Overview of
Communication Privacy Management

> Private life is not something given in nature from the
> beginning of time. It is a historical reality, which different
> societies have construed in different ways. The boundaries
> of private life are not laid down once and for all; the divi-
> sion of human activity between public and private spheres
> is subject to change. Private life makes sense only in rela-
> tion to public life.
> —Prost, *Public and Private Spheres in France*

Private disclosures epitomize the paradox of managing a public persona
while maintaining the dignity of one's private life (Westin, 1970). Talk-
ing about our private feelings in public is not always easy. In fact, it is often
risky because we might feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or somehow
exposed. For instance, a friend of mine recently went to the doctor com-
plaining of chest pains. She felt uncomfortable talking about these pains
because she thought she was too young to have something as dramatic as
a heart condition. Nevertheless, she went at her husband's request. How-
ever, when she started telling the doctor the reason for her visit, she
revealed only some of the symptoms, waiting to see if the doctor seemed
concerned. She thought that if the symptoms she disclosed were nothing,
she would not go into depth. In this way, she would avoid the further
embarrassment of giving them too much significance.

To tell or not to tell is a condition that we frequently face, yet the
question is complicated. The question is when to let others know our pri-
vate side and when to let it stay confidential? As the example above illus-
trates, revealing private information is never a straightforward decision.
We are constantly in a balancing act. We try to weigh the demands of the
situation with our needs and those of others around us. Privacy has impor-
tance for us because it lets us feel separate from others. It gives us a sense
that we are the rightful owners of information about us. There are risks
that include making private disclosures to the wrong people, disclosing at
a bad time, telling too much about ourselves, or compromising others.

On the other hand, disclosure can give enormous benefits. Undoubt-
edly, recent studies on people facing traumas such as sexual abuse,

HIV/AIDS, or catastrophic illness all confirm the gains they receive from revealing feelings (Derlega & Barbee, 1998; Pennebaker, 1995). We also may increase social control, validate our perspectives, and become more intimate with our relational partners when we disclose (Johnson, 1974). The balance of privacy and disclosure has meaning because it is vital to the way we manage our relationships. Revealing is necessary, yet we see evidence that people value privacy when they lament its apparent demise. For example, Alderman and Kennedy (1995) state that

> the issues [of privacy] are especially vital today as more and more of our privacy is stripped away. Private individuals join public figures in decrying "tabloid journalism" and complaining that the press can invade lives with impunity. Pro-choice advocates argue that a woman's right to make fundamental decisions is threatened by a hostile and intrusive government. Increasing concern about crime, terrorism, and calls for stricter law enforcement have led to measures expanding the authority of police to enter our homes, search our belongings, and intercept our communication. Moreover, the notion that information can be kept secret to any degree may simply vanish in cyberspace. (p. ix)

Clearly, both disclosure and privacy are important to maintain. Until recently, few theories have isolated a process to understand how people manage the relationship between revealing and concealing. This book presents a theoretical approach that gives us a rule-based system to examine the way people make decisions about balancing disclosure and privacy.

The theory of Communication Privacy Management (CPM)[1] represents a map that presumes private disclosures are dialectical, that people make choices about revealing or concealing based on criteria and conditions they perceive as salient, and that individuals fundamentally believe they have a right to own and regulate access to their private information. In order to fully grasp the nature of private disclosures, we not only have to consider the individual who is revealing or concealing, but we also must focus on how the decision affects other people. Thus, unlike previous research on "self" disclosure, CPM assumes that others are also central to discerning the tension between being public and private.

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1. The name of the theory has been adjusted in this book from "Communication Boundary Management" to "Communication Privacy Management," better reflecting the focus on private disclosures. Though the theory uses a boundary metaphor to explain the management process, the name change underscores that the main thrust of the theory is on private disclosures.

CPM uses the metaphor of boundaries to illustrate that, although there may be a flow of private information to others, borders mark ownership lines so issues of control are clearly understood. Thus, regulating boundary openness and closedness contributes to balancing the publicness or privacy of individuals. The regulation process is fundamentally communicative in nature. Consequently, CPM theory places communication at the core of private disclosures because it focuses on the interplay of granting or denying access to information that is defined as private.

Before we begin, there is one point of clarification. The term, *private disclosures*, is used to mark a distinction from the more traditional "self-disclosure" literature. CPM refashions the notion of disclosure in three ways. First, the literature on disclosure, from Jourard's inception, principally attends to a process of disclosing that gives less consideration and definition to the content of disclosure. CPM makes private information, as the content of what is disclosed, a primary focal point. In this way, CPM sets parameters and gives substance to the heart of disclosures, that is, what is considered private. Second, CPM continues the tradition of looking at how people disclose; however, it offers a rule-based theoretical system to conceptualize that process. Third, disclosure is not just about the self if it is considered a communicative process. Thus, to fully understand the depth and breadth of disclosure, CPM does not restrict the process to only the self, but extends it to embrace multiple levels of disclosure including self and group. Consequently, CPM theory offers a privacy management system that identifies ways privacy boundaries are coordinated between and among individuals.

Each of us has a mental calculus that we use to decide whether to tell or keep private information. Communication Privacy Management Theory provides a way to understand that calculus (see Figure 1.1). The theory proposes *five basic suppositions* that underpin the *rule management system*. Based on these assumptions, CPM proposes rule management processes for privacy regulation. Five fundamental suppositions define the nature of CPM.

First, the theory concentrates on private information. Second, a boundary metaphor is used to illustrate the demarcation between private information and public relationships. Third, control is an issue for two reasons. One, people believe that private information is *owned* or *co-owned* with others; thus, they desire control over the boundaries. Two, revealing or concealing private information may lead to feeling vulnerable. Consequently, control is also important to ward off the potential for vulnerability. Fourth, the theory uses a rule-based management system to aid in decisions about the way boundaries are regulated. Fifth, the notion of privacy management is predicated on treating privacy and disclosure as dialectical in nature.
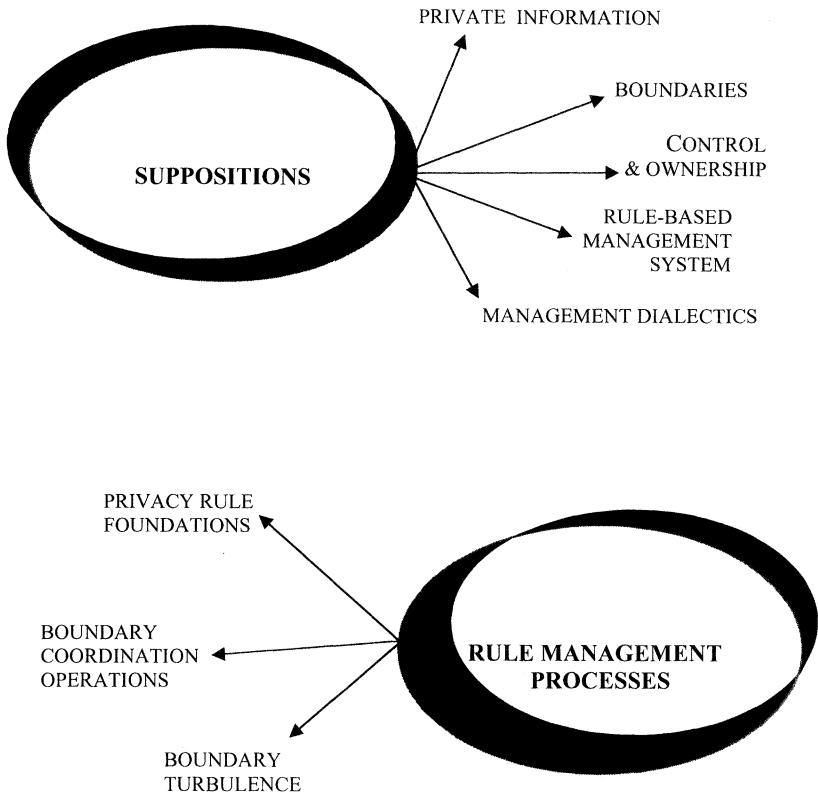
PRIVATE INFORMATION

