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Rules of Interchange: Privacy in Online Social Communities— A Rhetorical Critique of MySpace.Com

by Adam Tyma

Abstract

As online social communities (e.g. MySpace, Facebook) grow in popularity and become commonplace, these same communities also become sites of information exchange through various communication channels (eg. text, visual, aural). With these exchanges occurring either individually or collectively, sets of questions arise regarding the community, the value of information within that community, and how/what/why they choose to communicate what they do within such a space. By applying Sandra Petronio's Communication Privacy Management theory and Michel Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon, a rhetorical critique of user decisions regarding private information within Myspace.Com can be conducted. The knowledge uncovered adds insight into how and why decisions are made in order to become a community member, and why the value of privacy is overshadowed by the value of belonging.

"To tell or not to tell is a condition that we frequently face, yet the question is complicated . . . We are constantly in a balancing act" (Petronio, 2002, p. 1).

Online social communities (OSCs) are becoming more popularized and commonplace everyday. Though the exact number of communities is hard to locate, it is not hard to locate a community that reflects your own thoughts and interests. One such online community is MySpace.com. Started in 2001 and purchased by News Corporation Company in 2005, MySpace is one of the fastest-growing communities in the World Wide Web. Currently boasting approximately 192 million users, the MySpace community is of the most generic type of OSC, existing simply as a place within cyberspace that offers individuals a place to congregate, exchange information, discuss ideas, and create networks. Central to MySpace as a functioning community is the perspective that "information as capital."

With information the primary currency of exchange on MySpace, , providing new personal and sometimes intimate information for anyone to retrieve and inter-

act with, the management of that information by community members is of paramount importance. The purpose of this essay is to explore the rules governing information and privacy management within online social communities (OSC) via a rhetorical critique of MySpace.Com. Sandra Petronio's (2002) communication privacy management theory and Michel Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon will theoretically ground this essay. To accomplish this purpose, first, a review of both Petronio's and Foucault's works and the appropriate applications of these works will be offered. Next, a rhetorical analysis of the rules within the MySpace OSC is presented. Finally, conclusions and directions for future research are provided.

Theoretical Groundings – Petronio and Foucault

Sandra Petronio's CPM Theory and Privacy Management in Online Spaces.

Sandra Petronio's (2002) work, investigating information management, focuses on how information is categorized as public or private by an individual

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who has access to that information and at what level. Based on CPM theory, the proper amount of information retained and released into an interpersonal dyad or public space can provide acceptance into a social organization, the further development of an intimate relationship, or the proper treatment during a medical situation. Conversely, not releasing private information can lead to the opposite; “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” (Petronio, 2002, p. 2). Though there are differences between the privacy issues confronted in face to face versus online interactions, “many of the basic premises of CPM theory likely endure in online privacy management” (Metzger, 2007). Metzger’s (2007) position demonstrates the appropriateness of Petronio’s (2002) work for this project.

Petronio presents five suppositions as a way to organize the rule development process: private information, privacy boundaries, control and ownership, rule-based management system, and privacy management dialectics (Petronio, 2002). Each supposition allows a level of insight into how private information is organized, controlled, and exchanged. By utilizing each of these suppositions as a rhetorical model or strategy, then critiquing the decision-making processes allowed by MySpace, knowledge maybe uncovered regarding why OSC members decide as they do when their own information is involved. Such an application will be explored here.

Some work has been completed utilizing CPM in an online environment. LaRose and Rifon (2007) specifically analyze the privacy statements on 200 e-commerce sites. One of their motivating factors is the move towards a generalized theory of privacy behavior, one that will aid in the understanding of “website information practices” (p. 1012). A primary concern in the authors’ work is that there is no one theory regarding a theory of privacy, as the term “privacy” itself is contested. Among other examples, LaRose and Rifon categorize CPM as a “process of boundary maintenance” (p. 1012). This positioning of CPM as process rather than end-result centered allows the critic an insight into how and why decisions are made, but perhaps not always the end results of those deci-

sions.

