

“You looked better on MySpace”:
Deception and authenticity on the Web (2.0)

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While researchers have long noted that relationships formed *online* often migrate *offline* and develop into face-to-face (FtF) relationships (Parks & Floyd, 2002; Rheingold, 1993; Bruckman, 1992), the line between cyberspace and physical space is increasingly blurred with the emergence of social networking sites (SNSs). SNSs, websites that support both the maintenance of existing social ties and the development of new social ties (boyd & Ellison, 2007), enable users to create profiles which, in theory, accurately portray the user’s offline self, thus facilitating mixed-mode relationships that are maintained through multiple communication channels (i.e. both online and FtF). As such, there is an expectation that one’s online self matches one’s offline self. As we will see, there may be consequences for the SNS user when this expectation is not fulfilled.

In their attempt to accurately represent a user’s offline self SNS profiles often showcase a picture of the user¹. When two people have formed a connection through the site, but have yet to develop an offline relationship, this image may be the best indication of a user’s corporeal, offline, appearance. Understandably, users attempt to choose a photograph that puts their appearance in the best light, so to speak; however, a line has been drawn distinguishing “accurate” representations from “deceptive” representations in response to a particular style of photograph commonly featured on social networking profiles, a style referred to as “MySpace Angles” in reference to the particular SNS on which the style originated, and the technique employed to create these images.

¹ Users are not required to post photographs of themselves. Many choose to post photographs of friends, places, pets etc., or post non-photographic images such as drawings. Still others do not choose to upload any image at all. That being said, the expectation is that the image portrays the user. Consequently this type of image is the focus of this paper.

According to one SNS user and blogger, “MySpace angles are pictures taken in specific angles that make unattractive people appear attractive. Thereby fooling us all.” (“Beware”, 2007). Generally self-portraits taken with the photographer/subject’s arm outstretched above eye level, this style of portraiture, allegedly, makes the user appear especially attractive due to perspective and scope obtained from holding the camera above one’s head. MySpace Angles are further characterized by the poses struck, the facial expressions formed and the hand gestures made.

The unreceptive response to this trend, expressed online via websites that allow users to post their reactions in the form of user-generated content (UGC) such as videos (e.g. *YouTube*), text (e.g. blog postings, wikis), and images (e.g. *Flickr*), displays a shift in what behaviors are considered “deceptive” online. Formerly a label applied to users who lied about their identity in fundamental ways, pretending they were someone they were not (Donath, 1999; Van Gelder, 1996, Bruckman, 1993), users whose online self does not closely approximate their “actual self”² are now labeled deceptive.

This paper examines the reaction to the MySpace Angle phenomenon, asking how the policing of this practice informs our understanding of which online behaviors are considered deceptive, and further, how these transgressions inform our understanding of social norms on today’s (social) web. This case study approach utilizes a close reading analysis of the commentary surrounding this content (found on UGC websites such as *YouTube*, *Flickr*, and *Urban Dictionary*, as well as numerous personal blog postings), focusing not on users’

² Higgins (1987) differentiates between the “actual” self and the “ideal” and “ought” selves. The ideal self is the self an individual strives to be, for internal reward while the ought self is the self an individual strives to project in order to gain reward or avoid punishment from others.

motivations to engage in impression management³, but on the expectations for representation of the offline self held by SNS users and the particular features of MySpace Angles that violate these assumptions.

This close reading reveals three main themes in users' critique of MySpace Angles: 1) users who post these photographs are conforming to a social trend at the expense of their individuality, 2) the presentation of these photographs is narcissistic, and 3) these photographs purposefully conceal the body. These reoccurring critiques of MySpace Angles reveal that on Web 2.0, a web characterized by social media such as SNSs, users must be authentic, that is to say, their online self must approximate the offline self to the best of users' abilities. Furthermore, this presentation of the authentic, offline self must be effortless, not deliberately manufactured. Lastly, the hostility towards users who do not show their entire bodies shows that SNS users are now anchored to these bodies. The assumed division between the online self and the embodied self is eradicated as the online/offline boundary is increasingly challenged by the practice of presenting the self through SNS profiles, and by the migration of online relationships offline.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, this paper defines MySpace angles, explaining what it means for an image to be labeled a "MySpace Angle" photograph, both in terms of portraiture style and also how these photographs are viewed by SNS users. Next, the way in which MySpace Angles are policed by SNS users is presented. Following this, users' commentary on MySpace Angles is analyzed through a close reading of MySpace Angle commentary on the Web. Finally, this paper discusses the way in which the themes evident in this case study, the response to MySpace Angles, support and/or challenge existing theories of

