



SIXTEEN

# **Shaping the ‘me’ in MySpace:**

## **The framing of profiles on a social network site**

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### **Introduction**

A number of influential sociologists (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2001; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001) have suggested that one of the key characteristics of late (or second) modernity is the requirement for individuals to define and refine their identities reflexively. The growth of academic interest in institutional digital storytelling projects—as evidenced by the theme of this volume—may be a reflection of this, as these projects often require or at least encourage their participants to actively reflect about their identities in order to create their stories (Lambert, 2006). But alongside these professionally facilitated, organized storytelling projects we have seen the emergence of a number of internet-mediated spaces in which, unprompted and unguided, a much larger cross-section of members of the public publish details of their lives—a practice which may be important in this process of reflexive self-definition.

The online publishing of self-related texts has taken a variety of forms in recent years and its incidence has grown as Internet access and use have risen and, importantly, as new online services have emerged with new affordances.

Personal websites have existed since the web was invented, and in the last five years we have seen the invention and popularisation of weblogs—a technology that is more rigidly structured but easier to update and use—alongside services that are primarily non-textual like photo and video sharing sites. In the United States according to a February 2006 survey, 23.6 per cent of Internet users had posted a photo online, 12 per cent had their own websites, and 7.4 per cent kept a personal blog—the latter figure rose to 21.1 per cent of under-18s (USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future, 2007), while UK figures suggest 9 per cent of online users (as of March 2007) had a blog they have used within the last year (Dutton & Helsper, 2007). Most recently, the use of online social network sites (SNSs) like MySpace and Facebook has exploded—again particularly among younger people, who have adopted them even more rapidly and extensively than they have adopted earlier web-based tools. More than half of online teens (12–17) in the United States (as of November 2006) had created profiles on one of these services (Lenhart & Madden, 2007), and in the United Kingdom (as of June 2006) 70 per cent of those 16–24 and online had used such service, compared with 41 per cent of online UK adults (Ofcom, 2006). MySpace—the SNS chosen to be the object of the research for this chapter—was at the time of research one of the world’s leading SNSs and appeared to be the dominant SNS in the United Kingdom (Ofcom, 2006, p. 172).<sup>1</sup>

MySpace profiles (and other SNSs) are already being analysed as spaces for identity production:

The dynamics of identity production play out visibly on MySpace. Profiles are digital bodies, public displays of identity where people can explore impression management. Because the digital world requires people to write themselves into being, profiles provide an opportunity to craft the intended expression through language, imagery and media. (d. boyd, 2006)

Creating a text like an SNS profile is necessarily a self-reflexive act to some degree since it involves the choice and assembly of self-related episodes and attributes, but the *kind* and *extent* of self-reflection expressed in self-related online writing clearly varies. Institutional projects like the Center for Digital Storytelling encourage participants to ‘tell *meaningful* stories’ (emphasis mine) to ‘improve all our lives’ (<http://www.storycenter.org/>). Some academics studying the personal home page have suggested these can ‘give authors a better sense of self-understanding and personal efficacy’ (Hevern, 2000) or ‘transform the very way we think of ourselves and to change ourselves to who we really want to be’ (Chandler, 1998). Can the practice of SNS profile making provide similar benefits for the creators of their digital self-related texts? The technological affordances are there, but the nature of these texts and the way in

which their creation is approached depends on the way in which the practice of creation is framed.

Other chapters in this volume analyse the circumstances shaping the production of such writings in institutional contexts. There, the 'rules' of what 'counts' as a digital story are often clearly defined, certain forms and content are clearly encouraged, and there is generally a status differential between the owners/facilitators and those whose stories are to be told. On social networking sites and most other online spaces for self-related texts, the constraints and influences tend to be less clear since the purposes of these online spaces are less rigidly articulated, and performance in these spaces does not take place in a face-to-face group context (though as will be noted later there is generally an imagined group that the texts are produced for). The providers of the online spaces where identity-related texts are produced often frame them as being spaces for untrammelled self-expression. The first page of Blogger's 'tour of features' from its home page says, 'Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules' (Blogger, 2007). And of course the name MySpace emphasises the profile creator's individual autonomy and ownership. This chapter outlines some of the ways in which the practice of self-related writing is nonetheless framed by a number of specific structural elements, using one context as a case—that of MySpace profile creation and maintenance by teenagers in the United Kingdom.

