OTHER PEOPLE’S PRIVACY: A CASE STUDY OF THE ASHLEY MADISON DATA BREACH

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When it comes to privacy rules, previous research has shown that individuals are capable of articulating expectations and norms in regards to the appropriate accessing of information. Nippert-Eng (2010) offers the example of a woman’s purse: It is generally acknowledged that one does not look through a woman’s purse without permission. When this norm is violated, the victim’s anger is corroborated by others who can easily acknowledge that a privacy violation has occurred, and there may be social consequences for the violator.

When private data is hacked and made public through data dumps, however, there appears to be less concern for the social norms that direct behaviors towards others’ information. In August 2015 users of the infamous Ashley Madison service, a site intended to facilitate affairs between married people, found themselves to be the victims of a massive privacy breach. A hacker group called the Impact Team released all of Ashley Madison’s internal documents online for the world to see, including the profile and financial information of the site’s users. Individuals affected by the hack, journalists, and curious onlookers all engaged in searching through the data. Whereas previous high-profile hacks have used personal information to target highly visible people, the 2015 Ashley Madison hack had in its crosshairs otherwise ordinary individuals—that is, despite their having allegedly joined the site for the purpose of having an affair. Nevertheless, we can learn much about current, and possibly shifting, privacy norms by investigating the justifications of those who access stolen data, and how those data are put to use.

Privacy theorists recognize that privacy is a social norm that is culturally situated (Altman, 1975; Nissenbaum, 2010; Petronio, 2002). Individuals rely on knowledge of an assumed audience (Goffman, 1959) and on contextual clues to determine the appropriateness of information disclosure (Nissenbaum, 2010). Conceived this way, the value of privacy can be expressed hierarchically as a function of other social norms. Nissenbaum (2010) explains that in a doctor’s office, privacy is highly valued because of legal and societal norms that privilege information that is shared between doctor and patient. However, recent notions of networked privacy have highlighted the concern that
both context and audience can be difficult to discern or control in today's networked publics (Marwick & boyd, 2014) because “Even if a user makes a picture available to only three friends, these friends can easily disseminate it further. Whether or not they do so is not predicated upon their access to the picture, but their shared social norms and ties to the picture-provider” (p. 1064).

Starting from the assumption that privacy is highly valued by individuals, empirical research has asked whether and to what extent privacy norms have changed with the rise of networked communication. Recent privacy research typically focuses on social network sites and takes a discloser-centric approach. That is, it investigates the things people consider before they post (Vitak, Blasiola, Patil, & Litt, 2015), the audience they imagine and whether there is concern about an unintended audience (Litt, 2012), the strategies they use to share personal information in such a way that is neither offensive to certain audience members (Hogan, 2010), or that will not be understood by others (boyd & Marwick, 2011).

While these studies have gone a long way to challenge the privacy paradox (Acquisti & Gross, 2005) of the early 2000s, by centering analysis on disclosers of information, these studies reveal little about the norms that govern information acquisition, particularly when the recipient of information is actively engaging in a privacy violation. In fact, previous studies take for granted that unintentional disclosures and unforeseen audiences are not themselves the results of privacy-related behaviors by the acquiring party.

The purpose of this study is to flip the conception of privacy as a discloser-centered process and evaluate privacy norms from the opposite perspective, from the perspective of those who access information. It begins with the following assumption: The decisions of individuals to access another’s information reveals as much about privacy norms as does the decision by the discloser to share the information in the first place. It uses Twitter discussions of the Ashley Madison hack to address the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How are data from the Ashley Madison hack used?

**RQ2:** What justifications do people give for violating the privacy of Ashley Madison users?

**Data**

The data were historically acquired from Twitter. The date range focuses on the first two weeks of the hack, August 18 – August 31, 2015, when it was prominently featured in the mainstream media. The goal in data collection was to collect any English language tweet that was discussing the Ashley Madison hack, so both hashtags and keywords were used in the query (see Table 1). The data pull resulted in approximately 700,000 tweets.