SUPPOSITIONS

BOUNDARIES

CONTROL
& OWNERSHIP

RULE-BASED
MANAGEMENT
SYSTEM

MANAGEMENT DIALECTICS

PRIVACY RULE
FOUNDATIONS

BOUNDARY
COORDINATION
OPERATIONS

RULE MANAGEMENT
PROCESSES

BOUNDARY
TURBULENCE

Figure 1.1
Overview of Communication Privacy Management Theory

Because CPM is a rule-based theory, it depends on three rule man-agement processes. First, in order to manage privacy boundaries, people exercise control through implementing privacy rule foundations that man-age revealing and concealing personally or collectively. Second, because people often co-own private information with others, they need to coordi-nate their collectively owned boundaries. CPM theory proposes we manage both personal boundaries and collective ones. Thus, we adjust levels of access to privacy boundaries that we own independently of anyone else. In addition, we also find that once disclosure takes place, people become involved in collective management that requires coordination with others.

There is also an overlap in the way that personal and collective pri-vacy boundaries are managed. Both types of privacy management use three

rule management operations: (a) boundary linkage, (b) boundary co-ownership, and (c) boundary permeability. However, the kind of boundary coordination necessary for collective management may vary. Currently, the theory identifies three kinds of collective coordination patterns: (a) inclusive boundary coordination, (b) intersected boundary coordination, and (c) unified boundary coordination. Within the collective privacy patterns, the co-owners of the information determine rules that regulate linkages, control permeability, and determine the extent of ownership.

Third, though coordination is an objective, there are times when asynchrony is an outcome rather than achieving effective management. When coordination is less than smooth, boundary turbulence is a possibility. Discordant coordination often means that owners or co-owners of private information need to take corrective action to return boundary management back to a more synchronous level.

THEORETICAL SUPPOSITIONS

Supposition 1: Private Information

When we reveal, we disclose private information. Thinking about disclosure in this way is not new. In 1974, Goodstein and Reinecker suggested,

> while some information about one's self is rather public . . .
> there is other information about one's self that is rather private
> or intimate and is disclosed under special circumstances. This
> private, intimate information about the self ought to be the
> focus of both research and theorizing about self-disclosure. If
> this is not done, the term "self-disclosure" becomes vague and
> general . . . losing any special meaning. (p. 51)

Making *private information* the content of disclosure allows us to explore the way privacy and intimacy are separate but related fundamentally to the act of disclosure. Parks (1982) argues that in a vast number of studies and among textbook writers, self-disclosure is often equated with intimacy. In shifting the emphasis to private information, intimacy may be redefined as one possible outcome of revealing the self to others instead of being synonymous with self-disclosure. Attaining intimacy, that is, achieving a close personal relationship where the individuals are mutually dependent and engage in joint actions is more than sharing private information (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Intimacy reflects all of the aspects of a close relationship. Disclosing private information may be one way that intimacy is established, but it cannot substitute for all of the dimensions of an intimate relationship. Hence, disclosure is not the same as intimacy, and not all of private information (even at its most risky) leads to intimacy.

Intimacy is the feeling or state of knowing someone deeply in physical, psychological, emotional, and behavioral ways because that person is significant in one's life. Private disclosure, on the other hand, concerns the *process* of telling and reflects the *content* of private information about others and us. However, besides intimacy, there are many reasons people tell their personal information. Individuals may wish to relieve a burden, gain control, enjoy self-expression, or possibly develop intimacy, yet, the goal is not always intimacy.

Supposition 2: Privacy Boundaries

CPM theory uses the metaphor of boundaries to illustrate the lines between being public and private. Within the boundary, people keep private information (Petronio, Ellermers, Giles, & Gallois, 1998). However, because we are social beings, we also reveal private matters to others. In this theory, privacy is defined as the feeling that one has the right to own private information, either personally or collectively; consequently, boundaries mark ownership lines for individuals. Personal boundaries are those that manage private information about the self, while collectively held boundaries represent many different sorts of privacy boundary types (see Figure 1.2).

Collectively held privacy boundaries are such because the information is not solely about the self. However, they are differentiated according to the type of private information that is being regulated. Thus, for collectively held boundaries, the information may be private to a group, dyad, family, organization, or even a society as a whole. The collective selected becomes privy to the information that is about the group. Individuals can be responsible for personal as well as many different kinds of collective privacy boundaries.

Boundaries may be permeable or impregnable and are linked with other privacy boundaries. The lines of ownership may be ambiguous or clear. People work to strengthen their boundaries surrounding private information; they may also seek to attenuate the borders when they pursue intimacy. The boundaries may also become weakened by events outside the control of the owners. Thus, the boundary management may become turbulent when there is an invasion from outside sources or the management system does not work. Boundaries function to identify ownership of information leading to subsequent control over who knows about private matters.