Schmidt's article on "Blogging Practices: An Analytical Framework" (2007) provides a means to examine the differing ways in which blogging practices are framed and while SNS profiles are created in a different context the technological affordances offered by blogging are similar enough to profile creation and maintenance, and the framework is general enough that it has been adopted here to structure the examination of SNS practices.

Schmidt's article asserts blogging practices 'are framed (but not solely determined) by three structural elements: rules, relations and code' (2007, p. 1411). Rules, as defined by Reckwitz (1997) and used by Schmidt 'act as schemas for action, guiding situational performance by providing shared expectations' (Schmidt, 2007, p. 1411)<sup>2</sup> He sub-divides those relevant to blogging in several different ways—the most immediately relevant rules in this analysis are those that govern publication.<sup>3</sup> Relations are divided into those articulated using blogging technology itself (hyperlinks) and social ties which may be maintained both through blogging and a variety of mediated and non-mediated practices. Lastly, he identifies code (the specific technical implementation of the software that underlies a blogging service) as being of fundamental importance because it enables or restricts certain actions (2007, p. 1418).

To give some insight into the way rules and relations may structure MyS-

pace practices, ten semi-structured hour-long interviews were conducted with MySpace users—all young people between 16 and 19 years of age from two UK schools. They were also invited to fill in a short questionnaire online after the interviews to clarify issues that arose during the initial interviews. Because these were self-selected and because of the small overall number of interviews and the limited variety of the sample, it is not possible to generalise conclusions from the interviews to young MySpace users more broadly, but their experiences and accounts provide some possible explanations for SNS user behaviour.

In the remainder of this chapter, an overview is given of the nature of the profiles created by the interviewees. The process of profile creation and maintenance is then placed in the wider context of the uses of MySpace as described by those interviewed, and some of the influences which appear to have shaped what was produced are outlined. In the conclusion, the implications of the manner in which these practices are shaped for institutions involved in digital storytelling are explored.

## MySpace profiles as texts

The profiles examined included a range of information about likes and dislikes—generally favourite music, movies and TV shows—either using the forms provided for this purpose by MySpace (see section on Code below) or using self-descriptive questionnaires provided by third party sites. Four of the interviewees wrote no more than this. The remaining six provided more free-form self-descriptions, but in most cases these were brief. Three of them were less than 100 words, two were around 300 words and one (by Charlie<sup>4</sup>) was 730 words long.

The interviewees' profile pages were varied in their visual style and 'media richness', very often containing galleries of pictures of the authors and their friends and frequently including video as well (though generally of favourite musicians or—in one case—of other young people performing stunts rather than of themselves). All but one offered a song that played automatically when you visited their page, and all had a custom background to their page.

These profiles contain much *self-related* material, however the bulk of what was disclosed did not appear to be more than minimally *self-reflexive*, nor was it generally organized or expressed in order to provide the reader much insight into the user's self-understanding beyond the taste choices catalogued. Even when deeper themes were touched on in the profiles, they were not further

articulated. For example, two of the profiles appeared to suggest the author's religion was important to them (Sandra had a bible quote near the top of the page, and John had a repeated Christian image as a background to his profile). In neither case, however, was the significance of that religious adherence further articulated anywhere else on their profile.

As Livingstone found in her own SNS research (Livingstone, 2008), for many of her interviewees 'it seemed that position in the peer network is more significant than the personal information provided, rendering the profile a place-marker more than a self portrait'. It is for this reason that this chapter has labelled these profiles as self-related texts rather than using more value-laden descriptors like 'identity statements'.

## MySpace usage practices

It's more of a friends and music thing really. Good way to keep in contact.

