FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERNS AND PRIVACY ORIENTATIONS AS

PREDICTORS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR DISCLOSURES

IN THE COLLEGE CLASSROOM

by

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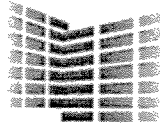

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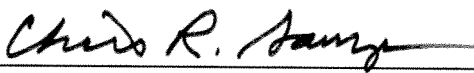May 2012

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Using Petronio's (2002) Communication Privacy Management theory, the current study sought to explore the relationship between family communication patterns, privacy orientations, and students' perceptions of instructor disclosures. The study examined the degree to which students' privacy orientations and family communication patterns (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations) are associated with their perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures in the college classroom. The results indicate that two dimensions of family communication patterns (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations) are associated with students' privacy orientations. Specifically, individuals from conversation oriented families tend to be more open and less private, yet individuals from conformity oriented families are more likely to be closed and private. Further, the results offer some support for the associations among family communication patterns (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations) and the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures in the classroom. While little support was found for the associations among students' privacy orientations and perceptions of instructor disclosures (i.e., frequency, relevance, and appropriateness), students with a weak privacy orientation are more likely to perceive instructors' disclosures as more frequent. Although privacy orientations did not mediate the

association between individuals' family communication patterns and perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom, family communication patterns and privacy orientations accounted for a unique percentage of the variance in students' perceptions of instructor disclosure frequency. Collectively, the results from this study contribute to the research on instructor disclosures by accounting for family communication patterns and privacy orientations as influential factors in the instructional context.

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Family Communication Patterns and Privacy Orientations as Predictors of Students' Perceptions

of Instructor Disclosures in the College Classroom

College instructors readily admit that they talk about themselves in the classroom by

disclosing information about their personal life (Sorensen, 1989), regardless of whether it is

related to course content or not. Consequently, instructional communication scholars have

examined the consequences of instructor self-disclosure on student learning in the classroom

(Scott & Nussbaum, 1981). For instance, Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) examined the

effects of instructor disclosures on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate.

Although their effect sizes were small, their results indicated that frequent instructor self-

disclosure is associated with high levels of anticipated motivation and affective learning, as well

as a positive classroom environment. Additionally, researchers have found a relationship

between dimensions of instructor self-disclosure and student motives to communicate in the

classroom (Cayanus, Martin, & Goodboy, 2009). Specifically, Cayanus et al. (2009) suggested

that students who perceive their instructors' disclosures as negative tend to communicate for

relational, excuse making, participatory, and sycophancy motives. On the other hand, students in

their study reported communicating for functional and participation motives in the classroom

when they perceived instructor self-disclosures as more frequent and relevant.

In addition to these lines of research, scholars have also examined classroom learning

outcomes in relation to the information management process and various characteristics of

instructor disclosures (Cayanus, 2004; Downs, Javidi, & Nussbaum, 1988; McBride & Wahl,

2005), as well as student perceptions of the amount, relevance, negativity, and appropriateness of

instructor disclosures (Cayanus et al., 2009; Lanutti & Strauman, 2006; Mazer et al., 2007;

Zhang, Shi, & Hao, 2009). For instance, McBride and Wahl (2005) found that instructors most

frequently disclose information about their families in the classroom, and that extending course content and attempting to relate to students were the two most common reasons why instructors disclose information in the classroom. Not surprisingly, researchers have found that students have more positive evaluations of the instructor when instructor self-disclosures are more honest, positive, and intentional (Lanutti & Strauman, 2006).

Although researchers have addressed classroom outcomes associated with instructor disclosures, scholars have yet to fully address the different factors that influence students' perceptions of these disclosures. One notable exception is Zhang et al.'s (2009) examination of U.S. and Chinese pre-service teachers' attitudes toward the use of instructor self-disclosure in the classroom. Their results revealed meaningful differences between U.S. and Chinese pre-service teachers' perceptions of what was appropriate and inappropriate instructor self-disclosures. Although their study addressed the role of culture in shaping pre-service teachers' perceptions of disclosure processes, their results underscore the idea that both teachers and students may enter the college classroom with certain predispositions toward (or away from) disclosing personal information that may influence the instructional communication process. Consequently, the current study seeks to understand two additional factors that may affect how students perceive instructor disclosures in the college classroom, namely, privacy orientations and family communication patterns.

McCroskey, Valencic, and Richmond (2004) argued that students come into the college classroom with certain dispositions (or traits) that may affect the way they interpret different stimuli in their learning environment. To date, however, the bulk of instructional research has focused primarily on the characteristics of instructor self-disclosures, with little to no recognition that students most likely vary in their desires and abilities to receive, interpret, and appropriately

manage private disclosures. Privacy orientations, in turn, are likely to vary as a function of the family communication environments within which students are raised. According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002a), family communication patterns (FCPs) emerge from cognitive orientations, or relational schemata, that guide and direct how family members interact with each other and with others outside of the family. Thus, it stands to reason that FCPs may cultivate certain orientations to privacy and disclosure that students bring to the college classroom, and that their orientations to privacy would influence their perceptions of instructor disclosures.

Therefore, the current study extended previous research on instructor disclosures by examining the degree to which students' family communication patterns and privacy orientations are associated with their perceptions of such disclosures in the classroom. Through the theoretical perspectives of Communication Privacy Management theory (Petronio, 2002) and Family Communication Patterns theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b; 2006), this study examined how students' FCPs predicted their orientations to private information, and how such privacy orientations, in turn, predicted their perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures in the classroom. Likewise, this study furthered extant research on instructor disclosures by testing the degree to which students' privacy orientations partially mediate the influence of the family communication environment on students' perceptions of instructor behaviors (i.e., disclosure) in the college classroom.

Theoretical Perspective

Communication Privacy Management Theory

Petronio's (2002) Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory furthers our understanding of how individuals manage the tension between concealing and/or revealing private information. It contends that individuals believe in their right to own private information

and control what information is concealed or revealed. In order to manage this tension,

individuals exercise different levels of control across personal and collective boundaries

(Petronio, 2002). For instance, when an instructor discloses private information to a group of

students, those students become co-owners of the information, regardless of whether they wish to

be co-owners of the information or not. In essence, they become part of a collective boundary

consisting of their instructor and the other students in the class.

In order to manage the permeability of these boundaries, individuals exercise different

levels of control in an effort to manage how public or private they wish to be (Petronio, 2002).

Privacy boundaries vary in permeability depending on the amount of access to, or control of, the

information within the privacy boundary. When individuals' boundaries are impermeable, they

exercise a high amount of control and are more careful in revealing private information.

Individuals with permeable boundaries, however, are more likely to disclose personal

information because they exercise less control over their private information. Thus, a "private"

individual tends to have thick, impermeable privacy boundaries, whereas an open individual

tends to have thin, permeable privacy boundaries. Some researchers examining boundary

permeability have found that instructors report relatively low boundary permeability with private

disclosures in the college classroom (Hosek & Thompson, 2009). This finding suggests that

when instructors perceive potential discomfort or a threat to students' face, they may avoid

disclosing private information in the classroom. Although Hosek and Thompson's (2009)

research provides further insight into instructors' privacy management behaviors, much less is

known about the factors that influence students' interpretations of their instructors' disclosures in

the classroom. In order to understand why students may experience greater or lesser degrees of

(dis)comfort in response to their instructors' disclosures, the current study analyzed how students' privacy orientations affect their perceptions of instructor disclosures.