Metzger (2006), by engaging CPM through two “recent models of electronic exchange,” looks at how both the online customer and vendor interact with online communication tools when engaging each other in commerce (p. 155). Based on the models, Metzger wanted to understand how trust factored into why online consumers would engage in e-commerce even when many felt it was not a secure system. Metzger suggests that utilizing CPM as a theoretical grounding for this line of research may help researchers in further understanding the decision-making processes around information exchange online.

Metzger (2007), in her analysis of electronic commerce information exchange using CPM theory, moved to understand “the degree to which privacy management strategies identified by CPM . . . operate in the computer-mediated context of e-commerce relational transactions.” Several hypotheses and research questions were tested, looking at how consumers on e-commerce sites exchange their personal information with a commercial organization in order to access it. Her findings suggest that online consumers do, in fact, manage their privacy online by revealing or concealing personal information based on specific rules they establish. Metzger (2007) explains “that similar kinds of balancing dynamics appear to operate in the Web environment as they do in face-to-face situations, thus extending CPM into the domain of CMC,” demonstrating that CPM is an appropriate theoretical position to understand OSCs from. It is the intent here to aid in extending what Metzger has brought to light.

With CPM, we are offered an entry point to aid in the understanding of the rhetorical decisions made by users when revealing or concealing information in an OSC. However, CPM only allows us access to part of the puzzle. We now turn to the work of Michel Foucault to develop a grounding regarding the consequences of adhering or not adhering to the policies and social rules that exist within an OSC.

Michel Foucault’s Panopticon and Information Control.

Michel Foucault’s original 1977 discussion of the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish* has become a foundational tool for understanding the current state of technology—and the user-relationship with technol-

ogy – over the past 15-20 years. Both his original thoughts, as well as those that have applied his theories to technological environments (e.g. Campbell & Carlson, 2002), create an opportunity to help understand how information and privacy are both maintained and co-opted within MySpace. The first aspect of Foucault's work to understand is the Panopticon.

Originally conceived as a penal institution design by Jeremy Bentham in 1791 (Campbell & Carlson, 2002; Foucault, 1995), the Panopticon is engaged by Foucault as a theoretical construct to demonstrate the realities of discipline and control in contemporary society. The prison design itself is initially counter-intuitive: all of the cells within the prison face a central tower in a circle rather than the popularized idea of the "cell block." Once the prisoner is placed within her or his cell, there is an immediate realization that the prisoner is allowed one view. From the vantage point of the prisoner, the only thing that can be seen—that exists—is the guard tower. It is the object that can punish the prisoner into a specific set of right actions by simply appearing to observe the prisoner's behavior, whether or not the behavior was ever observed at all.

In addition to the surveillance of the tower, prisoners also act as surveillors of each other as well. Each level of power is observed by the next, both above and below, ensuring the power relationship and control mechanisms of disciplining behaviors. Foucault (1995) encapsulates the concept when he states "[h]ence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (p. 201).

Foucault (1995) utilizes this architectural design philosophy and expands it into the social norms communities live by. In the case of the prisoner, Foucault reminds us that the prisoner "is seen but he does not see; he is the object of information, never the subject of communication" (p. 200). By this, the prisoner does not communicate with the warden; rather, he only delivers information to the warden and prison guards (the holders of power) information about himself, and the holders of power make judgments and decisions based upon the received information. This exchange of information further disciplines the prisoner into the preferred set of behaviors.

Similarly, Foucault claims that such power is expressed and utilized by those individuals that are in positions of power, ensuring that only certain behaviors and actions are followed within a community. These disciplines are both explicitly and implicitly established and upheld. The community member (the "prisoner") is so concerned that he or she will upset the power holders within a community (the "guards") that, even though there are no police officers observed by the community member at the moment of possible rules violation, the explicit laws of the community are followed. This example not only demonstrates the power of the Panopticon in an official capacity, there are also implicit rules by a social group that are followed in order to ensure a preferred status quo within a community. This two example demonstrates how the Panopticon is not only an architectural design for a prison but also for a community as well, in particular how power not only creates systems but also disciplines individuals.