³ See Baumeister, 1982; Schlenker, 1980; Goffman, 1959 for discussions of these motivations for impression management

deception and authenticity on the web after a review of current theories of authentic and deceptive presentations of the self online.

MySpace Angles

“MySpace Angles” are a style of photograph primarily showcased on SNS profiles (originally on the SNS “MySpace” but not exclusive to this particular site). These photographs are normally self-portraits taken by holding the camera above one’s head. Because the camera is only at arm’s length the subject fills the entire frame, though it is the face that is featured most prominently — due to foreshortening the subject’s body appears small relative to the face (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A “MySpace Angle” Photograph



Source: www.cheapshooter.com

Beyond the fundamental MySpace Angle techniques there are a variety of genres characterized by the facial expressions, hand gestures, and poses taken by the subjects. For instance, in “the Asian” the subject forms a “peace sign” hand gesture and smiles (“MySpace Angles”, 2007), while in “the shocked pose” the subject acts as if surprised to find that their

picture is being taken (though, comically, they themselves are the photographer) (see Figure 2). Other genres include “the thug”, “the emo pose” and “the kissy face”.

Figure 2. “The shocked pose”



Source: hyperionkp.com

On the surface it seems that “MySpace Angles” are simply a popular style of portraiture, just as head-shots are conventionally used for yearbook photos, identification cards, etc.; however, a cursory exploration into the way in which this style is defined by SNS users shows that many do not see the practice of taking a MySpace Angle photo as benign — some even going as far as to call MySpace Angles “an Internet disease” (“Those Damn MySpace Angles”, n.d.). Under *The Urban Dictionary*’s entry on “MySpace Angle” is the following definition:

Originating from the myspace community, this term has come into common use to describe a style of photography used to make unattractive people appear attractive, often by positioning the camera at strange angles and using extreme-close ups. It is quite popular on myspace user profiles, in an attempt to hide fat and other undesired features from the camera and fool others into thinking the person is really attractive (“MySpace Angles”, n.d.).

Consistently, users’ reactions to MySpace Angles assert that the display of these photographs as an indication of physical appearance is deceptive. This rhetoric of deception suggests that the use of these images is a deliberate attempt to “fool,” “trick,” or “deceive” SNS

users into think the subject is attractive offline. One blogger's post on MySpace Angles is accompanied by a picture of Disney's Pinocchio ("Those Damn MySpace Angles", n.d.). This "MySpace Voodoo" is seen as "dishonest," "disingenuous," and "misrepresentative" ("MySpace Voodoo", 2007; "Avatars: Part II of III", 2009; "Random Musings", n.d.).

MySpace angle photographs are not exclusively taken or displayed by women (staringbutnotseeing, 2007). In fact, the use of Angle techniques is often employed by men; however, the policing of this practice (particularly the criticism and practice of uncovering unflattering picture of MySpace Angle adopters) is primarily carried out by men who are appraising women, with the exception of satire videos that are predominantly made by women. One possible reason that this may be the case is that (in dating scenarios) men are often seeking youth and attractiveness above all other traits (Lynn & Bolig, 1985), while women promote their attractiveness more than men (Ahuvia & Adelman, 1992; Hirschman, 1987). Women may mock the use of this practice by other women out of anger that others are making themselves look better through the use of photographic techniques.