In general, Marshall (1974) defines privacy as the ability to control the extent to which society intrudes upon an individual's life, as well as the ability to alter privacy preferences in response to changing needs. Petronio (2002) has identified five different criteria that contribute to the development of privacy rules and the regulation of privacy boundaries. First, every *culture* has it's own set of ideals concerning the disclosure of private information. Since culture tends to be influential in our everyday decisions, cultural norms regarding privacy serves as one factor in the development of privacy rules. Second, *gender* may also guide the development of privacy rules due to the sex differences in disclosure patterns between men and women, as well as the sex of the target for disclosure. Third, personal *motivations* influence privacy rule development through individuals' varying needs to disclose or conceal information. For instance, individuals may reveal information because it fulfills their need for self-expression, self-knowledge, or self-defense. Fourth, the *context* of the situation also influences the types of privacy rules that emerge. The rules that materialize may change depending on the needs or circumstances of different situations like traumatic events, therapeutic situations, and life experiences. Finally, people develop different privacy rules as a function of assessing the *risks and benefits* associated with disclosure, as individual needs to manage the benefits and consequences of revealing and concealing private information may vary. How individuals use each of these criteria depends on the relevance of each criterion in a given situation. For instance, an individual may use the cultural criteria to develop privacy rules and manage privacy boundaries when encountering an acquaintance of a different culture because that acquaintance may have a different orientation towards privacy due to her/his culture.

According to CPM theory (Petronio, 2002), privacy rules also vary as a function of unique rule properties that change or become relatively stable over time. Specifically, certain privacy rules may become routinized over time as individuals develop stable patterns for revealing and concealing information. As Petronio (2002) noted, "Many interactions involving disclosure or concealment of private information follow a habitual pattern and the rules become routinized as they are used repeatedly to manage privacy boundaries" (p. 79). The long-term repeated use of privacy rules can become so ingrained that it leads to an even more stable form of concretized orientations to privacy. Petronio (2002) argued that although routinized privacy rules are stable, "by comparison, concretized orientation rules are unbending" (p. 79). CPM theory contends that the change in form from routinized privacy rules to concretized privacy rules constitutes *privacy rule orientations*. Individuals' privacy orientations serve as a predetermined set of rules that allow them to reveal and conceal information without having to devise a plan every time they have to manage private information. Such orientations emerge as individuals use the same privacy rules for such a long period of time that they become permanent privacy values. Based on Marshall (1974) and Petronio's (2002) conceptualizations of privacy and privacy rule orientations, then, *privacy orientation* is conceptualized in the present study as an individual's trait tendency to conceal private information concerning him or herself across various relational contexts.

According to Petronio (2002), individuals acquire or develop privacy rules through various ways. The most common way individuals acquire pre-existing rules is through socialization, particularly within the family environment. CPM theory contends that family privacy rule orientations affect whether privacy rules are congruent or incongruent between members within the family and outside of the family (Petronio, 2002). Given that FCPs emerge

from cognitive orientations that reflect relational schemata and shape family members'

information-processing skills (Schrodt, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008), it stands to reason that such

patterns of family interaction likely cultivate part of a student's privacy orientation, which in turn

should influence how that student views an instructor's disclosure behaviors in the classroom.

Consequently, Family Communication Patterns theory provides further justification for

examining the direct and indirect effects of the family communication environment on students'

perceptions of instructor disclosures through the mechanism of students' privacy orientations.

Family Communication Patterns Theory

Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002b; 2006) Family Communication Patterns theory

identifies the cognitive processes that underlie two dimensions of family communication, which

serve to help individuals interpret social interactions in various contexts. This theory is based on

McLeod and Chaffee's (1972) original program of research that examined the effects of FCPs on

interpretations of mass media messages. These scholars developed the original FCP scale in

order to measure two dimensions of communication within families: socio-orientation and

concept-orientation (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). A *socio-orientation* represents the degree to

which social roles and relationships will have a greater influence on children's decision-making

than the discussion of ideas, whereas a *concept-orientation* represents the extent to which

parental discussions of ideas and concepts influences children's information processing and

subsequent decision-making. Families high in socio-orientation tend to favor relationships

amongst family members when processing information, rather than explicit discussion of

different (and at times competing) ideas. On the other hand, families high in concept-orientation

prefer exploring ideas through open discussions, rather than focusing on maintaining harmonious

relationships.

Although McLeod and Chaffee's (1972) program of research provided the conceptual foundation for FCP theory, Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) documented several limitations associated with the original conceptualizations of the two FCP constructs and their respective measures. As a result, Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) revised the original FCP scale, and Ritchie (1991) re-labeled the original two dimensions of socio- and concept-orientations as *conformity orientation* and *conversation orientation*, respectively. These two dimensions of family communication are cognitive orientations that individuals use to understand social interactions. In turn, these cognitive orientations create communication structures (or relational schemata), which individuals use as a frame of reference for constituting reality in situations within and outside of the family, including such contexts as the classroom environment (Schrodt et al., 2008). Thus, students may access the relational schemata they have developed from their family interactions and use them as a frame of reference to interpret and make sense of instructor disclosures in the classroom-learning environment.

Conversation and conformity orientations are characterized by different family communication behaviors. A conversation orientation represents "the degree to which families create a climate in which all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction about a wide array of topics" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006, p. 54). Families high in conversation orientation have frequent, spontaneous, and unrestrained interactions, while families low in conversation orientation interact less frequently and less openly about fewer topics (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Second, *conformity orientation* refers to "the degree to which family communication stresses a climate of homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b, p. 85). High conformity orientation families engage in interactions that emphasize uniformity of beliefs and attitudes, as well as interdependence

amongst family members (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b; 2006). Children are encouraged to adopt the ideals of their parents, rather than developing their own perspective or interpretation of events independent from their parents. Essentially, family members are discouraged from openly exchanging ideas, unless their ideas are congruent with those of the authority figures within the family. Conversely, conversation-oriented families cultivate an openness to sharing ideas because they value the exchange of information and the exploration of ideas over maintaining peaceful relationships.

These two dimensions interact to create four family types: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire families. According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002b), *consensual* families are high on both conversation and conformity orientations. Family members feel pressure to agree and maintain the existing family hierarchy, while still having an interest in open communication and the exploration of new ideas. *Pluralistic* families are high on conversation orientation, but low on conformity orientation. All family members are equal participants in family decision-making because communication in these families is free and open between all family members. *Protective* families are low on conversation orientation, but high on conformity orientation. Communication is characterized by a focus on parental authority with little value on open communication between family members. Finally, *laissez-faire* families are low on both conversation and conformity orientations, as communication within these families is infrequent, uninvolved, and characterized by inconsistent norms for family interaction.

Researchers operating from this theoretical perspective have found that conversation and conformity orientations are predictive of individuals' communication behaviors in other relational contexts, including the college adjustment period (Orrego & Rodriguez, 2001), online communication attitudes (Ledbetter, 2010), and romantic relationships (Koerner & Fitzpatrick,

1997; 2002c). These lines of research lend further support for McLeod and Chaffee's (1972)

original contention that the communication environment that develops within the family will

influence the way individuals process information and make sense of reality outside of the

family. Individuals who are raised with a high conversation orientation in their family may

develop a more general schema for openness that encourages their decisions to disclose private

information, whereas individuals raised with a high conformity orientation in their family may

develop a more reserved schema for information management that inhibits such disclosure and

cultivates a disposition of privacy. Given that FCPs influence how family members interpret and

process information in a variety of relational contexts, then, one might reason that FCPs

contribute to the cultivation of privacy orientations in students. The next section further develops

this idea and advances the first set of hypotheses for the present study.

Family Communication Patterns and Privacy Orientations

According to CPM theory (Petronio, 2002), individuals "are socialized into family

privacy rules by members at a young age" (p.73). Children have small, in some cases even non-

existent, privacy boundaries, and the family is the primary source for children to acquire rules for

managing privacy boundaries (Petronio, 2002). Thus, it stands to reason that the privacy rules

that govern family privacy boundaries would constitute part of what McLeod and Chaffee (1972)

refer to as the "communication structure" within the family. In fact, they posit that the presence

of and interplay between conversation orientation and conformity orientation constitute the

communication structure in the family (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). Consequently, if the

communication behaviors that characterize conversation and conformity orientations are

reflective of how open individuals are in communicating within and outside of the family, and if

individuals' openness to communicate is one of the foundational concepts associated with

privacy orientations, then it stands to reason that conversation and conformity orientation would be associated with privacy orientation.