There are *life span changes* for a person's privacy boundaries (Berardo, 1974) (see Figure 1.3). Very young children in U.S. society manage small privacy boundaries. Bok (1982) argues that "the ability to deal with secrecy is rooted in the child's growing consciousness of identity, and of being able to act, to intervene, to alter, to resist if need be" (p. 29). Being
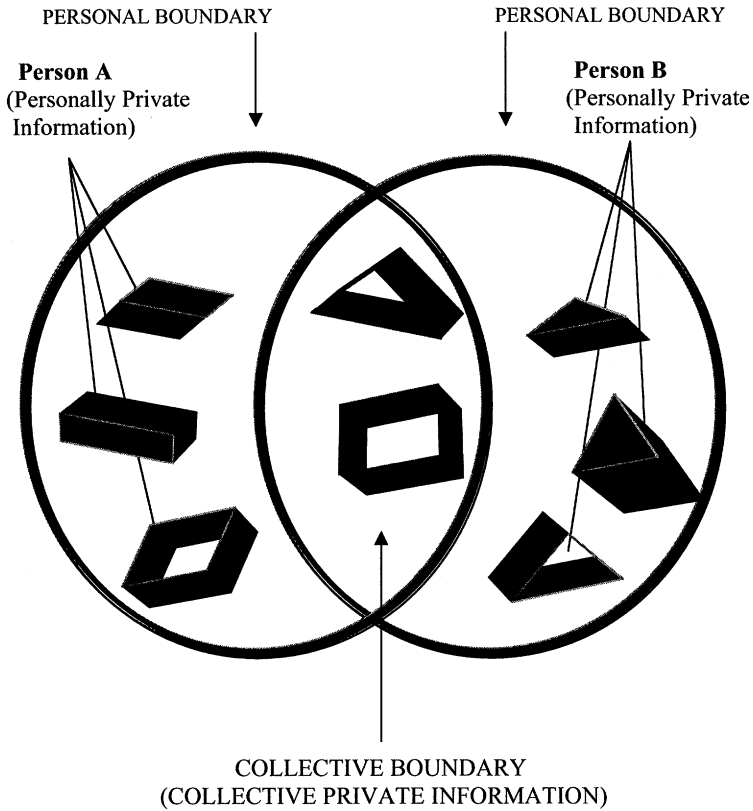
Figure 1.2
Boundary Types: Personal and Collective

unable to differentiate between self and other at an early age and the cognitive complexity of a privacy management process makes it less likely that children are concerned about the maintenance of private information. However, families often begin to teach their children rudimentary forms of privacy rules when they express parameters for disclosure to others. Consequently, while a child is not necessarily concerned with privacy per se, family members begin to teach the child about privacy and ways to maintain it.

As children continue developing their separate identities, so too do they come to establish boundaries around information they consider personal. During the adolescent stage, one of the chief issues in the deindividuation process is the formation of privacy borders (Youniss & Smollar,
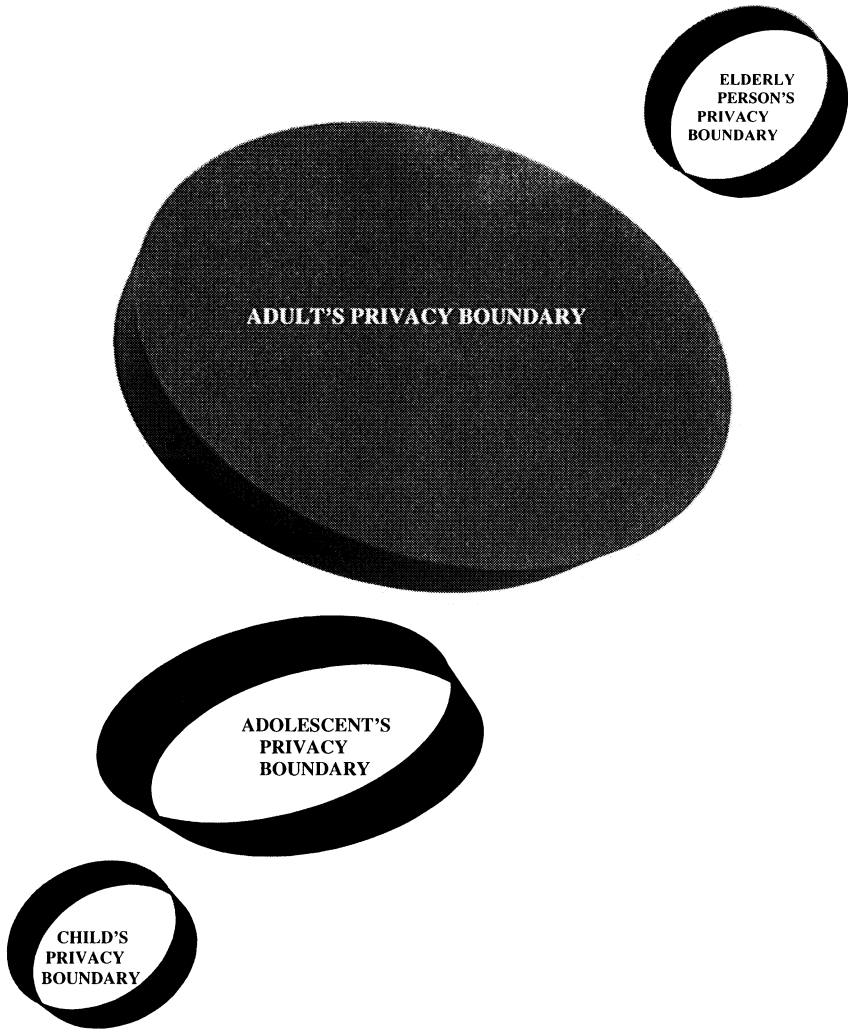
Figure 1.3
Boundary Life Span Changes

1985). As a result, the adolescent's boundaries expand to accommodate the increasing privacy needs that he or she develops. When individuals enter adulthood, their boundaries must increase so that they are able to control a great deal of private information about themselves and others.

Although privacy boundaries are large during adulthood, when individuals become more elderly, privacy often shrinks. Because of competing needs, such as issues of safety, for instance, privacy boundaries grow smaller as an older person requires someone to bathe him or her, take care of finances, or attend to health concerns (Petronio & Kovach, 1997). Thus, over a life span, privacy boundaries are modified to accommodate private information belonging to the individual.

Supposition 3: Control and Ownership

There have been numerous discussions about the "right to privacy" in the United States. Schoeman (1984) argues that privacy is regarded as a *"claim, entitlement, or right* of an individual to determine what information about himself (or herself) may be communicated to others" (p. 3). We equate preserving privacy with maintaining personal dignity and autonomy and with safeguarding the self. "Although we live in a world of noisy self-confessions, privacy allows us to keep certain facts to ourselves if we so choose. The right to privacy, it seems, is what makes us civilized" (Alderman & Kennedy, 1995, p. ix).

Legally, people continue to grapple with the meaning of ownership rights (Alderman & Kennedy, 1995; Gavison, 1984). In spite of the legal controversies, when someone tries to take control over information that we believe is ours, we claim a violation of privacy (Schoeman, 1984). Ownership and control are important to each other. Because the information belongs to us, we want to determine who is privy to it and who is not. Through control, we may protect against unwanted exposure. "Control . . . is one way of setting the conditions which make up privacy or for determining the content of the private activity" (Laufer, Proshansky, & Wolfe, 1974, p. 13).