Policing MySpace Angles

Apparently, those who post these photographs cannot expect to get away with this perceived deception. As one commenter wrote in response to a particularly scathing critique of MySpace Angles, "If people are going to post deceiving pics of themselves then be prepared to accept the consequences when they come along" ("Beware", 2007). The policing of this transgression is carried out in three ways: criticism, satire, and by exposing non-MySpace Angle pictures (e.g. zoomed out and taken at eye level) to reveal one's "true appearance".

Criticism

Criticism of MySpace Angles can be found on countless personal blog postings, in video commentaries, and on sites such as *Urban Dictionary* that define trends. Commentary on MySpace Angles directly criticizes the practice in many different ways. Some liken those who post these photos to criminals; calling them “Angle felons” (“She’s got MySpace Angles”, n.d.). Others write about the use of these angles as if they were a communicable disease rather than a social trend. One blogger writes, “MySpace angles are an Internet disease that was created in the MySpace community and has infested the entire online community” (“Those Damn MySpace Angles”, n.d.) while an independent film features two young men talking about how a girl whose profile they are viewing “has the Angles” (Lehre, 2006). There is even a guide to “Internet diseases” that includes “Polangleio: In which the inflicted, from taking so many photos from myspace angle, are now missing necks *Infected Regions: Myspace, Buzznet, Facebook*” (“Dr. Ikky”, n.d.). Lastly, some users don’t make any attempt at wit, simply ranting about how MySpace Angles are used to hide “ugly faces, fat, etc” (“Urban Dictionary”, n.d.).

Satire

Satires, “wit, irony, or sarcasm used to expose and discredit vice or folly” are criticism in their own right, even when the commentator’s negative opinion of MySpace Angles is not directly stated (“Satire”, 2009). However, the satire policing stands apart from criticism expressed directly, as the mechanisms discouraging the use of MySpace Angles differ. In satire MySpace angles are mocked, thereby stigmatizing the behavior. These satires come in many forms, but all serve to discourage SNS users from posting Angles pictures by parodying these photographs.

One form of satire is the “how-to guide”. In these guides users explain to readers/viewers what MySpace Angle photographs are and how to create them, demonstrating the way in which the camera should be held, hair should be styled, etc. (see Figure 3; “How to take the perfect profile pic”, n.d.). While some may sincerely aim to educate others on how to create these photographs, many are actually ridiculing Angles, for example by showing how one must go to such great lengths to take a picture that claims to have been taken in haste.

Figure 3. A MySpace Angles how-to video



Source: YouTube.com

Other forms of satire include posting Angles pictures of oneself along with captions that make clear that the poster does not think this method is a legitimate style of portraiture (see Figure 4), as well as taking pictures of animals and inanimate objects in MySpace Angles style (“Emocat”, 2007). Lastly, some users choose to proclaim that they do not need Angles to make themselves look attractive. One MySpace member’s username, “The myspace angles are lame when u look like this” conveys this sentiment (“Myspace angles are lame”, n.d.). In addition, some users choose to post videos in which they hold up a sign with their SNS profile web

address, holding the camera from at least four angles to show that they are not afraid of having their appearance judged from multiple angles (JAamaro, 2007).

Figure 4. Satirical MySpace Angles



Source: Flickr.com

Lastly, in *MySpace: the Movie*, a short independent film on social situations that arise out of interaction on MySpace parodies Angles. The film follows a MySpace user as he arranges to meet a girl whose profile he has viewed offline (despite his friend’s warning that “she’s got ‘the Angles’”). When he arrives he finds out that FtF she (the character is played by a man) is unattractive, resembling, as they note, a Yeti.