**Analysis**
First, I will conduct a conversation analysis to identify which prominent actors and which prominent messages rose to significance. Additionally, I will conduct a qualitative discourse analysis (QDA) (Fairclough 1995, 2000; van Dijk 1997) to offer a richer explanation of the findings that emerge from the Twitter conversation analysis. The purpose of the QDA is to identify “systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 17). The QDA will shed light on the social and cultural justifications given for accessing stolen information that clearly violates the privacy of the individuals in the hack.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Ashley Madison&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>#AshleyMadison</td>
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<tr>
<td>#AshleyMadisonHack</td>
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<tr>
<td>#AMHack</td>
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<td>&quot;Impact Team&quot;</td>
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Table 1. Twitter keywords for Ashley Madison Hack study.

**Discussion**

The results of this analysis will help to sketch out the normative construction of privacy’s value in relation to other cultural values. As more and more information becomes networked, and susceptible to massive leaks, understanding justifications for privacy violations is essential in moving towards more complete privacy frameworks. As the barriers to accessing personal information become easier to break, “The only guarantee against such things may be shared social norms and social ties” (boyd & Marwick, 2014, p. 1064).

**References**


TEACHERS’ EXPERIENCES OF BOUNDARY TURBULENCE: THE CASE OF WILMA IN FINNISH HIGH SCHOOLS

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Introduction

The introduction of ICTs into school life reorganizes social relations between teachers, pupils and parents. We present a case study of Finnish high school teachers’ experiences of a widely implemented social network system called Wilma. Our analysis focuses on (1) how teachers regulate interpersonal boundaries in the presence of this system and (2) how they cope with challenges that the introduction of such a system causes. Based on a qualitative study with interviews and a detailed exploration of Wilma, we will depict how the system acts as a nexus in organizing work and social relations at school, while also creating boundary turbulence.

Privacy Management and Boundary Turbulence

We build on Altman’s (1975) and Petronio’s (2002; 2013) work on boundary regulation and privacy management. Altman (1975) depicts boundary regulation as a dynamic process of trying to achieve the right amount of interaction. Here, privacy is understood as a dialectic process where too little interaction leads to social isolation and too much to feelings of crowding and intrusion. Petronio (2002) has taken this work further in Communication Privacy Management theory (CPM) which focuses explicitly on how individuals and groups regulate the revealing or concealing of private information. Here, privacy turbulence refers to moments where boundary expectations have been disrupted, and privacy rules have to be re-negotiated (Petronio, 2002).

Recently, CPM has been applied to understanding social media, with studies concerning blogging, social network site usage, and online dating (for a short review, see Petronio, 2013). We contribute to this line of research with a focus on the role a social network system plays in teachers’ privacy management in the context of school life – an organizational setting where the introduction of social media tools is disrupting longstanding work practices. Our analysis explores the ways in which Wilma acts as a medium for interpersonal communication and how it alters the circumstances in which teachers regulate interpersonal boundaries.

Case Study: Wilma in Finnish high schools

Our case study focuses on Wilma, an online social network tool and database program that is widely implemented in Finnish schools. Wilma has become a central coordinating
tool in school settings. Wilma’s functions are categorized towards helping to organize, report, and share information related to everyday life at school. The system provides one-to-one and one-to-many communication channels between different stakeholders at school, including teachers, pupils, and the pupils’ parents. Teachers use the software both for gathering data about pupils, as well as for communication with other teachers, pupils, and parents. Pupils can access their own data and communicate with school representatives. Parents can access their children’s data and use Wilma to communicate with teachers. Instead of allowing users to add friends and thus determine whom they interact with, as is typical of social network sites, Wilma establishes an online social network for each user based on their role in the social world of the school.

In our study, we explore Wilma in detail to gain insight into the impact Wilma may have on teachers’ boundary regulation. Our field notes include depictions of what types of actions Wilma allows for and encourages as well as our reflections on how values and objectives are built into the system. These observations are complemented with a set of eight individual, semi-structured interviews with Finnish high school teachers. The interviews were centered on the increasing use of ICTs as a part of school life and the perceived effects this had on teachers’ professional practice, on their leisure, and on their relationships with pupils and pupils’ parents. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. They are being collaboratively analyzed by the authors through an iterative, material-driven process. In the following, we discuss initial key findings.

**Boundary turbulence in schools**

Wilma can be used by teachers to sort, organize, and thus discipline the work and actions of the student body, helping teachers in achieving the goals of the work assigned to them. In this way, Wilma can support teachers’ authority. At the same time, the system seems to challenge a central way of maintaining authority: keeping distance to students. Wilma includes communication features known from social network sites that are used in leisure settings, such as instant messaging. This calls into question earlier ways of distance keeping. For example, according to our interviewees, students tend to use more informal language in communicating with teachers via Wilma, and they contact teachers more easily than their counterparts in the past. As a result, teachers feel a need to upkeep their social distance towards students, and seek new ways for doing so.