CPM argues that because people consider private information something they own, and over which they desire control, they both reveal and conceal the information. Individuals want to be in control because there are risks as to how this information is managed. Accordingly, people feel the right is theirs to determine what others know about them. Individuals feel violated when others (like credit card companies) find out something about them without their permission. It does not fit their calculus. People are not in control of something important that belongs to them—their information (Johnson, 1974). Sometimes people work hard to get back control by canceling subscriptions or changing doctors when influence over the information is compromised. Individuals want the information to stay within their domain—their privacy boundaries.

We manage control across two types of boundaries and exercise *levels of control* within each type of boundary. Since CPM contends that privacy

boundaries are multiple in nature, we regulate ownership and concurrent control for both personal and collective boundaries. We have personal ownership of private information that is about the self and we expect the right to control the boundary regulating concealing and revealing. At the same time, we co-own private information that we have shared or has been shared with others. Collectively owned information is controlled mutually by those privy to it and those who are considered to be within the boundary. When we are told private information by others, we enter into a contract of responsibility to be co-owners of the information.

We are co-owners of many types of private information. For example, we not only control our personally owned private information, we also are given information that belongs jointly, and we even have private information that belongs to our whole family (Vangelisti, 1994). There may be private information belonging to a corporation where we are employed or to groups of which we are members. Consequently, on many levels, we often co-own information with others. In each case, we erect boundaries around the private information to mark the lines of ownership and control.

Hence, control that maintains ownership rights is important for both personal boundaries and for collectively held boundaries. While control helps preserve ownership, the need for it also suggests that private information is not just a possession. Instead, embedded in the notion of owning private information is the potential for vulnerability. The choice to share the information or keep it often hinges on a risk-benefit ratio for those involved. We know that revealing exposes us to a certain amount of vulnerability, but so does concealing. Thus, the possibility of risk heightens the significance of control issues for privacy management. We feel the need to control our risk-benefit ratio by determining how much vulnerability we are willing to experience. Because of the possible liabilities found within ownership and co-ownership of private information, we engage in boundary control for personal and collectively held boundaries.

However, we exercise varying levels of control (see Figure 1.4). For example, when our boundaries are thick and we do not allow much accessibility, we maintain high levels of control over the private information. Individuals also may employ moderate control where they would have somewhat thinner boundaries. In addition, people may have very thin boundaries resulting in less control and more openness. Nevertheless, control and issues of ownership are salient in privacy management.

Supposition 4: Rule-Based Management System

The management system provides a structure for understanding the way that private information is handled. Because CPM argues that boundary
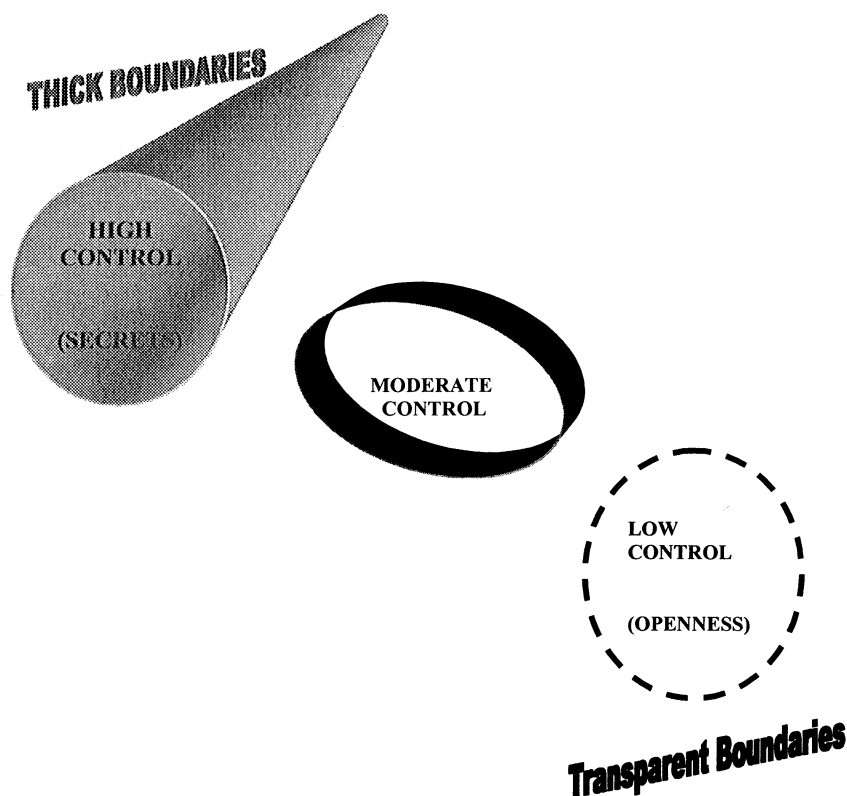
Figure 1.4
Levels of Control: Privacy Boundaries

regulation occurs on two interrelated levels, personal management and collective systems, we need to examine the way the elements and assumptions work for personal and collective boundaries. Thus, when we control access on a personal level, managing private information that belongs to us, the information is singularly owned.

Collective management systems represent times when we are co-owners of private information. Once a disclosure is made to someone, whether the recipient is a willing partner or not, he or she is expected to take on a certain level of responsibility for managing the information revealed (Petronio, 2000a). CPM proposes that initial disclosures set into motion a need for boundary coordination because there is an expected guardianship of the information often assumed by both the discloser and recipient.

The rule management system depends on three management processes. The first process is that of privacy rule foundations representing the way the rules develop and their properties. The second is the process of boundary coordination. This process reflects how privacy is regulated through rules when people are engaged in managing collective boundaries. Third, boundary turbulence signifies the assumption that coordination does not always function in a synchronized way. Consequently, there are times when people are unable, for a variety of reasons, to work together so that they have a smooth coordination process. Boundary turbulence illustrates when boundary coordination goes astray and rules become asynchronized.

Supposition 5: Privacy Management Dialectics

In general, "dialectics" refer to the assumption that in social life, people experience tensions between opposites and contradictions. Though some have questioned whether CPM is dialectical, the basic thesis of the theory is grounded in the unity of dialectics including disclosure-privacy, concealing-revealing, public-private, openness-closedness, and autonomy-connectedness (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The following discussion illustrates the way CPM is both consistent with and different from other dialectical approaches explaining disclosure events.

The dialectical tension considered in the theory of Communication Privacy Management concentrates on the forces pulling between and with the needs of being both private through concealing and public through revealing. There is a clear simultaneity of actions toward and away from disclosing and remaining private. The pull between and with private behaviors and public disclosures is not an easy equation. Revelations make information public. The degree of publicness depends on a number of issues, such as how many people are privy to the information, how much is disclosed, and who receives the information. Nevertheless, once a person discloses private information, it becomes a little less private and more public. Most of the existing research on self-disclosure only considers the revelation dimension of the equation without taking into account what a person is giving up when he or she does disclose.