Exposing Angles Users

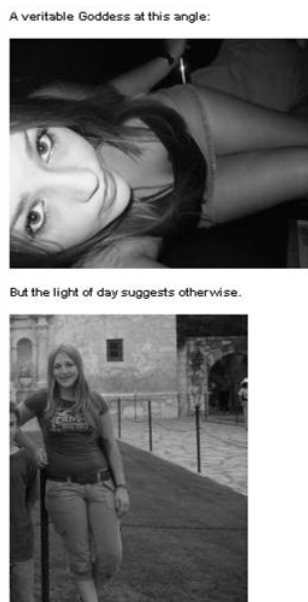
Lastly, users police the use of MySpace Angles by uncovering photographs of users in which Angles are not employed, photographs that supposedly more closely resemble the user’s true physical appearance. This watchdog activity is often accomplished by scouring friends’ photo albums for other photographs in which the user is “tagged” (identified as being present in the photo). One particular blog post, titled “Beware of the Dreaded ‘MySpace Angles!’”, received a great deal of attention, both online and offline. The author (not indicated) alleges to expose women who have used Angles to make themselves look better than they do offline in an attempt

to trick men into meeting them FtF. The author claims to see the work he has done to uncover more “objective” depictions of physical appearance as a service, introducing the post by explaining:

The MySpace Angles phenomenon isn't one that is new but is a growing concern for men, young and old, across the globe. Photography-savvy young ladies are utilizing crafty camera angles and even photo software to weave a type of black magic onto their likenesses that would rival even the most forgiving Glamour Shots photographers of the old days. These crafty ladies will bend and conform themselves precariously to just the right position to hide those multiple chins, unsightly bulges, and possibly even hooves in the attempt to rope in unsuspecting victims across the World Wide Web. (“Beware”, 2007)

After issuing this warning justification is given as to why these women must be publicly exposed the post goes on to contrast a series of MySpace Angle pictures with non-Angles pictures of the same person (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. MySpace Angle Reveal



Source: OfficialDatingResource.com

Themes in the User Response to MySpace Angles

There are three main themes that emerge in the MySpace Angles commentary: 1) users who post these photographs are conforming to a social trend at the expense of their individuality, 2) the presentation of these photographs is narcissistic, and 3) these photographs conceal the body. Each will be expounded here, including a discussion of the ways in which these criticisms reveal the social norms on SNSs that MySpace Angles breach.

User Reaction #1: MySpace Angles Posters are Conformists

Often, when users condemn the use of MySpace Angles their specific criticism is that using MySpace angles is a sign of conformity — that the people who take these pictures are succumbing to social pressure to the extent that they are not displaying an individual, authentic online self. This criticism is most often expressed in satire, as the critic depicts the formulaic process that is undergone to create a MySpace Angle picture.

In one how-to video the creator strikes his MySpace Angles pose, quipping, “It’s so artistic. I can’t even imagine doing anything more artistic than this. Who could ever think of doing MySpace Angles like this?” (omfgjohnstube, 2007).

Often, it is the predictability of the poses that is mocked, the fact that known genres of MySpace Angles exist. One blogger runs through the gamut of MySpace Angle varieties, displaying his version of each in an insincere attempt to find a profile picture that shows him at his best (“Pete’s Big MySpace Adventure”, 2006), while many other users create YouTube videos that similarly inform the viewer about the many genres in play (staringbutnotseeing, 2007).

User Reaction #2: MySpace Angles Display Narcissism

Secondly, users criticize the alleged narcissism a MySpace Angle photograph reveals. Commenting on an Angles picture of her friend one user captions the photograph: “Look at me, I’m so pretty”, projecting her opinion of what a subject is thinking when taking an Angles picture (“The Racialicious Roundtable”, 2009).

Others point to how the act of taking these photographs (as opposed to the posting of photos) displays narcissism. Mocking this act *MySpace: the Movie* shows a young man mortified when his mom catches him admiring his body in the bathroom mirror, looking for his best features to highlight in his MySpace Angles photograph.

Lastly, users often point out that the great lengths users go to in the search for the best profile picture is evidence that the user is superficial. Otherwise, why would they place so much emphasis on their physical appearance? One commenter asks, “When someone goes to great lengths to physically misrepresent themselves, please tell me, who is catering to shallowness?” (“Beware”, 2007).