Campbell and Carlson (2002) examined how marketers use online surveillance in order to increase the results of their advertising. Moving from a political economy position, they assert that the literature has not examined this area as of yet and that Foucault's work can inform the understanding of information exchange as a set of hegemonic discursive practices. In particular, the authors "confront a particularly troublesome aspect of panoptic surveillance – the participation of subjects in their own monitoring" (p. 588). They propose that what has occurred is a commodification of privacy, which moves private information from personal "self" to public commodity, developing an "inequitable power relationship" (p. 591) between the individual user and the e-commerce entity.

The critique of information use and exchange in an online space is a difficult one. Information is not only the commodity exchanged amongst OSC members, but it is also the only way that identity is originally manifested. This discursive process is best understood not only through the construction and maintenance but also the possible consequences. As demonstrated, CPM and Foucault, used in succession, will allow for a rhetorical understanding of this process.

Identifying and Critiquing the Process of Disclosure

CPM and MySpace—Understanding “What” and “How”

“Everywhere we look, there are technological issues that impact privacy . . . Privacy violations are bountiful, and although some are random, whereas others are intentional, their outcomes are difficult to absorb” (Petronio, 2002, p. 224).

CPM is a rule-based theory (Metzger, 2007), one that assists in the understanding of how private information is revealed or concealed. As there is a sequential argument that is developed through rule-based analysis, CPM is utilized rhetorically to explain how information is exchanged. To aid in understanding the consequences of information exchange, and whether or not information is exchanged, CPM is engaged discursively as a disciplining practice.

Managing the Information—MySpace and CPM

Managing information boundaries is necessary for the individual members of MySpace. Understanding how these boundaries are developed and maintained assists in our usage of and insight into this communication phenomenon. Utilizing Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPM) (Petronio, 2002) allows for a unique process-centered analysis of the communication processes inherent to this community.

Initial Boundary Creation and Negotiation. Users of MySpace construct multiple boundary layers around their information, each with its own specific rules and barriers governing information access. The boundaries are constructed after specific decisions are made regarding the user’s profile, in particular what information will be released to the total MySpace community. In addition, as the user has various experiences within the realm of MySpace, these boundaries may be re-negotiated based on what the user hopes to gain or achieve by the posting of a profile.

Distinct rules governing information publishing and exchange are created by both OSC owners (the official rules) and OSC members (the social norms). A key decision at this point is whether or not to allow a profile to be considered public or private. This boundary surrounding the information is tight and non-permeable, allowing for total control of the information by the user. At this point, per supposition one, everything contained within the boundary is private information,

only accessible by the user (Petronio, 2002). No decisions have been made to determine what information is going to be released to the community, nor have rules been established for exchange of information once a decision is made. Developing a MySpace profile starts with the invention of the actual profile. Rhetorically, the arguments surrounding this decision are key, as they will ground the initial rules constructed by the user, though these rules do change once the profile is created. As in other online communities, there are essential pieces of information that are collected by the service provider to open the user account.

Once the user begins to relinquish her or his information, new boundaries are formed and new community information is presented to the user through multiple channels (e.g. email, comments, bulletins, friends). This exchange of information demonstrates the permeability of the MySpace information boundaries as well as the social rules and norms that govern the availability and exchange of information. As the user publishes more and more of her or his personal information (through emails, comments, weblogs, interest groups, bulletins) to the community, the community presents more and more of itself to the user. It is this continual exchange of information that further renegotiates the individual user’s information boundary rules, allowing for near-seamless access to a majority of the information published by the user for the OSC.

Supposition one: Private information. Boundary establishment focuses on one thing—the control of private information. In MySpace, private information is relinquished almost immediately in order to gain entry. The user finds her or his information being requested or viewed through a variety of perspectives, resulting in the private information being contained in several boundaries simultaneously. This shift in information ownership from the individual to the community moves the user into a position where boundaries around her or his information must be recognized as needing boundaries.