Researchers have demonstrated that FCPs are associated with a host of information processing, behavioral, and psychosocial outcomes (Schrodt et al., 2008). Although scholars have yet to examine the associations between FCPs and trait orientations to privacy, there is indirect evidence to suggest such relationships exist. For instance, Avtgis (1999) found that individuals from conversation-oriented families possessed a trait-like tendency to approach communicating with others, viewing it as a rewarding process, whereas those from low conversation-oriented families possessed a trait-like tendency to avoid communicating with others. In a similar vein, students who have high privacy orientations may avoid communicating private information with their instructors and may not see their instructors' disclosures as rewarding, helpful, and/or relevant. Previous researchers have also found that parents and children talk more about sensitive topics (i.e. sex and alcohol) in families that practice open communication (Booth-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1998). Given that open communication is indicative of a high conversation-orientation in families, individuals who have a low privacy orientation may be more willing to discuss sensitive topics because they have more permeable privacy boundaries.

Moreover, Huang (1999) found that individuals from conversation-oriented families were more likely to talk about personal matters with friends and be sociable. On the other hand, individuals from conformity-oriented families were more likely to self-monitor and be shy. According to CPM theory (Petronio, 2002), individuals who have high boundary permeability tend to disclose more than individuals with low boundary permeability. That is, high boundary permeability is characteristic of a low privacy orientation due to the individual's willingness to

openly discuss sensitive or personal information, whereas low boundary permeability is characteristic of a high privacy orientation because of the individual's tendency to exercise greater control over private information and to more closely monitor the information that is disclosed. When coupled with Huang's (1999) findings, then, CPM and FCP theories would suggest that young adults from high conversation-oriented families would develop more permeable privacy boundaries that ultimately lead to relatively lower privacy orientations than those from low conversation-oriented families. Young adults from high conformity families, on the other hand, would develop less permeable privacy boundaries and relatively higher privacy orientations than those from low conformity families. This line of reasoning is further supported by recent research suggesting that conversation orientation is negatively associated, and conformity orientation is positively associated, with young adults' use of defense behaviors to protect against parental privacy invasions (Ledbetter & Vik, in press). Consequently, to test this line of reasoning with college students, the following hypotheses were advanced:

H1: Family conversation orientation is negatively associated with students' privacy orientations.

H2: Family conformity orientation is positively associated with students' privacy orientations.

Students' Privacy Orientations and Instructor Disclosures

Although researchers have yet to examine the degree to which students' privacy orientations influence their perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom, there is indirect evidence to suggest a relationship exists. For instance, Schrodt (2003) explored the degree to which students' trait verbal aggressiveness (VA) and global self-esteem predicted their perceptions of instructor VA in the college classroom. His results indicated that students with

moderate to high levels of trait VA or low levels of self-esteem perceived instructors as being more verbally aggressive than those students who reported low trait VA or moderate to high levels of self-esteem. These findings show how students' traits, such as VA and self-esteem, are likely to influence their perceptions of instructor behaviors in the classroom. Consequently, there is reason to suspect that students' privacy orientations may, in fact, influence their perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom.

According to Cayanus (2004), instructor self-disclosure can serve as a powerful instrument in the classroom when used appropriately. Instructors must make decisions concerning what information they will disclose or conceal from students in an effort to maintain a comfortable learning environment (McBride & Wahl, 2005). Instructor self-disclosures may be more or less helpful, relevant, and appropriate, depending on the instructor, the nature of the information disclosed, and student dispositions toward disclosure processes. According to Sorensen (1989), *instructor self-disclosure* is defined as "teacher statements in the classroom about the self that may or may not be related to subject content, but reveal information about the teacher that students are unlikely to learn from other sources" (p. 260).

Consistent with this definition and using CPM theory (Petronio, 2002), McBride and Wahl (2005) identified the topics instructors reveal and conceal in the classroom, as well as the purpose behind revealing particular topics. Their results indicated that instructors revealed information about their families, opinions, daily outside activities, and personal histories as examples to extend course content and attempt to relate to students on a personal level. Alternatively, instructors reported concealing personal information, negative personal relationships, sexual topics, and negative aspects of their character. These results confirm several of the findings from Downs et al.'s (1988) study that indicated 42% of instructors' self-

disclosure statements were used to clarify course content and related to their personal beliefs and opinions. These findings further our understanding of the topics or categories of information instructors tend to view as private versus public information.

In order to further understand the decision-making *process* instructors use when deciding what information to disclose to their students, Hosek and Thompson (2009) examined the development of privacy rules and boundary management. Their results suggested that instructors use four criteria to develop their privacy rules: instructor motivation to engage students, contextual cues, risk-benefit ratio, and other instructors' past mistakes. Their findings also support Petronio's (2002) argument regarding the criteria individuals use to create privacy rules, as three of the criteria to emerge in their report (instructor motivation to engage students, contextual cues, and risk-benefit ratio) paralleled three of Petronio's criteria (motivations, context, and risk-benefit ratio). Their findings also show that some instructors report low boundary permeability or no boundary permeability within the context of the classroom. Consequently, these lines of research provide scholars with an understanding of instructors' privacy rule development and boundary management, as well as the general topics that comprise instructor self-disclosures.

In addition to instructor perspectives on the disclosure process, researchers have also examined perceptions of instructor disclosures from the perspective of students. For example, researchers have found that instructor disclosures are associated with increased student affect, perceived intimacy, and perceived solidarity (Sorensen, 1989), higher levels of classroom participation (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994), and anticipated motivation, affective learning, and classroom comfort (Mazer et al., 2007). Although instructional communication scholars have begun to address how students' perceptions of instructor disclosures affect the classroom, to

date, they have generally neglected underlying factors and/or student characteristics that influence such perceptions in the first place. Therefore, the present study sought to understand the various ways in which students' privacy orientations affect their perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom.

In order to better understand this relationship, the association between students' privacy orientations and three dimensions of instructor self-disclosures were examined: frequency, relevance, and appropriateness (cf. Cayanus & Martin, 2008). These dimensions of instructor disclosures have been linked to classroom learning outcomes, though studies addressing students' perceptions of the amount of teacher disclosure has produced mixed results. For instance, Mazer et al. (2007) found that the frequency of disclosure teachers used on their Facebook website did not seem to affect how participants perceived the appropriateness of instructors' use of Facebook. Lannutti and Strauman (2006) also discovered that students' perceptions of the amount of instructor disclosure were not related to instructor evaluations. On the other hand, other scholars have discovered that students perceive the instructor and classroom environment more negatively when instructors engage in excessive amounts of self-disclosure (Downs et al., 1988; Sorensen, 1989). Each of these lines of research are based on students' perceptions of instructor disclosures, and it stands to reason that students' privacy rules and boundary permeability would not only influence their own management of concealment and revealment processes, but their perceptions of their instructors' disclosures as well.

According to Petronio (2002), individuals who desire to have greater control over private information tend to have thick, nearly impermeable boundaries that prevent them from disclosing personal information on a frequent basis. Accordingly, these characteristics would be reflective of an individual who has a high privacy orientation. Such individuals may also be less

comfortable receiving private information from others. Thus, students who are unaccustomed to frequently revealing private information may experience a heightened sensitivity and/or aversion to instructors' disclosures in the classroom. This, in turn, may create a situation where students with high privacy orientations are more likely than those with low privacy orientations to perceive any kind of personal example as an act of sharing private information when the instructor, in fact, does not view it as such. Based on this line of reasoning, a third hypothesis was advanced for consideration:

> H3: Students' privacy orientations are positively associated with the perceived frequency of instructors' disclosures in the college classroom.