User Reaction #3: MySpace Angles Conceal the Body

While the previous two criticisms, that MySpace Angles display narcissism and conformity, frequently emerge in MySpace Angle commentary most often discussed is the fact that Angles are misrepresentative because they conceal or distort the body, making the subject appear thinner than they are. These weight specific comments are numerous. One *Urban Dictionary* user defines MySpace Angles as, “there’s more than meets the eye” while the majority of users exposed for using angles to make themselves look more attractive are simply overweight, as the picture comments make clear (e.g. “...you may be biting off more than you can chew!”) (“Urban Dictionary”, n.d.; “Beware”, 2007). As one user notes on the discussion

board of the “Beware” blog post, seven of the ten women exposed were simply heavier than their MySpace Angle picture, showing only their face and foreshortened body (“Beware”, 2007).

In a discussion of MySpace Angle phenomenon on their popular radio show “shock jocks” Opie and Anthony coin the term “MySpace Iceberg”- “90 percent you can’t see. That’s the dangerous part” (“MySpace Voodoo”, 2007). While a blog commenter dubs Angle users “Secret Internet Fattie (SIF)” (“Beware”, 2007). On the message board of online dating site *OkCupid* one user writes:

“I don’t like myspace angles. It shows me that a girl is hiding *something* (usually weight). I know its [*sic*] taken for convenience, but I WANT a picture of your full torso regardless of how much you weight (who knows if your curves may be in the right places...or not). I provide one and so should girls too!” (“OKCupid”, 2008).

Commentators often liken Angles users revealed to be overweight to animals such as cows and whales. One simply writes “Man the harpoons!!!” (“Revenge”, 2007). Another writes, “Fat girls should be banned, we should have like ad blockers or something to protect our browsers from those white whales.” (“Beware”, 2007). Lastly, a commentator notes what may be concealed by a MySpace Angle picture: “multiple chins, unsightly bulges, and possibly even hooves” (“Beware”, 2007)

SNS Social Norms

In criticizing anti-normative behavior this commentary reveals social norms implicitly present in SNS communities that have been violated. Specifically, it is evident that SNS users must present their “authentic” selves, or at least, strive to minimize the disconnect between the online self and the offline self. However, this presentation of the online self must be effortless – to manufacture an online identity with the intent to please the online audience is disparaged as

the division between online and offline is considered tenuous. Furthermore, presentation of the “ideal self”, the self one wishes to be, is seen as unfair to those who may be looking to meet offline. Rather, facets of one’s identity that become apparent during a FtF meeting (e.g. weight) must be disclosed beforehand.

Current Theories of Deception and Authenticity Online

Self-Presentation on SNSs

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) changes the way in which the self is presented to others. As Pearson (2009) notes, “The mediated nature of [online social networks] means that most information about the virtual self and its place in the network is given through deliberate construction of signs” (p.2). That is, by virtue of the fact that communication is mediated, rather than FtF, the presentation of the self is manufactured to a greater extent than during offline interaction. For one, CMC is often asynchronous (unlike FtF interaction), affording the user greater control over how the self is presented (Trevino & Webster, 1992). Furthermore, CMC also minimizes the expression of nonverbal cues thus making self presentation online less subject to unintentional cues (Walther, 1996).

In his seminal work on presentation of the self Erving Goffman drew a distinction between those expressions that that are directly “given” (through language or gesture) and those that are unintentionally or involuntarily “given-off” (Goffman, 1959). Ellison, Heino and Gibbs, (2006) note that in Goffman’s terms, “more expressions of self are ‘given’ rather than ‘given off’” in the context of CMC due to what the authors call the “selective self-presentation affordances” of CMC (p.3).

Naturally, this greater control over self-presentation CMC affords does not dictate that users exercise the option to present an online self entirely removed from the actual self; rather, users must also balance the desire to put their best foot forward with a desire to minimize the discrepancy perceived between the selves during a FtF meeting, a desire to present an accurate self (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006). Accordingly, the prospect of meeting someone FtF may influence one to portray a more accurate online identity (Gibbs et al., 2006).