Wilma facilitates communication between teachers and parents, too, significantly changing how they can contact each other. In the past, both had to rely on notebooks carried by students between home and school, on phone calls made to the school’s landline during office hours, and on occasional in-person meetings. Wilma facilitates contact, and gives both parties easier access to each other. Again, medium-specific differences in ways of communication call for novel coping strategies. Our interviewees felt that some parents used the novel communication possibilities too eagerly, sharing excessive details about matters unrelated to school, while others were considered insufficiently interested in everyday school life, to the point that the teachers we interviewed assumed these guardians to mainly ‘click through’ reports about their children, instead of actually engaging with the contents.
Wilma, together with other ICTs, is used both at work and in domestic settings. Teachers use both their personal devices and those provided by the school to do so. A variety of devices, and with them access to work-related systems, are carried between home and work, enabling teachers to work more from home than in the past. The flexibility this provides was welcomed by most interviewees, but on the downside, others had felt compelled to take somewhat radical measures to manage the boundaries of professional and personal life, including giving up Internet access at home. Still others tended to use Wilma at school, drawing a clear line between life at work and at leisure. In choosing to manage their Wilma load during office hours, some teachers felt that they ended up missing out on social breaks and informal collegial discussions.

**Conclusion**

Our analysis focused on Wilma, an ICT system that is embedded into the everyday of Finnish high school teachers. We observed teachers’ need to create novel boundaries regarding professional and personal life in response to the introduction of Wilma and the changes the system brings about in the social dynamics of school life. These initial findings support the more general argument that the introduction of ICTs to schools should not be assessed only in utilitarian terms of efficiency gains or lowered costs, but also in how and with what implications such changes create boundary turbulence.

**References**


POLITICAL, PUBLIC, AND PROUD! WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE MINORITY OF CITIZENS WHO EXPERIMENT WITH POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON FACEBOOK

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It is perfectly normal for the average citizen to avoid political discussion in public, even in small crowds (see for instance Eliason, 1998 and Mutz, 2006). Besides the social discomfort, people may also avoid political issues because of an apathetic political nature (Dahlgren, 2009) or a homogenization of crowds according to the spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). Studies confirm that discussing political issues on Facebook is not common behavior (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, Dwyer, Shin, & Purcell, 2014; Hoff, Jensen, Klastrup, Schwartz, & Brügger, 2013). A semi-public setting like Facebook is often described as a complex space where social groups are constantly converging in way that can results in context collapse (Marwick & boyd, 2014). However, while the majority may choose to avoid political issues on social media, research can gain important insight from understanding the active people that challenge these norms. This minority of people represents the visible political debate on Facebook that the majority of people may encounter. Some of these may even serve important roles as opinion leaders on Facebook as suggested by Enjolras, Karlsen, Steen-Johnsen, and Wollebæk (2013).

This study argues that individuals can get some advantages from going against the norm and being political in public on Facebook. The politically active individuals included in this study went through complex reflexive processes based on their public or semi-public activities. Though this process may not improve the public debate in and of itself, it appears to be a healthy civic process for the individual. It may explain some of the motivation behind the engagement. This study argues that political individuals on Facebook are challenging the dominating privacy norms, but they are doing so purposefully in a playful and experimental manner that may increase internal efficacy and political reflexivity.

The data for this study is based on in-depth and longitudinal observation of Facebook profiles, focus groups and individual interviews with ten Danish citizens who used Facebook occasionally for sharing political opinions. The subjects were carefully selected after an analysis of the complete list of all citizens who commented on party leaders Facebook pages during the Danish general election of 2011. In the selection process, emphasis was on ensuring diversity in age (19-47 years), sex (male/female) and political leanings (left-wing or right-wing). It was also important that none of the subjects were currently engaged in professional politics, and that they did not exhibit extreme political behavior. In other words the purpose of the selected individuals was to study mundane political activity by citizens on an everyday basis. The subjects agreed to connect with the researcher on Facebook in order to access Facebook activity on the profile both live for about a year (2014-15) and in retrospect going back four years to the election in 2011. Political activity on Facebook was archived (with permission) by the
researcher and focus groups and individual interviews were transcribed for further thematic and qualitative analysis.