Intimacies can form within the MySpace community through this control and exchange of information, similar to what is experienced during other information exchange experiences (Petronio, 2002). As intimacies develop, more information is exchanged in order to maintain and enhance the relationship (Henderson and Gilding, 2004; Turkle, 1995). The amount

of information exchanged, therefore, is socially linked to not only the level of engagement with the OSC but also with the level of perceived intimacy.

Supposition two: Privacy boundaries. Both collective as well as personal boundaries are established and maintained simultaneously by the various users of MySpace. The decision-making processes required to manage the privacy boundaries, and the rules created to coordinate the management, can be affected not only by what the individual user and owner of the information is hoping to accomplish with her or his information but also by other users that are accessing – or attempting to access – the user’s information as well.

One decision that needs to be made within the OSC is that of “the friend.” The “friend” designation is rhetorically a polysemic position within the user profile. If the user has chosen to designate her or his profile as “private,” those that are accepted as a friend are able to access all of the information that is presented by user, developing a permeable boundary between the user and her or his friends. The single question, “who will have access to my information,” is answered by the user when he or she accepts or rejects a friend request from another OSC member.

Supposition three: Control and ownership. Each user of MySpace makes continuous decisions regarding the amount of information he or she makes public. What the user may not so readily consider is how others OSC members will use the information once it is in the community. Looking at the exchange of information as a way to become part of a larger whole and considering information exchange decisions by users through the lens of a unified boundary coordination (Petronio, 2002) may aid in the further understanding of this practice.

The individual user realizes that there are risks in releasing personal information to a public space (Petronio, 2002, p. 10). It is this dialectic tension that exists between the concealing and revealing of private information that is continually negotiated. If the potential return on the exchange of information is deemed higher than the potential risk, CPM contends that the user will reveal the information, further allowing her or his identity to be observed and commented on by others within the community.

Information control is always in the hands of the user. Except for the basic information revealed during the user registration, everything else about the user is initially considered private, contained by a thick boundary (Petronio, 2002). Once the user begins developing and customizing her or his profile, these boundaries move from thick to transparent, simultaneously allowing information out as the user takes more information about other users in.

Supposition four: Rule based management system. The coordination or rules between individual and collective owners of the information on MySpace exist at both a formal and informal level. Formally, the creators of MySpace detail the rules. The privacy statement for MySpace details how user information can and cannot be used by others within the MySpace community. The official rules are available for all to review. It is unclear if the majority of MySpace community members actually review the privacy rules as a user simply needs to agree to the privacy statement, not actually review it. Even so, the formalized structure does exist so that all members of the community are aware of expectations.

Informally, social norms govern the use of information within and outside MySpace. A MySpace profile can list many things about an individual. The age, gender, and location of the user are the most common attributes published about all users, whether or not their profiles are marked public or private. One attribute, for example, is what the user is “looking for” when he or she has created the profile. This information is reported as: “Friend,” “Networking,” “Relationship,” “Dating,” or others. By listing this information, others can “Browse” through profiles and send messages to those people that may be “looking for” similar experiences. By not listing this information, the user is able to avoid such possible conversations. This process is an example of boundary control practiced by the user.

Rule turbulence (Petronio, 2002) develops when certain profile expectations are not met (e.g. posting pictures; keeping a profile current). There are unwritten expectations that individual user profiles should be complete so other community members are able to appropriately determine the profile’s worth within the community. Petronio (2002) points out that rule coordination comes from a combination of defined rules for all parties as well as the negotiation of those

rules. It is this coordination that calms possible turbulent situations. In order to exist within the community appropriately, the user must coordinate her or his own privacy rules with the expectations (both formal and informal) of the OSC.

Supposition five: Privacy management dialectics.