Considering the other side of the equation, we may measure our degree of privacy only in comparison to how public we are with others. For example, celebrities may not have given much thought to privacy until their new status thrusts them into the public arena. Once there, celebrities come to realize that having control over private information is important to maintaining their persona. Finding themselves in the limelight, they no longer are able to take a break from presenting or managing their image,

even in the most secluded areas of their lives. The more public they are, the more narrowly they come to define their privacy. However, they are also more protective of the privacy they still own. These dialectical forces are critical to understanding how people manage their public and private lives. The dialectical underpinning for CPM has a number of dimensions in common with leading dialectical perspectives. However there are aspects of the CPM theory that deviate and extend current thinking about dialectics in communication.

Those advocating a dialectical perspective for disclosure have focused their energies on understanding openness or disclosure in relationship to the opposing force of closedness or privacy. Several scholars lead the way. Altman (1974, 1993; Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981), Baxter (1993, 1994, 1988, 1990; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Baxter & Widenmann, 1993; Baxter & Wilmot, 1984), Montgomery (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998), and Rawlins (1983, 1991, 1992) are among those who have both theorized and conducted research on dialectics, particularly in the context of relationships.

Contradictions

Although CPM is considered dialectical by Petronio, the particular dialectical perspective taken within the theory is similar to and different from the positions held by Baxter and Montgomery (1996; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998) and Altman (1975; Altman, Vinsel, & Brown, 1981). Using the four shared assumptions of dialectical perspectives proposed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) (e.g., contradictions, dialectical change, praxis, and totality), we can see the way a dialectical position is defined in CPM theory. For most dialectical theorists, the discussion of dialectics centers on a dialogue about contradictions (Altman et al., 1981; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Rawlins, 1992). Baxter and Montgomery (1996) state that contradictions are "the dynamic interplay between unified oppositions" (p. 8) reflecting two types of opposites, logical and functional. Logical opposites are defined as X and not X. Functional opposites, on the other hand, are identified as "X and Y, where both X and Y are distinct features that function in incompatible ways such that each negates the other" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 8).

As with Altman's boundary regulation theory, Petronio argues that CPM adopts the functional approach rather than the logical approach to opposites. Thus, CPM does not claim that the type of contradiction considered is that which is private and not private. Instead, CPM suggests that privacy and disclosure are opposites having distinct features from one another that function in incompatible ways. Disclosure is not privacy and

privacy does not represent the act of disclosure. Nevertheless, the two concepts reflect polar opposites.

The unity of opposites is another aspect of contradiction that is defined in two ways. One, the unity of identity suggests that each opposition "presupposes the existence of the other for its very meaning" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 9). CPM adopts this perspective by arguing that disclosure is meaningful only in relationship to privacy. In other words, disclosing implies that we are giving up some measure of privacy. However, disclosure cannot occur if there exists no private information that can be told to others. Correspondingly, CPM also accepts the contention that there is interactive unity for privacy-disclosure. Thus, privacy is a necessary condition that one protects or gives up through disclosure. In addition, CPM offers multiple oppositions to privacy. Hence, not only is privacy-disclosure considered, but also the related opposites of revealing and concealing, public-private, autonomy-connectedness, privacy-deception, and openness-closedness are illustrated in this volume.

Some confusion about the legitimacy of CPM as a dialectical theory is grounded in the way Baxter and Montgomery frame CPM as dualistic rather than dialectical. Hence, they assert that CPM treats the oppositional forces of privacy and disclosure as static and independent of one another, coexisting in a parallel form, rather than treating it as dynamic. By comparison, Baxter and Montgomery propose that treating disclosure as dialectical should "emphasize how parties manage the simultaneous exigency for both disclosure and privacy in their relationships and, especially, how the 'both/and' ness of disclosure and privacy is patterned through their interplay across the temporal course of the relationship" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 10).

CPM theory is framed as a dialectical management system that takes into account the simultaneous regulation of privacy in light of the disclosure of private information (Petronio, 1991). Although the reason for suggesting that CPM is dualistic is not completely clear, one possible clue is found in the focus on the notion of equilibrium and balance in the earlier versions of the theory. Altman, et al. (1981) offer an alternative to the definition of unity given by Baxter and Montgomery. Thus, Altman and his colleagues point out that, in addition to complementarity and integration, the strength and balance of opposites should be considered.

Altman et al. offer two ways of thinking about strength and balance of opposites that shed light on CPM's use of balance. First, they point out that we could assume "polarities always partially intersect and that one or the other pole never becomes so strong that it completely contradicts its opposite" (Altman et al., 1981, p. 121). This idea is similar to the unity of identity proposed by Baxter and Montgomery, however, the related concern of Altman et al. in this regard extends the discussion to balance.

Hence, Altman and his colleagues point out that the psychological sense of homeostasis, equilibrium, and balance is inconsistent with the underlying thesis of dialectics. Yet, the interpretation of balance adopted by Altman et al. is in harmony with a dialectical perspective and is one that has been assumed by CPM theory from the beginning.

Thus, Altman et al. argue that balance should be defined in terms of relative strengths. In other words, they suggest that dialectical opposites shift in strength given the circumstances, individual needs, or variations that evolve out of interaction between people. They refer to this shifting process as adaptiveness, where no one opposite has ultimate dominance, but where there is movement in focus without giving up the significance of the dialectical relationship between the two opposites.

Perhaps another way to reflect on the idea of balance is to understand that "assessment" is an alternative word for balance. Considering the body of literature based on CPM, assessment as a replacement for balance fits effectively with the idea of boundary management. Thus, CPM theory has proposed that when we think about disclosure in relationship to privacy, we "assess" the maintenance of each before we opt to make some of our private information public while keeping other parts hidden away. In this way, we give relative strength to the part of the information we want disclosed publicly and relative strength to that part remaining out of view. However, without the tension between the two, we cannot determine the nature of the relative strengths for each in connection to the other.

Because CPM depends on this interpretation of balance, the theory is not aiming for equilibrium in the psychological sense. Instead, it argues for coordination with others that does not advocate an optimum balance between disclosure and privacy. As an alternative, the theory claims there are shifting forces with a range of privacy and disclosure that people handle by making judgments about the *degrees* of privacy and publicness they wish to experience in any given interaction. In other words, using boundary rules, people decide whether to give up some portion of one (disclosure or privacy) in order to have some part of the other (privacy or disclosure). Disclosing some private information does not mean giving up all privacy. Privacy still exists. Consequently, we cannot understand this connection without acknowledging the relative tensions of the two opposites in a kind of unity.