The study revealed that each participant in the study went through complex reflexive processes when engaging with their personal social network on Facebook in the process of sharing own political views. Many of the participants did not feel that their political activity changed the minds of their audience. In other words they did not express a clear sense of external efficacy that could explain the motivations for sharing political views. On the other hand the analysis of activity and motivation for sharing seemed related to a sense of internal efficacy, i.e. increased reflexivity, improved rhetoric, nuancing of arguments etc. Individuals where guided by a political agenda usually consisting of a small set of issues that determined their public communication and reactions on social media. These issues would often trigger affective reactions that increased a sense of urgency for public communication. (See also Papacharissi, 2015).

From this study a model is developed to explain the process from private thinking, to public thinking and finally public communication (See figure 1). Public communication can generate new reflexivity through feedback from active audiences in the individual Facebook networks. This may lead to occasional context collapse if a family member or colleague engages in the political debate in an undesirable manner. While this is inhibiting political communication, it may also create more constructive and respectful debates between peers of people that need to maintain social relations outside of Facebook. The participants of this study explained how they made strong efforts to improve their own factual reporting and their manner of writing after instances of context collapse in their own personal semi-public on Facebook.

**Figure 1. From private thinking to public communication**

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<th>Process of reflexivity</th>
<th>Private thinking</th>
<th>Public thinking</th>
<th>Public communication</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No audience</td>
<td>Imagined audience</td>
<td>Active audience</td>
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These politically active citizens balance a fine line between social harmony and political provocation as they experiment with public political communication in each their own personal public of Facebook friends. This study present the concept of a ‘personal public’ defined by a fine balance between, on the one hand a relative sense of security in the private networks from limited exposure, while on the same time giving the
individual a sense of being in public. The publicness is defined from the sense of relative diversity through the mass of the people, even though it may technically be a type of a private sphere (see Papacharissi, 2010). In the personal public each individual engages with a range of complex audience concepts such as the imagined audience (Marwick and boyd, 2010), the active audience (Litt, 2012) and concepts such as the lowest common denominator (Hogan, 2010). This paper builds on earlier studies but presents a variety of new audience understandings and cooping methods that the individual implement. The study calls for a greater nuance in line with other studies (Davis and Jurgenson, 2014).

The conclusion of this paper is that converging contexts on Facebook create opportunities for testing public performance and opinions that may help the individual to reflect on opinions and improve arguments. This reflection is partly internal, but also social in the public communication process with an active audience. The paper does not suggest that public debate necessarily improves from this, but instead it suggests that research should consider the individual gains from engaging in public political communication.

References


PROFILE WORK FOR PRESERVING PRIVACY ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

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Introduction

During the past decade the social dynamics of self-presentation have changed dramatically due to social network site (SNS) contexts that encourage their users to draft user profiles to express their identities. User profiles such as on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, repeat similar architecture including profile picture, name, personal information and a wall for public social interaction. From a technology research perspective these SNS profiles have increased the need to manage one’s privacy in novel ways in order not to mistarget one’s disclosures (e.g., Marwick and boyd, 2014; Lampinen, 2014). Furthermore, from a social psychological perspective, management of one’s privacy can be viewed also from an identity perspective. In order to understand the link between privacy and identity this paper exploits the concept of profile work (e.g., Uski and Lampinen, 2014) and explains the changed dynamics of self-presentation that create a threat towards one’s networked privacy (Marwick and boyd, 2014) in terms of authenticity.

To begin to discern the differences between face-to-face and SNS self-presentation, there are three key changes in social dynamics induced by an SNS profile (Uski, 2015). The first addresses the role dynamic: the role presented in an SNS is now a meta-role, touching several social circles (e.g., context collapse). A second dynamic, temporality, posits that all actions one takes with an SNS profile are managed so as to maintain consistency considering the past, present and future (e.g., Van Dijck, 2013). A final core change is found in the communication realm, where the mediated nature of the interaction means that social cues are different and asynchronous – all these compared with how Goffman described self-presentation in face-to-face interactions in 1959.