Sophie

When interviewees were asked to talk in general terms about their use of MySpace and in particular when they were asked to describe what MySpace is 'for' to someone who did not know, three dominant uses emerged. In order of popularity, these were interpersonal communication,<sup>5</sup> keeping up with bands that used the site to promote themselves and promoting their own artistic projects. The creation and maintenance of their profiles or the examination of others' profiles appeared to be less important to them (except insofar as their own profiles were useful to advertise creative enterprises they were trying to promote or insofar as some conversations took place using comments publicly posted on their and other people's pages).

This balance of priorities appears to be borne out in their descriptions of the time they spent. When the interviewees refer to the frequency with which they visit MySpace they tend to suggest they do so daily or at least every few days—indeed, one of the interviewees (Darrell) mentioned that MySpace is his home page. This is consistent with the very high number of page views attributed to the MySpace site as a whole—twice as many as Google's according to one estimate (Garrett, 2006). However, it appears little of this time was spent by those interviewed creating or modifying their profile pages. Of the five people who responded to questions about this in a follow-up questionnaire online, three said they spent less than an hour producing their initial profile, one spent 3–4 hours and one spent a day. Most of them changed their

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profile infrequently after that—one added new features monthly, one ‘when I feel I need a change’ and one suggested that he/she never did—the other three changed every two to four months. The changes themselves took them between five minutes and half an hour to do. Although they said that their profiles were accurate—as far as they went—interviewees tended to assert that their MySpace profiles did not contain sufficient depth to give readers a good idea of what they were like.

People look at my layout, and they think, ‘colorful, happy, Indie kid’, and then they look at my music, and it’s like, hmm, SlipKnot. It’s hard to sum yourself up in one page. It tells you the bare facts, but then there’s nothing to link them together. (Charlie)

You would get a sense of what the person is about, their interests, especially if they’ve got one of those surveys on their page. . . . you’d get a sense of how they think and what they’re into. But I don’t think you really know them that well until you have actually met them. (Tom)

I change it quite often, so . . . people might look at it, and think that I’m one way, and the next week they might see, like a different layout. A lot of my friends with MySpace, they reflect their personalities. But mine, I don’t think it reflects my personality that well. (Claire)

In at least three cases—those of Claire, Sandra and John—changes to their profile appeared to be more influenced by a desire to entertain those who visited them or to relieve boredom than by a desire to reflect changes in the author’s idea of their self.

You always change your blogs [blog postings] because blogs are inviting people to comment on your page, I mean, comment on the issue, and the more new blogs you have, the more people comment on your blogs. So you can’t have one blog all the time, because everyone already knows the question, and already answered it. (John)

[you have to] update your profile so people will have a reason to keep coming back onto it. (Sandra)

I’ll just look at, and I’ll get bored of the same profile, and then I’ll just think, okay, I’ll change it. (Claire)

What then (using Schmidt’s terms) are some of the relations, rules and code that frame the profile creation and maintenance practices outlined here?

## Influences on the self-reflexive use of MySpace profiles

### Relations

#### *Intended readers*

The people who look at your MySpace mainly are people who already know you, or know of you or know a bit about you, and then all it sort of really does is it says a little bit more.

David

Social relations appear to be central to the use of MySpace—while the site is sufficiently customisable to allow for many different uses, its self-definition (on its home page) is as 'a place for friends', and as we have seen in the section on MySpace usage practices those interviewed most frequently framed MySpace as a tool to articulate and maintain inter-personal links. The centrality of relations to MySpace use may, however, direct the owner's attention away from the kind of self-reflexivity observed by academics studying other online self-related spaces and encouraged by institutional storytelling projects and towards a more or less strategic self-presentation.

As David remarks above—and as echoed in research on another SNS, Facebook (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007)—for most of those interviewed the primary audience (both expected and desired) appeared to be those they felt they already knew.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it therefore would not be necessary to further articulate their identities, as the most important potential readers would be expected already to have some idea of how they present themselves.