Dialectical Change

When we consider dialectical change, Baxter and Montgomery argue two combinations of issues. First, they note that change may be based on efficient cause or formal cause. Efficient cause represents a linear

antecedent-consequent relationship. Formal cause is a more patterned relationship among phenomena. Second, Baxter and Montgomery point out that change may be considered teleological (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) or is a spiraling change with no end state. On the first issue of change, CPM follows a formal cause perspective similar to Altman's transactional theory (his extension of his original boundary theory). On the second issue of change, CPM argues a combination of teleological and spiraling change. Though other dialectical theorists may argue that the definitions of each type of change model are incompatible, there is room for aspects of each to converge into an alternative way of examining change.

Formal cause option. Following the formal cause option, CPM theory proposes that it is more fruitful to consider the whole disclosure-privacy process, including the way patterns change in a disclosure event for *both* the person revealing and the confidant. CPM argues that without focusing on the mutual relationship between the sender and receiver, a complete understanding of the communicative exchange is not possible. Without considering the person revealing and the individual(s) listening to the private information, we are not able to fully appreciate the complexity of the event. In addition, we must consider how change takes place over time within and across multiple privacy boundaries—allowing for rule change over time, understanding the nature of boundary coordination, and examining change when the behaviors are unpredictable—to fully grasp the fluidity and complexity of change for each disclosure-privacy event. Thus, formal cause best reflects the way CPM defines change for revealing and concealing episodes because it considers the whole of the process.

Framing the model of dialectical change used in CPM falls outside of the distinct categories proposed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996). The dialectical model CPM follows is not as clear-cut, although it fits portions of both the teleological approach and the idea of spiraling change proposed by Baxter and Montgomery. In addition, aspects of the openness-closedness cycles suggested by Altman et al. contribute to the way change is treated in CPM.

Teleological model. CPM ascribes to a teleological model as individuals disclose, giving up a measure of privacy, thereby initiating a linkage where there is the formation of (at the least) a dyadic boundary. Once that dyadic boundary exists and the individuals are co-owners, the information becomes collectively controlled through negotiated rules about permeability for boundary maintenance. Thus, one pole (disclosure) becomes more dominant (thesis), which in turn sets in motion a change in the opposing

pole (privacy) such that some private information is relinquished (antithesis). The synthesis occurs when that disclosive message moves from being personal in definition, transcending into a dyadic boundary.

The synthesis is indicated by co-ownership of the information and the necessity of formulating mutually agreed upon boundary rules to regulate the newly established dyadic boundary. However, CPM also allows for the continuation of tensions, even when a type of synthesis is achieved. Thus, although coordination represents a process that attempts to maintain the synthesis, CPM argues that there are times when coordination fails. As a result, boundary turbulence erupts when people are unable to abide by or agree on mutual rules for boundary regulation thereby disrupting synchronized coordination.

Linear and spiraling change models. Although Baxter and Montgomery appear to suggest that any one theory cannot ascribe to both a teleological model and a spiraling change model, dimensions of the spiraling change model also occur within CPM in both linear and cyclical ways. However, the cycle of change may be closer to the proposal of Altman et al. than Baxter and Montgomery. Consequently, linear change is illustrated by the way individuals manage their personal or collective boundaries using rules that permanently modify the nature of their boundaries or the ways they regulate them.

For example, as newly married couples determine mutually held privacy rules for their marital privacy boundaries, they are also laying the foundation for what will become a family boundary. When children are incorporated into this family structure, they are taught privacy rules the parents establish for family private information.

Eventually, those boundary rules for family private information may become more concrete, forming family orientations that regulate the family boundary. Thus, as rules become more stable, the resulting orientations are often noticed by statements such as: "in my family, we never talk about our parents' salaries to people outside." This movement from dyadic to family boundaries with concomitant rules illustrates how we might have linear change over time.

CPM also assumes a spiraling interplay of disclosure-privacy opposites. Thus, "boundary rule change" often operates within "a model of indeterminacy in which two opposing tendencies simply continue their ongoing interplay, although the meaning of the interplay is fluid" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 12). Through rule change, boundary connections among and between people become linked and disengaged in a spiraling fashion. Boundaries come together and pull apart depending on the ebb and flow of private information being maintained. Through the examination of rule change, we see the fluidness of the patterns that constantly

come into existence, change, or dissipate. For example, CPM theory proposes ways that rules change to accommodate entrance into existing boundaries and subsequent socialization to learn operating rules for the collectivity. In addition, there are triggered rules that respond to changes in disclosure expectations, reflecting the need for adjustments to old rules to fit a new circumstance (e.g., divorce). Further, rule change may become salient when current rules fail to meet disclosure-privacy needs and require a complete overhaul.

In a number of instances, boundary management means dealing with repeated and newly established patterns. These patterns require a dynamic mechanism (rule change) allowing for an ebb and flow of revealing-concealing in multiple circumstances across many boundary lines. Thus, changed rules may result in alterations of the way people cycle through periods of openness-closedness or represent variations on the degree of revealing-concealing.

Totality

In general, totality refers to understanding phenomena in relation to other phenomena. Baxter and Montgomery propose two ways to consider totality, through the location of contradictions and interdependence among contradictions. They claim that dialectical tensions are located at the level of interpersonal relationships. This assertion moves the unit of emphasis (analysis) away from sole focus on the individual and into a relational arena. "Dialectical tension is thus jointly 'owned' by the relationship parties by the very fact of their union" (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996, p. 15). CPM theory is both consistent with and different from this definition of totality.

On one level, CPM theory locates contradictions squarely within relationships as Baxter and Montgomery propose. Thus, CPM argues that people co-own private information and coordinate their efforts to manage the degree of access others have to it. In addition, disclosures are made to others linking them relationally into a jointly "owned" privacy boundary. Totality takes place when revelations are made and privacy is shared.

However, CPM is different from the proposal of Baxter and Montgomery in two ways. First, CPM expands the idea of totality to accommodate multiple kinds of relationships. Thus, privacy boundaries may not only be interpersonal, as with intimate partners and friendship relationships, but they may also include groups of people such as families, work groups, organizations, and societal institutions. Anywhere people are linked through the sharing of private information constitutes a level of *totality* because everyone privy to this information is expected to enter into a bond that establishes rules for boundary regulation.

The coalescing factors are the sharing and management of private information on a collective level. The private information is jointly owned by all members within the privacy boundary. As such, they need to coordinate the development, usage, and regulation of boundary rules to manage the ebb and flow of co-owned private information to those outside the boundary.

Individuals, therefore, participate in collective ownership of many different privacy boundaries. For each, the process of synchronization is necessary in order to effectively control the tension between disclosing and concealing private information within the boundary. Thus, people within the boundaries must coordinate with others so that the rules are known and used according to agreed-upon ways. When this is accomplished, the boundary regulation process is synchronized and coordination takes place. However, CPM allows for the difficulty of achieving synchronicity and argues for instances of boundary turbulence. Asynchronicity or turbulence occurs when the rules for managing the tensions between privacy and disclosure somehow fail to be coordinated among the boundary members. Asynchronicity may occur for a variety of reasons. For instance, a confidant may not want to be linked into a boundary by knowing the disclosed information. People may presume the listener is interested only to find out that the recipient is unwilling to participate in boundary regulation.