Prolonged Identity Performance

When the three dynamics merge in SNS contexts, self-presentation is directed toward a prolonged identity performance, which is a non-traditional phenomenon in ordinary people’s lives and social psychology. Prolonged identity performance with these changed social dynamics is manifested in several challenges facing self and identity. For instance, overlapping identities, identity development, coherence and consistency, and the “realness” of the self may be threatened. These threats comprise the psychological array of conditions that follow subjectively experienced violations of
privacy. In the following, the efforts individuals invest in preserving their networked privacy are elaborated with help of two main concepts: profile work and authenticity.

Profile Work

The changed dynamics of self-presentation seen when SNS user profiles enter the picture do have an impact on the efforts that users invest in managing their presentations. The more a profile functions as a stage for prolonged identity performance, the greater the self-presentational challenges it introduces for the performer. The notion of self-presentation can depict the phenomenon with only a limited amount of clarity in delineation of the dynamics and challenges SNS user profiles induce, hence the concept of profile work is exploited to enhance the understanding of creation and maintenance of a prolonged identity performance on an SNS.

The aim of profile work is the same as that in self-presentation: presenting a truthful but ideal self to others (Goffman, 1959, 44). SNS user profiles offer their users great opportunities to express themselves but also an excessive amount of control over the cues one wishes to present (Stern, 2008). However, not everyone is actively presenting all the time. A great deal of time spent in SNSs is around watching others. The SNS user profile has potential to induce and maintain public self-awareness (Buss, 1980) by offering a concrete image of the performer to audiences to interpret (Fenigstein, 1979).

As a concept, profile work draws together the performer’s experience and visible actions. Profile work is about control and access, though the users engage in profile work also when they do not have control. They might worry about their SNS presence in many ways, a fact highlighting that this is not a lightweight matter for the individual. Every act of publishing in one’s profile involves profile work; however, the concept extends further, to the mental effort that may or may not result in observable updates or other publications. Thinking about publishing but then not going through with it would count as profile work.

It is worth reiterating that profile work need not leave any traces. A relevant study of users’ self-censorship on Facebook has found that people often censor their initial ideas about what to publish (Das & Kramer, 2013). In addition, thoughts, feelings, and reasoning related to one’s profile are profile work and are part of the overall process of self-presentation in one’s life. The visible acts or marks in the profile are only to be considered the tip of the iceberg.

In SNS context (Lampinen, 2014; Ellison et al., 2007; Marwick and boyd, 2014; Stutzman & Hartzog, 2012), it is necessary to explicate that profiles function as platforms for social interaction and that one’s profile content is accumulated in a manner
encompassing collaborative practices, however, profile work represents subjective experience of these collaborative operations in managing one’s privacy. For instance, when an audience member posts to a performer’s profile, the performer conducts profile work in evaluation of whether the content posted supports the identity performance. If it does not, profile work is undertaken for judging how to cope with the unsuitable content.

**Profile Work for Authenticity**

Prolonged identity performance induces several challenges facing self and identity. As acknowledged in the context of Internet research, the two contexts, SNS and offline, do operate in the same reality of a user experiencing them. Consequently, one of the main realities is that SNS user profiles, viewed as prolonged identity performances, are more or less integrated into the offline world. In the framework of SNS profiles, these two contexts are brought together is the shared audience: the social realm. For instance, if one’s Facebook connections go beyond Facebook as well, the authenticities must be able to hold in both contexts. Users need to cope in two competing contexts at the same time; they need to engage in profile work to balance these two contexts. Davis (2014) concludes that in the SNS “the self is the object of triangulation, and self-triangulation is accomplished when online identity performances and offline identity performances point to, and reflect, the same self.” This idea of self-triangulation is a good tool to understand the prolonged identity performance in SNS profile in relation to the social realm where the performer operates. With respect to triangulation of self, profile work draws the attention to the prolonged identity performance that anchors the triangulation to the SNS user profile.

Based on these ideas the subjective networked privacy can be viewed as a result of successful profile work in order to manage the presentations given to one’s social realm. Given the three changed dynamics of self-presentation the latest trends in SNSs, such as Snapchat and Periscope nurture the idea that shorter identity performances decreases the needed amount of profile work, and thereby increases experienced privacy. For instance, on Periscope the user profile does not include user’s history and the communication is less mediated than on a Facebook profile. This kind of turn in SNS profile features will help users to maintain their authenticities within their social realms.

**References**