Not only might privacy orientations influence perceptions of disclosure frequency, but they may also alter the degree to which students understand the relevance of instructor disclosures in the classroom. The *relevance* of a course can be defined more generally as "a student's perception of whether or not the course content can meet his/her personal needs, personal goals, or career goals" (Keller, 1983, p. 327). The relevance of an instructor disclosure, in turn, refers to the degree to which the sharing of private information by an instructor helps illustrate course content and/or helps students meet their academic, professional, or personal needs in class. According to Cayanus and Martin (2008), students reported that the course was more meaningful to them when instructor disclosures were relatively positive and relevant. Their results also indicated that when instructors disclosed more information that was relevant, students expressed greater levels of meaningfulness and impact on the classroom environment. Taken together, their results highlight the importance of looking not only at the frequency of instructor disclosures, but at the relevance of the disclosures as well. Individuals who are sensitive to private information and have low boundary permeability (i.e., high privacy

orientations) may believe that disclosing private information of any kind is less relevant to the purposes of classroom discussion than those individuals who possess permeable privacy boundaries. To test this, the following hypothesis was advanced:

H4: Students' privacy orientations are negatively associated with the perceived relevance of instructor disclosures in the college classroom.

The third and final dimension of instructor disclosures examined in the present study was appropriateness. Although previous instructional research has focused on the valence of instructor disclosures (e.g., Cayanus & Martin, 2008), Caltabiano and Smithson (1983) found that positive disclosures were perceived as appropriate and negative disclosures were perceived as inappropriate. More importantly, the perceived appropriateness of the information that instructors may share about themselves in the college classroom is more closely aligned with CPM theory than the valence of the information itself. For instance, students may find themselves in the role of reluctant confidant when their instructor discloses private, inappropriate information in the classroom. Students who are in this role do not seek the information from their instructor, yet are given the information without their consent (Petronio, 2002). According to Hund, Olson, and Markley (1986), unsolicited self-disclosures were rated as less socially appropriate than solicited self-disclosures. Based on current research, it is reasonable to suspect that students may perceive instructor disclosures as inappropriate if they are unwillingly invited into an instructor's collective boundary. Students' reluctance to become apart of their instructors' collective boundary may result from their personal levels of boundary permeability and control over information.

If students possess low boundary permeability and high control over their own private information (Petronio, 2002), they may view their instructors' self-disclosures as inappropriate

because their instructors' behaviors do not align with their own rules for governing their private information. Alternatively, students who have high boundary permeability and are less concerned about controlling their private information may be more likely to perceive instructors' self-disclosures as appropriate because revealing private information does not violate their orientation to privacy. To test this logic, the following hypothesis was advanced:

H5: Students' privacy orientations are negatively associated with the perceived appropriateness of instructor disclosures in the college classroom.

Family Communication Patterns, Privacy Orientations, and Instructor Disclosures

The final purpose of this study was to test a hypothesized model of privacy orientation as a mediator of family communication patterns and perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom. Given that family conversation orientations encourage unrestrained interaction and open discussions on a variety of topics (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a; 2002b; 2006), it stands to reason that students from conversation oriented families would be more open to instructor disclosures in the classroom, particularly when such disclosures are viewed as relevant and appropriate. Conversely, conformity orientations stress homogeneity of attitudes, beliefs, and values in response to overt parental authority. Thus, students from families high in conformity orientation are not only more likely to be more private individuals (cf. Ledbetter & Vik, in press), but they may view the sharing of private of information by college instructors as less appropriate, less relevant, and as occurring more frequently than it actually does. To test this, the following hypotheses were advanced:

H6: Family conversation orientation predicts students' perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom (i.e., frequency, relevance, and appropriateness).

H7: Family conformity orientation predicts students' perceptions of instructor disclosures

in the college classroom (i.e., frequency, relevance, and appropriateness).

Finally, the present study seeks to explore the mediating role of privacy orientation

between family communication patterns and students' perceptions of instructor disclosures.

Although researchers have yet to consider privacy orientations as mechanisms linking family

communication environments to students' reports of instructor disclosures, there is indirect

evidence to support this line of reasoning. For instance, Ledbetter and Schrodt (2008) found that

conformity and conversation orientations were meaningful predictors of informational reception

apprehension (IRA), a trait information-processing anxiety known to be associated with student

motivation and other classroom outcomes (e.g., grade point average) (Ellis, 2004; Schrodt,

Wheeless, & Ptacek, 2000). Their results indicated that conformity orientation was positively

associated with two dimensions of IRA: listening anxiety and intellectual inflexibility.

Conversely, they found that conversation orientation was inversely associated with listening

anxiety and intellectual inflexibility. These two dimensions of IRA, in turn, are negatively

associated with student motivation and grade point averages (Schrodt et al., 2000).

Likewise, instructional researchers have linked IRA (also known as receiver

apprehension) to various classroom outcomes including affective learning and cognitive learning

(Ellis, 2004). Taken together, Ledbetter and Schrodt's (2008) research provides evidence that

FCPs may influence instructional communication processes by enhancing and/or mitigating the

development of student traits associated with motivation, learning, and instructional

communication behavior. To the extent that conversation and conformity orientations cultivate

stronger or weaker orientations to privacy in individual family members, students' privacy

orientations may partially mediate the unique and combined effects of FCPs on their perceptions

of instructor disclosures in the college classroom. To test this line of reasoning, a final

hypothesis was advanced:

> H8: Students' privacy orientations will partially mediate the associations between family
>
> communication patterns (i.e., conversation and conformity orientation) and students'
>
> perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom (i.e., frequency, relevance,
>
> and appropriateness).

Method

Participants

Participants included 382 undergraduate students enrolled in a basic communication

course, ranging in age from 18 to 30 ($M = 19.17$, $SD = 1.29$). Slightly more than half of the

participants were female ($n = 216$, 56.5%) and the majority were Caucasian ($n = 290$, 75.9%),

though 9.4% ($n = 36$) were Hispanic, 8.1% ($n = 31$) were African American, 4.2% ($n = 16$) were

Asian, and the remaining 2.4% were classified as "Other." Most of the participants were

classified as either first-year students (51.0%) or sophomores (30.9%), and most were from first-

marriages families (95.0%).

Procedures

Participation was solicited from undergraduate students at a medium-sized, private

university in the Southwest. After providing informed consent, participants voluntarily

completed an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire consisted of demographic questions

and the measures included in this report (see Appendix). Consistent with the technique advanced

by Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond (1986), students were instructed to answer the

research instruments while thinking about "the instructor you have just prior to meeting with this

class." This technique assures that instructors from a wide variety of disciplines are referenced

by the students, and it has been used successfully and frequently in previous research (e.g., Myers & Rocca, 2000; Schrodt, 2003; Schrodt & Finn, 2011). Students were awarded minimal course credit, or extra credit (less than 2%), for their participation in the research. Students completed the online questionnaire during a designated class period or outside of regular class time, and all responses were anonymous. The questionnaire took approximately 35 minutes to complete, after which participants were thanked for their participation and debriefed.

Measures

Privacy orientation. Marshall's (1974) Privacy Preference Scale and Pedersen's (1979) Privacy Questionnaire were adapted and combined to create one survey instrument assessing students' privacy orientations. The original version of Marshall's (1974) Privacy Questionnaire consists of six subscales that address the different factors that contribute to one's privacy: *intimacy, not neighboring, seclusion, solitude, anonymity,* and *reserve*. Results from Marshall's (1974) student sample produced the following alpha reliability coefficients: intimacy ($\alpha = .56$), not neighboring ($\alpha = .76$), seclusion ($\alpha = .65$), solitude ($\alpha = .67$), anonymity ($\alpha = .71$), and reserve ($\alpha = .63$). Select items from each of the six subscales were included in the adapted measure used in this report, including such items as "Even intimate friends should respect your desire to keep certain things to yourself" and "It is important to me to live where I can do what I want without bothering other people."