Deception Online

Traditionally, it has been assumed that a lack of corporeal presence allows for deception to occur online (Donath, 1999; Stone, 1996; Rheingold, 1993). Stone (1996) notes, “The body in question sits at a computer terminal somewhere, but the locus of sociality that would in an older dispensation be associated with this body goes on in a space which is quite irrelevant to it.”

(p.43) while Donath similarly remarks:

The virtual world is different. It is composed of information rather than matter. Information spreads and diffuses; there is no law of the conservation of information. The inhabitants of this impalpable space are also diffuse, free from the body’s anchor.
(Donath, 1999. p. 29)

The disembodied internet is often seen as a function of the anonymity CMC may afford users. As Rheingold (1993) writes, “You can be fooled about people in cyberspace, behind the cloak of words” (p.12). Extensive research has explored the way in which feelings of anonymity affect users online behavior, from the way in which anonymity leads to feelings of deindividuation (see McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Postmes & Spears, 1998), to the effect of feelings of anonymity on self-disclosure (Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimmons, 2002; Joinson, 2001). The extent to which users are truly anonymous in CMC settings has long been debated, with some

authors contending that users' true identities are expressed through non-visual cues, and revealed by research conducted by other users elsewhere online (Postmes & Spears, 2002; Wynn & Katz, 1997).

CMC has also been shown to allow users to explore roles and identities that remain hidden in everyday life (Turkle, 1995; Stone, 1991). While this aspect of CMC allows for stigmatized identities to be expressed online (Davison, Pennebaker, & Dickerson, 2000), some users create identities completely removed from their true self (Van Gelder, 1999, Bruckman, 1993).

Recently, researchers have explored deception online in the context of dating sites. The findings of this body of literature suggest that the vast majority of online dating site users feel that there is a high degree of physical appearance misrepresentation online (Gibbs et. al, 2006). As a result, users are significantly concerned about the prevalence of lies and the prospect of meeting someone offline without prior visual cues (Donn & Sherman, 2002; Madden & Lenhart, 2006). Brym & Lenton (2001) found that ten percent admitted misrepresenting their identity online, though to some extent it appears that users deceive as a reaction to their perception that others are deceiving (Fiore & Donath, 2004). However, when FtF interaction is anticipated, deception may occur to the same extent as in FtF relationships (Toma et al, 2008). Toma et al. (2008) found that inaccuracies in online dating profiles were intentional rather than self-deceptive.

Researchers have outlined many ways in which identity may be inferred online, despite the various levels of anonymity CMC may afford to users. Donath (1999) suggests that Usenet group members look for cues that are difficult to fake such as tone, as well as those cues evident in email addresses and signatures while Ramirez (2002) notes that users may look to other areas

on the web for clues informing a person's identity, such as Newsgroup postings. When few cues are available participants may form their impressions of others based on stereotypes (Jacobson, 1999). Walther and Parks (2002) suggest that "warrants", connections between the offline and the online self, help to validate or invalidate online identity cues. Profile pictures are assumed to be warrants to the extent that those who post photographs of themselves should be less likely to lie than those who do not post a physical representation of themselves (Toma et al, 2008).

Reconsidering Deception and Authenticity Online

This case study of the response to MySpace Angles both supports and challenges existing theories of deception and authenticity online. Users' response to the MySpace Angles phenomenon makes clear that existing theories, often developed through analysis of text based interactions such as those found in MUDS, chat rooms, and Usenet groups, cannot easily be applied to Web 2.0, a web teeming with social networking sites in which users post an image representing their offline, physical appearance.

The Embodied Internet

For one, the assumption that the internet is disembodied is called into question by users' response to MySpace Angles. Despite the fact that many users on SNSs are not specifically looking to initiate relationships that will move offline (as online dating site users are) the increasingly blurred boundary between the offline and the online necessitates that users' online selves approximate their offline selves. Though researchers have noted that relationships formed online may develop into FtF relationships (Parks & Floyd, 2002; Rheingold, 1993; Bruckman,

1992) the emergence of the SNS further clouds the space between the virtual and the physical as members' online networks substantially overlap with their offline networks.