Each of the previous suppositions points towards the key dialectic tension that exist within MySpace—the desire to conceal personal information in opposition to revealing of personal information for community gain. Though an either/or approach is often looked for, it is impossible to sit on the extremes of the dialectic (Petronio, 2002). MySpace requires a certain level of information exchange in order for the individual user to become part of the community. It is up to the user to determine exactly how to negotiate this dialectic continuum for their personal benefit. Figure 1 demonstrates various degrees of information that can be exchanged through MySpace and where each information reveal might sit on the dialectic continuum.

At the left end of the continuum, no information is released since a profile has not been created. As the continuum is moved through, there is only a certain amount of information that can be released through the prescribed format of a MySpace profile. Figure 1 demonstrates that, at a certain point, the continuum is expanded past what MySpace provides within its profile templates and into customizations that can be completed with the assistance of third party software. It is difficult to determine at what point MySpace will stop a profile from existing, but it does monitor for items that are considered “unacceptable,” illustrated at the far right of the continuum. This will normally result in the profile being suspended or closed com-

pletely (MySpace.Com, 2007b).

The user negotiates this dialectic tension by balancing her or his personal beliefs, the social norms of the user’s face-to-face environment, the official rules of MySpace, and the OSC norms dictated by other members of MySpace. These OSC norms are made known through observing what information is supplied by other members. This dialectic tension is further negotiated as the user determines how else the MySpace profile can translate the user’s identity.

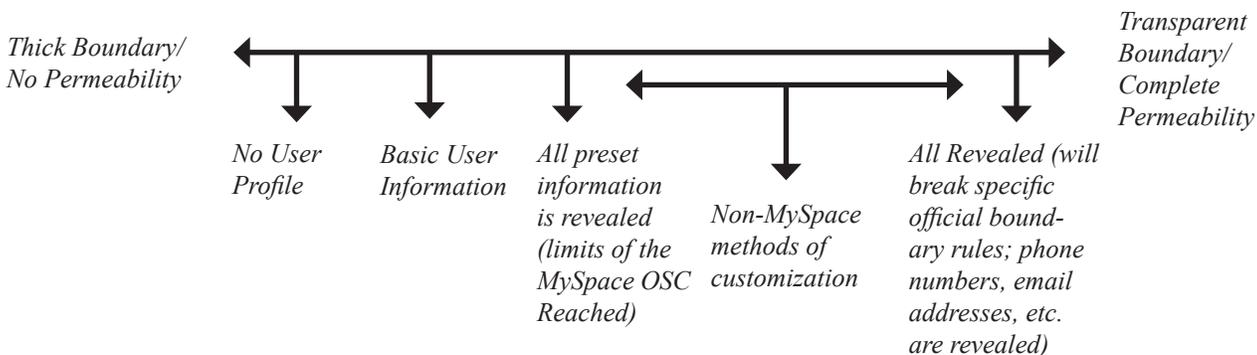
This section has applied the five suppositions of CPM presented by Petronio (2002) to analyze MySpace user profiles and decision-making processes. The overall conclusions via a CPM-informed paradigm point the researcher towards a way of understanding rhetorically why individuals will allow their private information to be commodified and exchanged, for access to an on-line social community. Now that the decision-making process has been evaluated, the possible consequences of that commodification need to also be interrogated.

Foucault and MySpace—The Consequences of Membership

“The seeing machine was once a sort of dark room into which individuals spied; it has become a transparent building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole” (Foucault, 1995, p. 207).

As online social communities develop and flourish, the position of the individual within a community that is truly discursively constructed is one that needs to be understood. One method to further this understanding is to examine not just the how and why a commu-

Figure 1. Conceal-reveal continuum



nity member's private information is presented to the community. A critique of the official rules and social norms of the community, and in particular the resultant effect of those controlling technologies on the member is necessary. Michel Foucault's work on understanding the origins of power regimes constructed by discourse allows us an entry point into this particular phenomenon.