In addition, the fact that in MySpace the intended readership of 'friends' is explicitly defined and delineated by each user may increase the authors' awareness of the consequences of any self-disclosure that is unacceptable to their peers (though the interviews did not shed light on this potential influence). Research suggests that self-revelation is more likely to take place in a communicative situation of (relative) anonymity, where such revelations can take place without perceived cost (Spears & Lea, 1994; McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Joinson, 2001). Of course MySpace users are free to create 'dummy' anonymous profiles for identity experimentation but those interviewed had not done this.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, many other online spaces where self-reflexive writing takes place have some degree of anonymity—just over half of US bloggers, for example, reported blogging under a pseudonym (Lenhart & Fox, 2006).<sup>8</sup>

### ***Unintended readers***

The interviewees did not express concern over the way friends or family might react to reading about personal issues they might air online, although this concern may have been present but not acknowledged explicitly since studies of personal blogging (Qian & Scott, 2007) and earlier studies of other forms of interpersonal communication (Rubin, 1975; Derlega & Chaikin, 1977) suggest self-disclosure is considered less risky with complete strangers. Instead they (particularly the six women interviewed) consistently maintained that personal details should not be shared on profiles because of the risk that unintended readers would see them. Several of the respondents said simply that strangers did not have the right to know about personal matters. As John says

You have to write about yourself to a limit, or, if you want to get to know me more, contact me. If you become that close, I will talk to you in that way, but if you're just viewing my page, I don't even know you, and you're just looking at my personal life, as if you're my best friend or something.

Even when MySpace profiles are not seen as dangerously exposed to unwanted eyes, the profile is still seen as a less appropriate means of communication for personal issues than face-to-face or telephone conversation. This is partly because MySpace is an asynchronous medium—in Tom's words—'If you want to say something that's not that important, then you would message them over MySpace. It doesn't matter when they get it, as long as they get it eventually. But if you need to talk to someone quicker, then you'd phone them'. There is also the implication that even when MySpace readers are not strangers they may be merely acquaintances, and sharing personal issues in depth would therefore not be appropriate.

The messages that you send on MySpace are usually things to do with MySpace, like um, somebody messaging about a song, somebody messaging you to put them in the top friends, somebody messaging you about your layout. . . . If it was someone that you speak to, that you needed to tell them about something more important, you would usually have them on your MSN [instant messenger] list, or you'd have their phone number to just phone them. (Tom)

Yeah, because some friends on MySpace, they're not really your friends, they're just people that you might talk to every so often. (Claire)

Some of the caution about online strangers may also have been connected with the media and educator discourses in the UK about 'stranger danger' which recent research shows have been widely promulgated (Livingstone & Bober, 2004). Rebecca, for example, clearly perceives a tension between these discourses and MySpace use:

Not even a year ago, it would be that the internet is full of bad people who want to get your address and get your number and find out where you live and come after you. And with sites like MySpace, they are now encouraging you not to talk to strangers, which, in all fairness is making it harder for creepy people to get to you. But at the same time, it's easy for them to find out all about you.

In response to concerns about personal online safety, MySpace users under 18 are presented with a warning on the page where they are first invited to upload a picture of themselves, and are also reminded to 'exercise caution when posting personally identifiable information' when entering their profile information. In this way MySpace through its framing code is both responding to and reinforcing these rules, although it is difficult to say how much this has had an impact, and none of the interviewees mentioned these warnings.

### Code

By its nature, this form of framing may operate without the users' realising it. As a result, the way that code may frame the production of profiles was not extensively probed in the interviews—this portion of the analysis relies therefore on an examination of the relevant technical affordances and limitations of the profile portion of MySpace at the time of the research (mid-2007).

Schmidt tends to treat the influence of the code of blogging services (and by implication of SNSs) as binary—allowing certain practices and preventing others. The analysis in this chapter seeks to foreground the subtle ways in which the interface through which an SNS like MySpace presents its functions and frames user content can influence user behaviour as well, encouraging some uses and discouraging others. The literature on default settings (Kesan & Shah, 2006) provides a telling example of this kind of influence in action. In one online experiment (Bellman, Johnson & Lohse, 2001), the numbers opting to be notified of more health surveys doubled when the default setting was changed from a negative to a positive one, even though the users in both cases were free to choose whichever option they wished.