The second way that CPM differs from the definition of totality given by Baxter and Montgomery is in allowing for a personal privacy boundary. The individual is given the right to maintain personally private information within CPM. In this way, CPM is closer to the position advocated by Altman in his boundary theory. The basic mechanisms that function to develop and change boundary rules for collectives are the same for individuals. CPM argues that one way collective boundaries are formulated is through linkages made when individuals decide to reveal personally private information.

When personal information is shared, it moves into a collective domain where the information is no longer under the sole control of the individual. Joint ownership, therefore, means relinquishing unilateral control. Thus, through the disclosure of personally private information, collective boundaries are established. CPM lets us understand the "self-disclosure" process on an individual level, gives a way to track the transformation of individual boundaries into multiple ones, and provides a means to comprehend decisions people make through rule usage to manage any number of privacy boundaries. Hence, at a fundamental level, Baxter and Montgomery argue that disclosure is a cocreation between people. Alternatively, CPM proposes that the disclosure of private information may be the province of the individual, but once it is "disclosed"

the boundary shifts into a co-owned entity where the rules for boundary regulation must be cocreated.[2] Consequently, CPM affords individuals the right to own private information independent of others, yet it also shows what happens once people share this information with others.

Interdependence. Baxter and Montgomery also advocate the interdependence among contradictions. The knot of contradictions (principal and secondary) is evident in CPM theory. As discussed earlier, CPM argues that the privacy-disclosure dialectic is the principal tension. However, many secondary contradictions interface with privacy-disclosure. For instance, when people enjoy privacy, this condition also allows for autonomy. Yet, there is the opposition of disclosure where we find connectedness. In some circumstances, recipients are reluctant confidants (Petronio, 2000c). Being drawn into a privacy boundary unwillingly impacts the dialectics of autonomy-connectedness and freedom-responsibility. The knot of contradictions is also seen when new privacy boundaries are formed or old boundaries need modification; the adjustments people make effect stability and change.

Internal and external contradictions. In addition to principal and secondary contradictions, Baxter and Montgomery propose that the knot of contradictions also includes interplay between internal and external contradictions. Internal contradictions are representative of "within boundary" issues. Consistent with this distinction, CPM claims that when individuals are within dyadic, group, family, organizational, or societal privacy boundaries, there is a necessity to formulate "within group" regulation rules that control the access and protection of the private information. Once the rules are established, the collectives then must abide by the agreed-upon rules in making judgments about the flow within and outward to others. The within boundary activities revolve around rule maintenance (e. g., development of rules, rule adjustments, and sanctions for breaches of rules) that taps into many of the interfacing dialectics discussed earlier.

The external contradictions are represented by two types of "across boundary" activities. First, because we are social, people simultaneously engage in administering multiple privacy boundaries. The interface between managing personal, dyadic, group, family, organizational, and/or

2. CPM also proposes that there are times when disclosure is mutually shared giving the illusion of co-creation. Thus, the establishment of collective boundaries does not necessarily occur when only one person discloses. Instead, two people could theoretically enter into a conversation wherein they reciprocate disclosure co-creating a dyadic privacy boundary.

societal privacy boundaries means there are always external dialectical tensions outside of a particular privacy boundary. For example, while functioning with a marital relationship, the partners also want to maintain their own personal privacy boundaries to preserve autonomy. Within families, members must find ways to manage dyadic boundaries between siblings, for example, while also abiding by boundary rules established for the family boundary.

Because across boundary activities are often difficult to maintain, there are times when individuals make mistakes about the rules. The boundary turbulence that erupts may be a result of issues such as misunderstanding the rules, believing in different rules, applying rules from one boundary to another, and ignoring collectively held rules. Boundary turbulence speaks to the complexity of across boundary maintenance and to the complications often found with maintaining multiple dialectical tensions. As a side note, making boundary turbulence central to managing dialectical tensions sets CPM apart from other dialectical theories. The concept allows the researcher a way to examine the inconsistencies in regulating tensions and captures the extent to which turbulence becomes a change agent for the dialectical contradictions.

The second aspect of external contradictions reflected in CPM is across boundary lines. Not only do people regulate across boundaries, but the basic idea of rules controlling the permeability, linkage, and ownership of the boundary directly addresses the way that external contradictions are managed. The decision criteria of culture, gender, motivations, context, and the risk-benefit ratio proposed by CPM underscores the contributing factors for judgments about regulating privacy-disclosure. These factors feed into the development of boundary rules that manage the ebb and flow of privacy and disclosure to those outside the boundary. As Baxter and Montgomery (1996) point out, the internal and external contradictions "interrelate in dynamic ways" (p. 16). Consequently, the rules not only need to be coordinated among individuals within boundaries, but they also need to be coordinated across boundaries as well in order for the interface of the privacy-disclosure dialectic and its correlate dialectical tensions to be functional for people.

Contextualization. The last aspect of totality Baxter and Montgomery (1996) propose focuses on the "contextualization of dialectical interplay" (p. 17). CPM differs somewhat from Baxter, Montgomery, and Altman, in that, Petronio makes a distinction between the notion of context and that of "contextualization," or where the dialectical management is taking place. Context for Petronio represents one dimension effecting decisions about the tension between privacy and disclosure. Consequently, context is an influencing factor in developing or changing rules that regulate this tension.

Although context is important, it is only one of several dimensions essential for privacy management. For CPM, communication is the focal point while context is a player in effecting that communicate exchange.

However, Altman, Baxter, and Montgomery all ascribe to the significance of dialectics situated within relationships. Clearly, CPM also recognizes that the very nature of communicative interactions presumes some type of relational connection. Thus, the contextualization or how the dialectical tensions are situated for privacy management assumes that whenever private information is disclosed, a privacy boundary is formed around the participants. Consequently, the dialectical tensions are situated in the kind of boundary formulated; however, those boundary parameters are often marked by the relationship between people (e.g., marital, family, group).

Praxis

Of all the dialectical characteristics, praxis has been the most widely addressed in CPM. Praxis reflects the notion that "people are at once actors and objects of their own actions" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 13). Individuals are proactive and reactive simultaneously. To witness the outcome of praxis, we consider the practices used for disclosure episodes. Dindia (1998) argues that one way to see praxis in disclosure is through privacy regulation. Application of CPM to life circumstances has illustrated the practices of disclosure where people are both proactively making choices while reactively dealing with responses to those choices.