In addition, Pedersen's (1979) Privacy Questionnaire includes six factors, four of which are nearly identical to Marshall's (1974) scale, that comprise individuals' privacy: *reserve, isolation, solitude, intimacy with family, intimacy with friends,* and *anonymity*. Again, certain items from the *reserve, isolation, solitude,* and *anonymity* subscales were included in the adapted measure for this study, though items from the *intimacy with family* and *intimacy with friends*

subscales were excluded. Using sample items from both measures, then, students' privacy orientations were operationalized using an adapted inventory that included 40 items measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1= *Strongly disagree*, 7= *Strongly agree*). Example items adapted from Pedersen's (1979) privacy questionnaire included: "Although I occasionally enjoy talking to my neighbors, I don't like to get very involved with them" and "I sometimes want to get away from everyone for a while, even my close friends" (see Appendix for the remaining items in the adapted measure). In this study, the privacy orientation measure produced an alpha coefficient of .85.

Family communication patterns. Participants' family communication patterns were measured using Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002b) Revised Family Communication Pattern Scale. The RFCP is a self-report measure composed of 26 Likert-type statements assessing *conversation orientation* (15 items, e.g., "I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things") and *conformity orientation* (11 items, e.g., "When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question"). For over two decades of research, the RFCP has demonstrated excellent reliability and validity (Schrodt et al., 2008), with previous reliability coefficients ranging from .81 to .89 for conversation orientation and .74 to .79 for conformity orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b; Schrodt et al., 2008). In this study, the RFCP produced alpha coefficients of .90 for conversation orientation and .81 for conformity orientation.

Students' perceptions of instructor disclosures. Students' perceptions of instructor disclosures were measured using three dimensions of disclosure: appropriateness, frequency, and relevance. First, a modified version of the Conversational Appropriateness Scale (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987) was used to measure students' perceptions of the appropriateness of instructor

disclosures. This is a 20-item scale that was adapted in order to specifically address instructor disclosures. For instance, items like "S/he was a smooth conversationalist" were altered to say, "My instructor is a smooth conversationalist." All items are measured using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). The original scale is considered reliable with alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .74 (Canary & Spitzberg, 1990) to .85 (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987). In this study, the modified appropriateness scale produced an alpha coefficient of .93.

Second, the frequency of instructor disclosures in the classroom were measured using Cayanus and Martin's (2004) Instructor Self-Disclosure Scale. Although the original scale was designed to assess the *amount* of instructor disclosure, in the present study, the instrument was adapted to assess the *frequency* with which instructors disclose private information in the classroom. The original instrument was comprised of 18 items measured on a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*Completely disagree*) to 7 (*Completely agree*). In order to reflect the frequency of instructor disclosures in the current study, the scale was adapted using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very often*). Example items included "My instructor expresses his/her beliefs" and "My instructor seldom discusses family or friends" (reverse-coded). In previous research, Cayanus and Martin (2004) reported alpha reliabilities ranging from .90 to .92 for the original scale, and in this study, the measure produced an alpha coefficient of .90.

Finally, students' perceptions of the relevance of instructor disclosures were assessed using Frymier and Schulman's (1995) Content Relevance Scale. The scale originally assessed the relevance of the content instructors taught, yet the scale was adapted to address the relevance of instructor disclosures for the current study. The scale consists of 12 items such as "My

instructor uses examples to make the content relevant to me" and "My instructor helps me to understand the importance of the content." These items were selected in an effort to reflect explicit instructor behaviors in order to reduce students' subjective feelings. Frymier and Schulman (1995) reported an alpha coefficient of .88, and in this study, the scale produced an alpha reliability of .92.

Data Analysis

The first seven hypotheses were tested using Pearson's product-moment correlations. The final hypothesis was tested using separate hierarchical regression analyses for each dimension of instructor disclosures (i.e., perceived appropriateness, frequency, and relevance). At step one, conversation and conformity orientations were entered as predictors of students' perceptions of instructor disclosures. At step two, privacy orientations were entered into the model. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), mediation occurs when the introduction of the mediating variable into the model reduces the beta coefficients for the predictors by a statistically significant amount. Thus, for models where mediation tests were warranted, Sobel tests were conducted to determine whether or not privacy orientations mediated the effects of FCPs on perceptions of instructor disclosures.

<center>**Results**</center>

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and Pearson's product-moment correlations for all variables are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations Among all Variables (N =

382)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Privacy Orientation	4.17	.54	--					
2. Conversation Orientation	4.94	1.03	-.17**	--				
3. Conformity orientation	4.03	.96	.23**	-.25**	--			
4. Disclosure-Appropriateness	5.61	.99	-.05	.10*	-.09	--		
5. Disclosure-Frequency	2.84	.70	-.11*	.11*	.14**	-.31**	--	
6. Disclosure-Relevance	5.69	1.10	.01	.08	.13*	.24**	.38**	--

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Hypotheses one and two predicted that students' family communication patterns (i.e.,

conversation and conformity orientations) would be associated with their privacy orientations.

Pearson's product-moment correlations revealed an inverse association between conversation

orientation and students' privacy orientations ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$), as well as a positive association

between conformity orientation and students' privacy orientations ($r = .23$, $p < .01$). Thus, the

first two hypotheses were supported.

The next set of hypotheses (i.e., H3, H4, and H5) predicted relationships between

students' privacy orientations and their perceptions of instructor disclosures (i.e., frequency,

relevance, and appropriateness). H3 predicted a positive association between students' privacy

orientations and perceived frequency of instructor disclosures, yet the results revealed an inverse

association ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$). Although this association was statistically significant, the direction of the association was opposite of what had been hypothesized. Therefore, H3 was not supported. H4 and H5 predicted that students' privacy orientations would be negatively associated with both the perceived relevance and the perceived appropriateness of instructor disclosures. The results failed to provide support for both hypotheses (see Table 1), as privacy orientations are unassociated with the perceived relevance and appropriateness of instructor disclosures. With the exception of a marginal association between privacy orientations and the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures, the results for H3, H4, and H5 provide relatively little evidence to suggest that students' privacy orientations are associated with their perceptions of instructor disclosures.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that family conversation orientation would predict students' perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures. The results revealed that conversation orientation positively predicts students' perceptions of the frequency ($r = .11$, $p < .05$) and appropriateness of instructor disclosures ($r = .10$, $p < .05$), yet does not predict students' perceptions of the relevance of instructor disclosures (see Table 1). Thus, H6 is partially supported. Similarly, H7 predicted that family conformity orientations would predict students' perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures. Pearson correlations indicate that conformity orientation positively predicts students' perceptions of the frequency of instructor disclosures ($r = .14$, $p < .01$), as well as the perceived relevance of instructor disclosures ($r = .13$, $p < .05$). Conversely, conformity orientation did not predict students' perceptions of the appropriateness of instructor disclosures (see Table 1). Consequently, the seventh hypothesis was also partially supported.

The eighth and final hypothesis predicted that students' privacy orientations would partially mediate the associations between family communication patterns (i.e., conversation and conformity orientations) and students' perceptions of instructor disclosures (i.e., frequency, relevance, and appropriateness) in the college classroom. Given that students' privacy orientations were associated only with the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures, only this dimension was used to test the final hypothesis. A hierarchical regression analysis was conducted using conversation, conformity, and privacy orientations as the predictor variables and students' perceptions of the frequency of instructor disclosures as the criterion variable. This model produced a significant multiple correlation coefficient, $R = .24$, $F(3, 378) = 177.80$, $MSE = .47$, $p < .001$, accounting for 5.7% of the total variance in the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures. At step one, examination of the beta weights revealed that both conversation ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.87$, $p < .01$) and conformity orientations ($\beta = .18$, $t = 3.38$, $p < .01$) were significant predictors in the model. At step two, conversation orientation ($\beta = .13$, $t = 2.56$, $p < .05$) and conformity orientation ($\beta = .20$, $t = 3.84$, $p < .001$) emerged again as significant predictors in the model, as did students' privacy orientations ($\beta = -.14$, $t = -2.61$, $p < .01$). Given a marginal reduction in the beta weight for conversation orientation and an increase in the beta weight for conformity orientation, a Sobel test was conducted only for conversation orientation. This test provided no support for mediation ($z = 1.62$, $p > .10$), and as a result, H8 was not supported.

Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to examine the degree to which students' family communication patterns and privacy orientations are associated with their perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures in the college classroom. Overall, the results offer modest support for the theoretical line of reasoning advanced in this

report, particularly through the relationships between family communication patterns, privacy orientations, and the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures. The results do indicate that students' family communication patterns are associated with their privacy orientations, as individuals from conversation oriented families tend to be more open and less private, whereas individuals from conformity oriented families tend to be more closed, reserved, and private. Although little support was found for the predicted associations between students' privacy orientations and their perceptions of instructor disclosures (i.e., frequency, relevance, and appropriateness), the results did suggest that students with a low privacy orientation are more likely to perceive instructors' disclosures as occurring somewhat more frequently. Although students' privacy orientations do not mediate the association between family communication patterns and students' perceptions of the frequency of instructor disclosures, both family orientations and privacy orientations predict unique variance in students' perceptions of instructor disclosure frequency. Consequently, the results of this study extend previous research on family communication patterns and privacy management by tying both processes to students' perceptions of an instructor disclosure behavior in the college classroom.

Based on FCP theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b) and CPM theory (Petronio, 2002), hypotheses one and two predicted that conversation and conformity orientations would be associated with students' privacy orientations. Both hypotheses were supported, though the effect sizes were relatively modest. Thus, individuals from conversation-oriented families that are accustomed to openly communicating about a wide variety of topics with little to no restraint are somewhat less likely to develop strong trait orientations to privacy. Conversely, individuals from conformity-oriented families who experience strong pressure toward agreement from (and with) an authority figure in the family are more prone to develop a high privacy orientation.

Taken together, then, individuals from families that are high in conformity and low in conversation orientations (i.e., protective families) are perhaps most likely to develop low boundary permeability and trait orientations to privacy. Within the family, individuals develop a communication structure based on conversation and conformity orientations (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). Additionally, CPM theory contends that the family serves as the primary source for children to learn rules regarding privacy boundary management (Petronio, 2002). Therefore, the associations found between family communication patterns and privacy orientations indicate that individuals' privacy orientations, or how they manage their privacy boundaries, are part of their family communication structure. Because the family communication structure is developed based on whether a family is conversation or conformity oriented, individuals' privacy orientations are influenced by the characteristics associated with both conversation and conformity orientations. Thus, the results from this first set of hypotheses provide further support for the idea from CPM theory that the family environment is an influential factor in the development of trait orientations to privacy.

The next set of hypotheses predicted that students' privacy orientations would be associated with their perceptions of instructor disclosures in the college classroom (i.e., frequency, relevance, and appropriateness). Hypothesis three predicted that students' privacy orientations would be positively associated with the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures. Although this hypothesis was not supported, the results revealed a significant, inverse relationship between students' privacy orientations and the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures. Students who have thick, nearly impermeable privacy boundaries may be somewhat less likely to perceive instructor disclosures as frequent because they themselves are less perceptive of what constitutes "disclosure" in the college classroom. Or perhaps, such

individuals choose to ignore other individuals' disclosures of private information due to their own discomfort with revealing private information. Individuals with high privacy orientations have thick, impermeable boundaries that restrict them from disclosing private information and this, in turn, may make them less receptive to other individuals' disclosures of private information. That is, in an effort to avoid being reluctant confidants (Petronio, 2002), highly private students may avoid or neglect to recognize their instructor's disclosures of private information in the classroom.

Hypotheses four and five predicted that students' privacy orientations would be negatively associated with both the perceived relevance and appropriateness of instructor disclosures. Neither hypothesis was supported. In previous research, Schrodt (2003) found that students' trait verbal aggressiveness (VA) and global self-esteem predicted their perceptions of instructor VA in the college classroom, yet the findings from the current study failed to provide further evidence that students' trait orientations to communicating private information influences their perceptions of their instructors' disclosures. One explanation for these results may be that privacy orientations, in general, influence how individuals manage and process their own private information, yet play less of a role in how they perceive, process, and manage other people's private information. Indeed, an implicit assumption embedded within this study is the idea that highly private individuals experience a form of anxiety and discomfort when receiving other individuals' disclosures, and that assumption may not be warranted. Of course, the lack of associations between privacy orientations and perceptions of instructor disclosures may also be a function of the research design. In this study, privacy orientation was conceptualized as a trait and the privacy orientation measure was a global measure that focused on an individual's general orientation to privacy, or how private of a person one thinks he or she tends to be. This set of

predictions (i.e., H3 – H5) attempted to link a general trait (i.e., privacy orientation) to a specific behavior (i.e., student perceptions of instructor disclosures) within a specific relational and physical context (i.e., instructor-student relationship within the college classroom). Consequently, the conceptualization and operationalization of privacy orientations used in this report may have been too broad and general to link with a specific communication behavior and relational context.

Consistent with the information-processing assumptions embedded within FCP theory (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b), hypotheses six and seven explored the relationships among family communication patterns and students' perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures. For H6, the results indicated that conversation orientation is positively associated with both the perceived frequency and appropriateness of instructor disclosures, though again, the effect sizes were negligible at best. Nevertheless, students from families who celebrate and welcome the open expression of ideas and opinions on a variety of topics are perhaps somewhat more likely to perceive instructors as disclosing appropriate information with greater frequency than students from low conversation-oriented families. Perhaps one reason for this finding is that students who grow up in family communication environments that encourage the open exchange of ideas may more easily recognize the appropriateness (or lack thereof) of instructor self-disclosures, as well as what counts as self-disclosure and what does not. According to FCP theory, conversation and conformity orientations create communication structures, or relational schemas, that serve as frames of reference for communicating in other contexts (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Students from conversation oriented families are accustomed to a family environment that is open and that encourages unrestrained interactions, and thus, they may come to expect similar

forms of interaction with their college instructors, particularly given the general purpose of higher education and the role of public deliberation and discourse in communication classes. Likewise, they may possess broader definitions of what constitutes self-disclosure than students from low conversation-oriented families. This, in turn, might explain why students from families who openly share information tend to perceive the instructor as disclosing personal information more frequently.

Similar to the results for conversation orientation, the results also revealed that conformity orientation predicted students' perceptions of the frequency of instructor disclosures (i.e., H7), though conformity also predicted their perceptions of the relevance of instructor disclosures. Although it may be expected based on previous research (Schrodt et al., 2008) that conversation and conformity orientations would be associated with the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures in opposite directions, both orientations yielded positive associations. Consistent with FCP theory, individuals from conformity oriented families develop communication structures within their families that influence the way they may perceive communication in other contexts. Communication within conformity oriented families is characterized by strong parental authority, pressure toward agreement, and family decision-making at the hands of the primary authority figure in the home (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Given such an emphasis on the importance of parental authority in processing information and making decisions, it stands to reason that students from such families adopt similar postures with their instructors. The role of an instructor is to engage students and help them learn, which requires the instructor to share both content-based and (at times) personal information. Because sharing information is one of the most important parts of an instructor's role, instructors may be more prone to be seen by students from families that have a conformity orientation as disclosing

more frequently. These students lack the experience of openly disclosing information in their families, and therefore develop a heightened sensitivity to the open sharing of information. In turn, students may perceive the instructor as disclosing more frequently, particularly due to the incongruent communication structure in their families and in the classroom.