Criticisms of MySpace Angles users' concealment of weight suggest that users may in fact be anchored to the bodies that sit in front of the computer monitor. Identity play in SNS is discouraged, as are projections of the ideal self. In a study of online dating site users Hardey (2008) concludes that these sites that facilitate offline interaction are not free-for-all disembodied spaces for identity play that MUDS and chat rooms once were. Rather, "virtual interactions may be shaped by and grounded in the social, bodily and cultural experiences of users." (Hardey, 2008, p.1). Empirical online dating research supports this notion that, even with the anticipation of FtF interaction users (especially women) lie about their weight (Toma et. al, 2008).

While the effect of anticipated FtF interaction on online dating site users' presentation of the self and proclivity towards deception has been explored at length, the case of MySpace Angles shows that the expectation for offline interaction exists elsewhere on the Web. Most importantly for the scope of this paper, SNS users are similarly tied to their physical bodies – policed for concealing weight and mocked for their attempts to display an "inauthentic" offline self though they are not exhibiting themselves in online spaces dedicated to facilitating FtF interaction.

This is not to say that the internet is fully embodied. Rheingold's (1993) assertion that "all online interactions are influenced by the lack of corporeality" still stands (p.330). A paucity of nonverbal cues such as body language still characterizes CMC in large part (despite the emergence of video-mediated interaction online). Furthermore, SNS users have tools at their disposal which allow for the privatization of profiles, though these tools are often not utilized. As a result, the expressions 'given' by CMC users remain greater than those 'given off'.

Policing

Secondly, the anonymous nature of CMC is called into question in light of the policing activities undergone in the MySpace Angles case. Due to the rise of SNSs there are more avenues of measuring the disconnect between the online and offline self than ever before. In a study of SNS users Tufekci (2008) concludes that “little adaptation is made to the Internet's key features of persistence, searchability, and cross-indexability” – that is to say, that SNS users do not constrain their information sharing practices in an attempt to minimize warranting (p.1). In a *New York Times* article Tufekci goes on to say, “[information sharing on SNSs is] just like living in a village, where it’s actually hard to lie because everybody knows the truth already... If anything, it’s identity-constraining now” (Tufekci in Thompson, 2008). As the unfortunate MySpace users who were publicly exposed in less flattering photographs discovered, there are many channels on the web, some outside of your control, that may be weeded through in an attempt to invalidate an online self.

In China this process of combing the web for information pertaining to an individual is called the “Human Flesh Search Engine”. A Human Flesh Search Engine “is where thousands of volunteer cybervigilantes unite to expose the personal details of perceived evildoers and publish them on the Web...The consequences for those on the receiving end often transcend the virtual world and can include loss of employment, public shaming, even imprisonment” (O’Brien, 2008). Lastly, an increase in the number of forums for UGC facilitates the publication of satire and critique.

Conclusion

The social web brings a new form of “deceptive” behavior and an accompanying technopanic, a moral panic over contemporary technology (Marwick, 2008). Where once users

worried that they or their children would be lied to about another's identity with no recourse, SNS users now fear that they will "fooled" into thinking that the person they are interacting with is more attractive online than off as a result of a particularly flattering style of portraiture. As King Henry VIII felt disappointment upon meeting his fourth wife Anne of Cleves after selecting her to be his mate on the basis of her portrait, SNS users now worry that the person they fall for online may not live up to their impressions (Erickson, 1976). Concerned about "false advertising" on SNS profiles users police the adoption of MySpace Angles, attempting to curtail their use.

This case study displays a shift in the conception of deception online. On the social Web populated by SNSs, theories of deception and authenticity are called into question as users are increasingly anchored to their bodies, expected to effortlessly present an online self mirroring the offline self, while divulging information that may be gleaned offline. Increased avenues for warranting police this desired presentation of the self, as users are able to validate whether this offline presentation of the self is in accordance with SNS norms.

This paper further shows the way in which UGC provides a unique forum for researching norms of CMC as they evolve. As future technopanics arise, UGC will be an essential source in the investigation into users' negotiations of these contentious issues.

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