One example of praxis is seen with disclosure between marital couples. When couples are learning each other's communication styles, routines develop from decisions about privacy rules for both the disclosing spouse and receiving partner (Petronio, 1991). When partners use disclosure strategies that are ambiguous (e.g., hinting), for instance, receiving spouses must assess their choices for a response. Because the disclosure is implicit, receiving partners need to evaluate expectations in terms of responsibility and degree of autonomy desired.

In addition, the receiving partner often makes attributional searches to consider the reasons the spouse is hinting at some issue. Ultimately, the receiving spouse decides on a way to respond. Clearly, any response by the receiving partner triggers a reaction from the disclosing spouse. In this way, couples negotiate patterns of behavior that are used to coordinate the regulation of their emerging dyadic privacy boundaries. If the choices made seem compatible with expectations by both parties, a certain degree of fit occurs and predictable patterns of interaction emerge.

CPM has been applied to a number of investigations such as child sexual abuse (Petronio, Reeder, Hecht, & Mon't Ros-Mendoza, 1996), dis-

closure among individuals with HIV/AIDS (Greene & Serovich, 1996), and medical mistakes (Allman, 1995). In each case, the research identifies patterns of disclosure episodes found in privacy management for all parties involved in the dialectic of privacy-disclosure. The contribution that CPM makes is in giving a theoretical framework to understand the interface between individuals involved in a disclosure/privacy exchange. Thus, CPM allows researchers to consider not only an individual's "self-disclosure," but also the reactions of recipients and the counteractions of those initially setting the privacy-disclosure dialectic into a praxis pattern. The negotiation of rules, the choices to apply rules, the management of permeability, linkages, and ownership, and maintaining boundaries across and within, call for considering more than just the individual. The theory intersects the individual with the collective to gain a broader view of a specific communication phenomenon where people manage private information.

PRIVACY RULE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

CPM proposes that the degree of revealing and concealing is regulated through rule management processes. Thus, people use rules to regulate the degree of access to or protection of their private information. Privacy rules are used in all matter of managing revealing and concealing, for example, in determining who receives a disclosure, when, how much or how little, where the disclosure occurs, and how a person might conceal information. For instance, husbands might have rules for responding to their wives' questions about their appearance. Some men might answer every question with a polite response, perhaps saying, "Dear, you always look good in whatever you wear." Other men might gently offer an alternative suggestion or offer a brutally honest response. To capture the way privacy rules function overall, CPM identifies three rule management processes that include: (a) foundations of rules ranging from the way they are developed to the elements that make up their attributes, (b) their boundary coordination, and finally (c) their turbulent nature.

Management Process 1: Privacy Rule Foundations

In general, the notion of rule foundations focuses on two main features, *development* and *attributes*. The first feature concentrates on the way that rules develop. Individuals use certain criteria such as cultural expectations, gender, motivation, context of the situation, and risk-benefit ratio to establish privacy rules. The second feature reflects the particular attributes of rules. There are two key dimensions: the way people acquire rules and the

properties of these rules. Accordingly, for the first dimension, rules are acquired by learning preexisting rules or they are negotiated as people formulate new collective boundaries. For the second dimension, rules have four properties. First, they may stabilize, becoming routine for people. Second, rules may become so permanent that they form the basis for orientations to privacy. Third, rules may also change. Fourth, there are sanctions that people institute to control the use of rules.

Privacy Rule Development

Rules are formulated based on decision criteria such as cultural expectations, gendered differences, motivations for revealing and concealing, the context of the situation, and the level of risk in revealing or concealing. Thus, there are five decision criteria used to develop privacy rules to manage our boundaries.

Cultural criteria. People are socialized into certain norms for privacy in their culture and those norms are basic to the way they conceive of privacy (DeCew, 1997). Thus, cultures may vary in the degree to which privacy plays a role in social life. For example, more individualistic cultures tend to value privacy, as illustrated by a German person's need for shutting doors to rooms in a home. However, almost every culture has some need for privacy (Altman, 1977; Schoeman, 1992). Consequently, each individual develops expectations for privacy, in part, by considering cultural values.

Gendered criteria. Though gender differences are being questioned in current research, there is evidence to suggest that men and women have different ways of defining privacy boundaries (Canary, Emmers-Sommer, & Faulkner, 1997; Petronio & Martin, 1986). Within a boundary system, men and women appear to have distinct sets of rules for judging how revealing and concealing should be regulated. Similar to cultural variations, men and women develop rule sets that are predicated on socialization and a unique view of privacy. This is not to say that they are precluded from coordinating those rule sets; however, men and women may initially come to an interaction with different visions of how privacy and disclosure work.

Motivational criteria. People also make judgments based on their particular motivations for privacy and disclosure. Some people are motivated to seek the opportunity to express their feelings, whereas others may have a greater need to mask their reactions to conversations (Jones & Archer, 1976). In addition, the same behavior may result from a variety of motivations: people seek control by disclosing certain information; however,

they might likewise want self-clarification and disclosure to obtain it. Individuals may also be motivated to protect themselves from others. In all, goals and needs for regulating revelation and concealment form a basis for judgments about useful rules.

Contextual criteria. In addition to culture, gender, and motivation, the context of the situation may function as a critical element in formulating rules that regulate revealing and concealing. There are two elements of context, the social environment and the physical setting. The social environment includes contextual factors such as judging the appropriateness of raising a particular topic in a situation, changing circumstances, and the timing of revealing or concealing in a context. For example, when a person is newly divorced, he or she may need to talk about the experience to cope with his or her emotions. Not having been divorced before, the individual is challenged to establish new privacy rules to accommodate the change in his or her circumstance. Hence, the social environment influences rule development.

From the research by Altman and his colleagues (e.g., Altman et al., 1981), we find significant evidence that the physical environment plays a substantial role in the way people define privacy. In addition to marking territory, personal space, and issues of crowding, physical surroundings impact both our nonverbal behavior and our choices about revealing and concealing private information. Hence, the nature of some settings influences the decision rule to disclose or protect privacy. For instance, the Zuni home is described as a sacred place and therefore private (Werner, Altman, & Oxley, 1985):

> It is a "living thing," is blessed and consecrated, is a location for communication with the spirit world . . . , is a place for religious observances, and is a setting within which occupants reside, live, eat, and raise children. (Werner et al., 1985, p. 20)

This environment invites revealing private information.

In another example, the physical setting played an important role for children and adolescents in decisions to reveal sexual abuse (Petronio et al., 1996). Selecting the setting where the children told about their sexual abuse was a significant dimension of controlling the riskiness and making the decision to reveal. Consequently, in settings where a trusted other was engaged in mundane tasks, such as when the child and a disclosure target were watching television, or within a home considered a "safe haven," the children revealed their abuse. Thus, both the physical setting and the social environment combine to represent the context of the situation, forming another decision criterion that can be used to develop rules for boundary regulation and privacy management.