Deferring to the authority (or legitimate power) of a college professor might also help explain why students from high conformity families perceive that their instructors' disclosures are more (rather than less) appropriate. It is important to remember, however, that the effect sizes for both family orientations and dimensions of instructor disclosures were negligible at best. One explanation for these results is that the content of the instructor disclosures, as well as the content of the course, was not accounted for in the research design. It may very well be the case that instructors who teach certain subjects (e.g., mathematics, chemistry, physics, etc.) find little need to self-disclose in the classroom. Given that students reported on instructors who taught a variety of subjects, there may have been fewer opportunities for students to observe private disclosures from their instructors. Likewise, what counts as "disclosure" varies as a function of the content of the messages themselves, and thus, future researchers may extend the present study by examining the content of instructor disclosures and how content interacts with the subject matter to influence perceptions of disclosure appropriateness and relevance.

At the same time, family communication patterns may be more applicable to understanding the frequency of other people's personal disclosures, rather than the actual content of the disclosures. Family communication patterns theory tends to focus on how frequent, spontaneous, and/or constrained interactions are within the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b), yet both the theory and the measure really do not take into account what constitutes an *(ir)relevant* message or an *(in)appropriate* message. Even though a family may have a high

conversation orientation, a family member can openly communicate about a particular topic or disclose personal opinions about said topic, but still disclose information that may be perceived as inappropriate or irrelevant by other family members. This example illustrates that family communication patterns do not necessarily address the content, or depth of disclosures, which may further explain why conversation and conformity orientations are relatively unassociated with students' perceptions of instructor disclosures.

The final hypothesis predicted that privacy orientations would mediate the associations between family communication patterns (i.e., conversation and conformity orientation) and students' perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of instructor disclosures. Because students' privacy orientations were not associated with the perceived relevance and appropriateness of instructor disclosures, this hypothesis was tested using only the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures as the outcome. Although no evidence in support of mediation emerged, family conversation and conformity orientations, as well as privacy orientations, served as small, but meaningful sources of variability in students' perceptions of the frequency of instructor disclosures. Specifically, students who come from high conversation and high conformity oriented families (i.e., consensual families), and who possess relatively low, trait orientations to privacy, are more likely to perceive that their instructors self-disclose in the college classroom. Although the total variance accounted for was modest, this result is meaningful, given that both FCPs and privacy orientations represent trait constructs that were used to predict students' perceptions of a specific communication behavior (i.e., disclosure) within a specific relational context outside of the family (i.e., teacher-student relationships). McCroskey et al. (2004) reasoned that students bring certain characteristics to the college classroom that play a small, but meaningful role in how they interpret classroom behaviors and

engage (or fail to engage) the instructor in the learning process. With the exception of a rather substantial body of research on both trait and state public speaking and communication anxieties, instructional scholars have generally focused on the teacher rather than the student when attempting to understand how communication traits affect the instructional process. To the extent that FCPs and privacy orientations pre-dispose students to interpret the frequency of instructor disclosures in certain ways, the present study provides modest evidence in support of McCroskey et al.'s (2004) line of reasoning.

Theoretical Implications

There are several theoretical implications that are apparent in this study. Petronio (2002) claimed that the most common way to acquire privacy rules is through socialization, particularly through the family environment. First, the findings from this study indicate that conversation and conformity orientations are influential factors in the development of students' privacy orientations. It follows, then, that part of an individual's general orientation to privacy emerges as a function of the communication structures, or relational schemas, developed within the family. This provides further evidence in support of Petronio's claim that individuals' privacy rules are partially cultivated through the communicative patterns and environment established by their families. Second, the minimal support provided for the relationship between privacy orientations and students' perceptions of instructor disclosures indicates that other factors besides privacy orientation may be more influential in their perceptions of instructor disclosures, particularly because privacy orientations only accounted for a small percentage of the variance in the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures. Therefore, students' management of privacy boundaries and privacy rules may have very little to do with their perceptions of their instructors' disclosures in the college classroom.

Finally, McLeod and Chaffee (1972) claimed that the communication environment within the family would influence the various ways in which individuals process information and engage in interactions with other people outside of the family context. This represents one of the central ideas undergirding FCP theory. For instance, researchers have found that family communication patterns are predictive of individuals' communication behaviors in other relational contexts (Orrego & Rodriguez, 2001; Ledbetter, 2010; Koerner & Kitzpatrick, 1997; 2002c). In contrast to this fundamental assumption behind FCP theory, the current study found minimal support for the association between family communication patterns and perceptions of instructor disclosures. Thus, the communication structures developed within the family environment may not be as applicable to the classroom context, though the results for perceptions of disclosure frequency are worth noting. Perhaps the differences between the dynamics in the college classroom and family environments influence students' likelihood of referencing their relational schemas from their family relationships when interpreting their instructor's behaviors in the classroom context. For instance, in high conversation oriented families there is not an emphasis or pressure on maintaining agreement as there is in high conformity oriented families, yet in the classroom, the instructor is typically viewed as the primary authority figure who nevertheless may self-disclose at different points in the semester to help illustrate course concepts. Consequently, the relational schemas, privacy rules, and subsequent privacy orientations that emerge from family relationships may simply be less relevant to how students perceive instructor disclosures and assign meanings to instructor behaviors in the college classroom.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the contributions of this study, the results should be interpreted with caution given the inherent limitations of the research design. No causal claims can be made about the relationships between family communication patterns, privacy orientations, and instructor disclosures due to the correlational nature of the data. Additionally, privacy orientation has typically been researched in social psychological studies, not in communication research. Thus, a modified measure of privacy orientations was created for use in the present study, and this measure may represent another limitation. Future research is needed to further validate the privacy orientation measure used in this report.

Likewise, this study did not assess the content of the instructors' disclosures. Data regarding the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness of the disclosures were collected, but the actual messages that comprised the instructor disclosures were not collected and analyzed. Although students rated whether the disclosures were relevant and appropriate, it did not allow an analysis of the types of disclosures students found to be more or less relevant or appropriate. Instructors may disclose information about a myriad of topics that were not accounted for in this study, and students may possess different thresholds for what they consider appropriate or relevant disclosures. Also, students referenced instructors from a variety of academic disciplines, which could have affected the nature of some instructors' disclosures. The content and information that comprise certain academic disciplines lend themselves more to some instructor disclosures than others. For instance, an instructor in a family psychology class may disclose more intimate personal examples from his or her family experiences as opposed to an instructor in a calculus or physics class. A class in family psychology tends to involve more opportunity for discussion and sharing experiences on behalf of the instructor, yet classes in the hard sciences

and math tend to involve less opportunity strictly based on the nature of the content. Thus, students' perceptions of the frequency, relevance, and appropriateness may vary as a result of the class they referenced. For these reasons (and others), the results should be interpreted with caution.

Researchers should continue to examine the factors that contribute to the development of privacy orientations. The current study supported Petronio's (2002) contention that the family environment is influential in how individuals manage their privacy, yet CPM theory generally neglects the role of personality in determining how individuals manage and respond to private disclosures. In both CPM theory and in this report, privacy orientation is conceptualized as a trait construct, and thus, one reasonable extension of CPM theory would be to explore the potential association between personality and privacy orientations. Additionally, researchers should continue to examine students' privacy orientations in relation to their perceptions of instructor disclosures by altering the research design. Future research should focus on examining one class, with one instructor in order for students to have a consistent experience that they are responding to. This would give researchers more control over the instructor disclosures that students are referencing. In addition, accounting for the content of the disclosures would give the researchers a better understanding of what types of instructor disclosures students find more relevant and appropriate.