The initial choice made by the user is, again, whether or not to become a member of the community. There are distinct advantages to membership—access to information and extension of personal social networks among them. The individual user must weigh out the advantages and disadvantages of this type of information exchange (Metzger, 2007). Once the decision is made, and the individual chooses to become a voluntary member of the OSC, the disciplining of the user begins.

In the case of MySpace, the processes that present user information in exchange for community access occur in both formal and informal ways, similar to how boundaries become permeable (Petronio, 2002, p. 31). As the prisoner is the receiver and purveyor of information within the prison system, so too is the MySpace member the explicit and implicit sender and receiver of social and official rules of conduct within the community. These rules include what kind of information can and cannot be published, what are considered appropriate uses for MySpace, or who may or may not become part of MySpace. The position of the user is one of disciplined community member, disciplined by not only her or his own rules of information revelation or concealment but also the policies of the OSC.

Explicitly, the new user's personal information must be released across a firm boundary in order for the status quo of the community to be maintained. As object rather than subject, the prospective user becomes part of the global community, and only through the additional release of appropriate information can her or his own semi-unique identity be established and maintained within MySpace (Henderson & Gilding, 2004; Turkle, 1995). This exchange of private information for personalized access further maintains the disciplining systems within the community. The process of information exchange reconstitutes boundaries around multiple groups and subgroups of users, giving the

ultimate power over user information to the power regime rather than the user.

The self-surveillance of individual users within the MySpace OSC is quite similar to that of the prisoners within the prison. Users interact with other community members by visiting their profiles, emailing or instant messaging the other members, posting comments on the user's profiles, or reading the other users' blogs. During the interactions, individual users learn the social norms through observation and replication. Comments that are acceptable are viewed, while others are not observed. Social cues about who is and who is not welcome to contact or comment are internalized into the user's daily practices. The user is disciplined into specific behaviors, monitoring herself or himself to ensure that he or she is following those rules, and is offended by those who would not follow the rules. The ability to report another user always exists. If the user is concerned enough for the well being of the community, they simply contact the governing force within MySpace – “The gaze is alert everywhere” (Foucault, 1995, p 195).

Guarantees to the safety of the user's information do exist. The privacy statement published by MySpace ensures that malicious use of user information is neither approved by MySpace nor those that work for MySpace (MySpace, 2007a). At the same time, the privacy statement also dictates that the information collected by MySpace can be used to specifically market to the user. Of course, only the products that are owned by or have agreements with MySpace are able to do this, a rather large number of entities, as News Corporation Company owns MySpace. In this virtual reality, it is impossible to know all of the information owners, reflecting Campbell and Carlson's (2002) concerns that no one can identify all of the guards in the prison. Co-ownerships of information, along with the boundaries that are negotiated around the information once considered private and known only to the user, are murky and abstract, difficult to locate and definitively identify.

Information in the MySpace OSC is key. It is the user's information that gives shape and structure to the geography of MySpace. Without it, MySpace does not function as an information-centered community. It is up to the user to allow her or his information to move from the private, fixed boundary to the public perme-

able boundary. This is controlled by the user but can be governed through the disciplining practices within the OSC. The individual user is surveilled by any number of random or specific users in order to ensure that proper social norms are being adhered to and reproduced. Noncompliance to the rules of information availability results in a change of status within the MySpace OSC. The privacy and boundary rules of the community punish the prospective user, only giving access to the user if he or she becomes compliant to the rules of the community, further disciplining the user into social norm adherence.

The Panopticon is not a physical structure, at least not in the MySpace OSC. It is, though, a system of disciplining practices that individual members of the community adhere to in order to ensure their place amongst the community. Similar to an offline organization, the online social community expresses specific expectations of its members in order to ensure cohesion. The Panopticon as a metaphor presents these disciplining rules, demonstrating how they not only come from the power regime that discursively constructs the reality but also from the user's own internal expectations and – perhaps more importantly – desires to become part of the OSC. The user disciplines herself or himself through the reconstituting of the information management boundaries, allowing the only thing that constructs the self within an OSC, information, to be commodified and exchanged, allowing for total disciplining of the self into a docile body.

