hoping they didn't see it before hand (Child et al., 2011, p. 2022).**

We know from this research there are triggers that change the typical privacy rules people use to reveal or conceal on blogs (Child et al., 2011). They include impression management triggers, such as the above example shows. There are also identity safety triggers when bloggers are worried about others knowing too much about their everyday lives and feel unsafe, relational triggers, and fear of legal or disciplinary actions. This study also showed that there are three types of privacy management bloggers: *Cautious bloggers* who pre-empt scrubbing problems by carefully selecting privacy management practices. When they post their blogs, they never worry about the ramifications because they have already addressed the inevitabilities. *High risk-taking bloggers* also do not scrub their blogs because they are not worried by potential consequences. It is possible that this category of people do not have high privacy needs in general. *Normative bloggers* are more receptive to the triggers than either cautious or high risk-taking bloggers and adjust their privacy practices to accommodate the needs of the situations as they arise.

This overview of CPM and particularly the discussion of online blogging help illustrate two issues that address this earlier question: "*What are we giving up and what are we risking when we disclose our private information online?* First, many of our privacy concerns may be addressed by better understanding the way we think about privacy management and control over information that we define as belonging to us. We calculate the risk against the benefits either proactively so that we protect ourselves by anticipating what might happen. Or, we might also realize the risks after we have posted a message or disclosed, then we likely try to repair the potential or actual damage to ourselves or others. Second, while we calculate risks versus benefits, it is important to realize that as social animals, we have two competing needs. We both need connections with others and the ability to maintain our autonomy apart from others. These competing needs, at times, complicate the calculus we use to decide whether to post a blog or put a message on our Facebook. Our difficulties tend to arise when we wish to engage others in our lives and one of the ways we do that is to reveal private matters, feelings, emotions, and situations. If we did not want relationships with other people, we would never have any problems with privacy. However, think how lonely it would be if we did not have relationships with partners, friends, family, the local bank where we keep our money, the hairdresser, our teachers, physicians, and so on. While we need others, it is the balance of also needing to be our own person. As part of that tension, we regulate how much of ourselves we give over to someone for those relationships to work. People are certainly different in how much they are willing to tell or conceal. Nevertheless, we all regulate our public and private selves in ways that make us feel like we have some control over what people know. As this chapter has shows, we do so with a set of rules and a privacy management system that guides us in the best way we know how to have both connections with people and a sense of autonomy. When one need grows too big, our self-regulating communication privacy management system adjusts to accommodate the other need. Hopefully, this chapter gives you some issues about privacy management to think about the next time you go on Facebook or blog someone revealing or concealing private information.

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