Overall, instructional communication scholars should continue to expand their focus on student characteristics that contribute to the instructional communication process between teachers and students. To date, most of the research on instructor disclosures examines the outcomes of such disclosures on factors that promote (or inhibit) student learning. To provide a more complete, theoretical understanding of disclosure processes in classroom environments,

however, researchers should seek to understand the underlying factors that contribute to students' perceptions and evaluations of their instructors. In a small way, the present study contributes to this dearth of research by documenting that privacy orientations and family communication patterns account for small, but meaningful portions of the variance in the perceived frequency of instructor disclosures. Therefore, in order to extend our understanding how instructor self-disclosures impact students and the learning process, future research is needed to better understand other factors that may influence students' perceptions of instructor disclosures.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

1. Please indicate your age: _____ yrs.

2. Please indicate your biological sex: ___ Male   ___ Female

3. Please indicate the answer that best represents your race or ethnicity:

    1. American Indian or Alaska Native
    2. Asian or Pacific Islander
    3. Black or African American
    4. Latino/a or Hispanic
    5. Middle Eastern
    6. White or Caucasian
    7. Other (please specify) _____

4. Which best represents your current classification as a student?

    1. First-year student
    2. Sophomore
    3. Junior
    4. Senior
    5. Graduate Student

5. What is your current grade point average (GPA)? _____

6. If you have declared an academic major, what is your major? _____

Instructions: Complete the following items based on **your perception of privacy**. Use the following scale to indicate whether you strongly disagree or strongly agree.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. People should respect a person's right to be individual and different.
2. It is important to be able to confide in someone and know that your confidence will be kept secret.
3. Even intimate friends should respect your desire to keep certain things to yourself.
4. It is important to me to live where I can do what I want without bothering other people.
5. It is important for a child to have a room of her/his own after s/he reaches a certain age.
6. I would rather live alone than share a two-bedroom apartment with three friends.
7. Although I occasionally enjoy talking to my neighbors, I don't like to get very involved with them.
8. When I really need to find a solution for a problem, I do it best by talking with others rather than working alone.
9. When I have a very important decision to make, I prefer to make it alone.
10. I want my friends to feel that they can drop in at my house any time they like.
11. It annoys me to have people come to my home without letting me know they are coming.

12. I would like to live in a secluded house out of sight of any other houses.
13. I find the constant noise of modern life to be exciting and stimulating.
14. Although I enjoy walking in the woods, I would rather not go alone.
15. I am never happier than when I am alone.
16. I would be happy living all alone in a cabin in the woods.
17. I sometimes want to get away from everyone for a while, even my close friends.
18. It is important to me to be able to be alone when I want to be.
19. Even members of a family need to get away from each other now and then.
20. I like to be home alone where it is peaceful and quiet.
21. I like to be home with nobody else around.
22. I like being in a room by myself.
23. There are times when I really want other people to leave me alone and not intrude on my thoughts even though we're in the same room.
24. Sometimes I like to be alone where I cannot be observed by anyone.
25. I like to be the center of attention in a group.
26. At parties, I am more likely to sit by myself than to join the crowd.
27. I like other people to notice me when I am in public.
28. I would like to live in a large city because neighbors and acquaintances there would be less concerned about my private life.
29. I would not like to live in a small town because there is too much gossip about your private life.
30. I would like to live in a neighborhood where people do things together.
31. I dislike talking about personal matters to a friend in a crowded place where other people can overhear us.
32. I like to meet new people.
33. Whenever possible, I avoid being in a crowd.
34. I would be reluctant to engage in a prolonged conversation with someone I had just met.
35. I don't like to talk about personal things with friends until I have known them a long time.
36. I don't like to sit next to strangers in a crowded bus.
37. I usually don't tell people I don't know very well personal things about myself.
38. I would be very upset if a friend read something I had written without my permission.
39. My personal relations with people are cool and distant.
40. Acquaintances often ask questions that I consider rude and personal.

Instructions: Complete the following items based on your **family environment**. Use the following scale to indicate whether you strongly disagree or strongly agree.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others.
2. When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question.

3. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."

4. In our home, my parents usually have the last word.

5. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.

6. My parents feel that it is important to be the boss.

7. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.

8. My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs.

9. My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of an issue."

10. If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want to know about it.

11. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.

12. I can tell my parents almost anything.

13. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.

14. In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.

15. My parents often say things like "You'll know better when you grow up."

16. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.

17. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.

18. My parents often say things like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."

19. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.

20. My parents often say things like "A child should not argue with adults."

21. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.

22. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.

23. My parents often say things like "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."

24. In our family, we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.

25. My parents often say things like "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad."

26. My parents like to hear my opinion, even when I don't agree with them.

For the remaining items on this questionnaire, please answer the questions while thinking about the instructor you have in the class that meets just before this one. PLEASE THINK OF THE SAME INSTRUCTOR AND THE SAME COURSE for the remainder of the questions.

1. Please indicate the biological sex of the instructor you have selected: ___ Male   ___ Female

2. Please indicate the status of the instructor: Faculty   Graduate teaching Assistant

3. What is the name of the course (please include the course number, if possible) that this instructor teaches? _____

4. What is your reason for taking this course (please circle one)?
       1. It is a required general education course.
       2. It is required for my major.
       3. It is required for my minor.
       4. It is an elective course for my major.
       5. Other (please specify): _____

5. Is this the first time you have taken a course from this instructor? ___ YES   ___NO

6. If you answered NO to question #5, how many other courses have you taken from this instructor? _____

Instructions: Complete the following items about your instructor with whom you have just had a class. Use the following scale to indicate whether you strongly disagree or strongly agree.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. During class, my instructor says things that seem out of place in the conversation.
2. My instructor is a smooth conversationalist.
3. Everything my instructor says during class is appropriate.
4. Occasionally, my instructor's statements make me feel uncomfortable.
5. During class, my instructor's disclosures are very suitable to the situation.
6. Some of the things my instructor says during class are awkward.
7. During class, my instructor's communication is very proper.
8. In class, my instructor says some things that should not be said.
9. I am embarrassed at times by what my instructor shares in class.
10. Some of my instructor's remarks are inappropriate.
11. I am comfortable throughout classroom conversations with my instructor's remarks.
12. Some of the things my instructor has shared in class are in bad taste.
13. None of my instructor's disclosures during class are embarrassing to me.
14. My instructor has disclosed some things that were simply the incorrect things to say.
15. My instructor has not violated any of my expectations with things that s/he has disclosed in class.
16. The way my instructor has disclosed personal information in class is unsuitable.
17. The things my instructor has disclosed about him/herself were all in good taste as far as I'm concerned.
18. Some of my instructor's disclosures were simply improper.

Instructions: Complete the following items about your instructor with whom you have just had a class. Use the following scale to indicate how frequently your instructor engages in the following.

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

1. My instructor expresses his/her beliefs.
2. My instructor reveals personal information about his/her personal life.
3. My instructor often talks about what he/she does on the weekends.
4. My instructor seldom talks about him/herself.
5. My instructor uses his/her family or friends as classroom examples.
6. My instructor often gives his/her opinions about current events.
7. My instructor shares his/her dislikes and likes.
8. My instructor presents his/her attitudes toward events occurring on campus.

9. My instructor discusses his/her feelings.
10. My instructor often talks about him/herself.
11. My instructor often gives personal examples in class.
12. My instructor seldom discusses family or friends.
13. My instructor only discusses class related material.
14. My instructor rarely discusses his/her personal life.
15. My instructor gives his/her opinion about events in the community.
16. My instructor is open with the class about his/her feelings.
17. My instructor often talks about his/her family and friends.
18. My instructor seldom expresses his/her beliefs.

Instructions: Complete the following items about your instructor with whom you have just had a class. Use the following scale to indicate how frequently your instructor engages in the following (never to very often).

Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

1. My instructor uses examples to make the content relevant to me.
2. My instructor provides explanations that make the content relevant to me.
3. My instructor uses exercises or explanations that demonstrate the importance of the content.
4. My instructor explicitly states how the material relates to my career goals or to my life in general.
5. My instructor links content to other areas of content.
6. My instructor asks me to apply content to my own interests.
7. My instructor gives assignments that involve the application of the content to my career interests.
8. My instructor helps me to understand the importance of the content.
9. My instructor uses own experiences to demonstrate or introduce a concept.
10. My instructor uses student experiences to demonstrate or introduce a concept.
11. My instructor uses discussion to help me understand the relevance of the topic.
12. My instructor uses current events when teaching a topic.