Concluding Thoughts

CPM theory and the Panopticon metaphor have allowed for a critique of two aspects of membership within an online social community, in this case MySpace.Com.

This is significant to the field as CPM theory has not been applied rhetorically to online privacy. CPM theory can do more than allow for a decision-making process to be recognized. It can also aid the researcher in locating places where certain decisions may have consequences within the online space, where other paralanguage is not possible. Additionally, the use of CPM theory in concert with the Panopticon metaphor provides insight into the power structures that govern what information is kept private, made public, and co-opted for the use of the dominant regime.

The combination of social scientific and critical theoretical positions helps to uncover collectively what neither are able to do independently. Through the utilization of CPM theory as a rhetorical lens, the decision-making process for an individual user can be recognized. The five suppositions presented demonstrate how private information is categorized and placed within distinct boundaries when the user first enters the OSC. Control of those boundaries and the ownership of the information within is then negotiated based upon what the user wishes to gain from entry into the OSC versus what the OSC requires of its members in order to become community members. As this negotiation process occurs, the rules along with the information boundaries are continually being reconstituted. Decisions are always being made about that the user wants or does not want from part or all of the OSC. Each decision is based rhetorically on the dialectic tensions that the user must balance in order to ensure that perceived equilibrium is being maintained for all involved parties.

The use the Panopticon metaphor allows for us to move underneath the processes the user engages in and to understand the power relationships that dictate the decisions the user makes. The OSC structure is networked, without any perceivable core or tower, yet one does exist. The core is discursively constructed through the “right” practices engaged in by the members as dictated not only vertically from the dominant power regime but also horizontally by the disciplined members themselves. Because information is not only exchanged but also constructs everything within an online space, looking at the OSC as a discursive and rhetorical construct allows for an understanding into the ramifications of the decision-making processes engaged by OSC members. Even though this work is theoretically illuminating, there are limitations to this project.

The first limitations are those that are inherent to rhetorical critique. There are as many experiences and interpretations of the space as there are users, meaning that the discussions here are not generalizable to the entire community. Further research into privacy and boundary concerns within MySpace is encouraged, particularly if done so through both interviews (qualitative inquiry) and measurement tool development and deployment (quantitative inquiry).

Second, the use of CPM's analysis of information management and control through communication boundaries and Foucault's discussions of surveillance allow for the uncovering of specific pieces of knowledge concerning the communicative properties of MySpace and, at a broader level, online social communities as a whole. Analysis of the interpersonal relationships that develop and are maintained, the organizational and macro-level constructions that exist within the online community, and comparisons to face-to-face social communication experiences will further aid in a holistic understanding of the MySpace community.

Finally, a critical understanding of the messages presented through and by MySpace must be developed. The creation of supposed personalized messages as promotion by individual users and commercial entities, a conscious move to sell identity as "product," presents significant issues for those sending the message as well as those receiving the messages. From a macro-level, the change in ownership of MySpace to News Corp. presents critics with an interesting opportunity to see what happens when a social space is co-opted and used as a marketing tool for specific products.

Both Communication Privacy Management Theory and the work of Michel Foucault separately give an insight into the information management and maintenance enacted by users of the MySpace online community. CPM helps to explain why certain decisions are made about information containment and exchange and may aid in answering the question "why will users make their private information public in MySpace when they may not do the same in a real-time environment?" Foucault's discussions of the Panopticon helps to make more clear the cultural behaviors and norms that are reproduced and institutionalized (Morgan, 1997) within MySpace. Combined, these two perspectives allow the researcher an insight into the value of private information, why it may be so readily exchanged by users, and what makes the concept of private information exchange in the online environment different from, and much easier to accept than in the real world. Information ownership is no longer in the hands of the few but, as the boundaries that surround information become more and more transparent, the information is no longer contained by the policies and practices in place and is owned by any who want to find it.

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