Communication, Privacy, and Social Relations

Adam N. Joinson

*Interactions Lab*, School of Management
University of Bath
Collaborators

• Mina Vasalou
• Dave Houghton
• Ben Marder
Privacy and Intimacy

• Privacy not just about information - also concerns freedom of expression, freedom of action, and *small group intimacy* (Westin, 1967)

• Usually seen as an opportunity to share within limited boundaries - dynamic process (Altman, 1975)

• Can be achieved in multiple ways...
  – restricting access (e.g. closed door)
  – setting, maintaining boundaries, proxemetics
  – ‘us’ time
Openness and Intimacy

• Intimacy theories follow an ‘ideology of openness’ (Parks, 1992)
• Self-disclosure associated with relationship satisfaction, ratings of closeness, love.
• Propinquity & mere exposure effects
• Danger of uncertainty (Knobloch, 2007)
  – especially out of character behaviour (Turner, 1990)
• Lack of monitoring can be a problem
Openness and social media

• The move to real names from pseudonyms
• Lack of privacy control (real, normative)
• Need to generate value (relational and for the organisation)
• Historical and current information
• Social graph information
• Google
• Broadcasting & persistence (Binder et al, 2009)
• “There are good reasons to balance openness with secrecy in a relationship” (Petriono, 1991)
• “withholding information is sometimes benign or even useful” (Afifi et al., 2007, p.78)
Why lots of information can be bad...

- Familiarity breeds contempt (Norton et al., 2008)
- Distant relationships (Stafford and Reske, 1990)
- Space for storytelling
- 100% predictability = dull
- Trust requires uncertainty - e.g. kids location tracking
PVN
privacy value networks

Disclosure level
Little
Some
Lots

50.0
37.5
25.0
12.5
0

Interactions Lab
Why the wrong type of information can be bad..

- Overlapping social spheres (Binder et al., 2009)
  - causes ‘tension’
  - e.g. location to boss vs. friends

- Sending the wrong messages
  - e.g. photos of pets in sunglasses to colleagues.
Examples
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Befriended %</th>
<th>You view %</th>
<th>View you %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends known offline</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of friends</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangers met online</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People on a night out</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship partners</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-partners</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex’s new partners</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief-sexual partners</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/lecturers</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Marder & Joinson, in review. Sample: 546 Facebook users (UK)
Sending the wrong photo?

- circa 400 participants
- Completed measures of photo sharing, and relationship quality (compared against benchmarks)

Source: Houghton & Joinson, in prep.
• Conflict:
  – Relative*Photos of Friends +
  – Colleague*Photos of Friends +

• Antagonism
  – Relative*Photos of Friends +
  – Colleague*Photos of Friends +

• On Affection
  – Colleague*Photos of Self -
  – Relative*Photos of Family +
  – Colleague*Photos of Animals -

• On Admiration
  – Colleague*Photos of Self -

Source: Houghton & Joinson, in prep.
Solutions?

• Privacy settings in new media...
  – to maintain or repair boundaries
  – to control flow (or repair leakage)
  – to hide / obfuscate information
  – to enable dynamic management of privacy (e.g. Argyle & Dean, 1965)

• Behavioural solutions...
  – limit use (activities) - Facebook studies
  – reserved communication (banality) - Twitter
  – limit who you connect to?
  – never use.....
Mobile tracking of kids

- 1,130 parents via market research company
- Diffusion of innovation approach to analysis...
- 2% (had) used location sharing / tracking
- 32% knowledge stage (hadn’t heard of)
- 48% had heard, decided against
- 18% had heard, considering

Source: Vasalou, Oostveen, Joinson, in review
PERSUASION STAGE (against location sharing services)

Compatibility  Children’s developmental needs
• Children need privacy (e.g. children need freedom to experience the world, children need to live without fear, GPS tracking violates privacy)

Compatibility  Parental attitudes towards outdoor dangers
• The government and media are preying on people's fears
• I am not paranoid or anxious

Compatibility  The role of trust between children and parents
• I trust my child (e.g. my child communicates with me, tells me where s/he is and is capable, GPS tracking undermines trust)

Relative advantage  Supervision and communication
• I always know where my child is
• My child is already within reach through mobile phones
• We have rules
• My child hangs out with a good group of friends
• My child is always supervised by an adult or doesn’t go out much
PERSUASION STAGE (in favor of location sharing services)

Compatibility  Children’s developmental needs
• This would allow my child to move more independently

Compatibility  Parental attitudes towards outdoor dangers
• Today's world is dangerous
• It offers peace of mind for the parent

Compatibility  The role of trust between children and parents
• When my child breaks my trust (e.g. doesn’t follow the curfew, engage in risky activities)
• To check if my child is lying (e.g. about their whereabouts or friends)

Relative advantage  Supervision and communication
• When there is no other way to reach them (e.g. mobile phone)
• I sometimes lose track of my child's whereabouts
• To locate them at any given time
• When my child does a new activity
• To keep in touch

Relative advantage  Children’s security
• Knowledge of where one’s child is ensures s/he is safe
• In case of an emergency
• Our family lives in dangerous area
Challenges?

- How do we design social media that encourage intimacy while preserving privacy?
  - New (social) media encourages sharing, openness (with peers and organisations)
  - Lack of trust, privacy leads to behavioral & communication management of privacy

- What would new media designed for intimacy look like?
Thanks!

- www.joinson.com
- a.joinson@bath.ac.uk