The default interface through which MySpace enables its users to create a profile provides a structure for what can be said about the self. The user is

prompted to provide information about their favourite music, films, television, books and their heroes. Fields are also provided for the users to describe themselves demographically—gender, age, religion, income, marital status, educational attainment and so on. The particular life interests which are considered relevant to a profile are also suggested, (though not determined) by the nature of the questions asked and the order they are asked in. MySpace users are asked what their religion is but not their political affiliation, for example. Half of the interviewees chose either to supplement or replace this set of questions with others, but even here the lists of questions were themselves taken from third parties and were designed to entertain rather than inform—for example, ‘Have you ever wanted to drive a race car?’

Users are also provided with more ‘free form’ opportunities for self-description in the form of ‘about me’ and ‘interests’ boxes, but the space into which they are invited to type only displays around 130 words at a time,<sup>9</sup> and as noted earlier half of those who used those boxes at all wrote less than 100 words. Users are of course free to enter as much text into such fields as they wish (the browser would provide a scroll bar once they had filled the box), and none of the interviewees mentioned the size of the box as an influence on their profile writing. The size of the text box may nonetheless have an effect on the length of the text typed into it.

The depth and scale of the whole profile are tacitly limited as well. MySpace profiles largely consist of a single page (though there are optional sub-pages for pictures, video clips and other features). As a result the length of the self-presentation may be limited by the reader’s willingness to scroll down the screen, and it is not straightforward to divide one’s self-presentation thematically—all aspects of one’s self-presentation generally have to be presented on the same page.

## Rules

It appears that all the interviewees were acting within a set of rules guiding their notions of what kind of content was expected on their profiles and what the purposes of a profile were expected to be, though the perceived rules in question were not always the same. This is not surprising as in order to find existing and new friends and in order to find new music, MySpace users view many profiles, and the contents of such pages—particularly those produced by their peers—provide models for how their own profiles should work and what they should contain.

***The profile as promotional space***

MySpace has become well known in part as a place for bands to promote their work (d. m. boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 217), and as we have seen learning about new music is one of the dominant reasons expressed for using the website. Three of those interviewed either were using or were planning to use MySpace to promote their own artistic activities—Sandra and John were going to produce videos (though none were yet visible on their MySpace pages), and Rachel had both a band profile for the (amateur) music she has produced and a separate personal MySpace profile.

Sandra and John were strongest in positioning MySpace as a space for artistic or professional promotion. In fact, Sandra went further to suggest other uses of MySpace were less legitimate:

That's what I think MySpace is good for, if you're promoting something . . . but I don't like it when people make MySpace pages, and they're just trying to show off, like, this is me in my bikini, this is me in Spain, with tan. . . Well, it's their business. . . I don't mind when people have an online profile and things like that. I personally wouldn't do it, because it's just exposing yourself over the internet. But if you're promoting something through MySpace, I think that's really good.

Even those without a particular promotional aim for themselves recognised such promotion as an important and legitimate use for MySpace. Rebecca remarked, 'It's quite odd that other people can see your page and everything about you and pictures of you. . . it's quite good because, just for the publicity, if you like, for people that are trying to get themselves out there,' and both she and Charlie then mentioned people they knew who were using the site to promote their band, their photography or t-shirts they had designed.

While this rule relates specifically to MySpace and its media framing as a means of artistic promotion, one can also link it to broader emerging social rules. Bauman, for example, sees SNSs as another example of the way consumer culture encourages a desire to 'commoditize' one's self (Bauman, 2007) and Rosen sees the revelation of aspects of what was once one's private life online as part of a wider trend towards 'personal branding' (Rosen, 2005, p. 182). These promotional profiles contain details that could be considered 'personal', but they are not being shared as a means to build intimacy or trust with peers or to develop a better self-understanding but as a way to add a 'personal touch' to the product that is being promoted.

***The profile as entertainment space***

People's MySpace, like they decorate it, they have games on it, so there's lots of things to do . . . and it's a more fun way of communicating I think.

John

Entertainment—of the author or of their audience—is the other principal use given for the MySpace profile. As noted in the section on MySpace usage practices, those who spoke of this use presented it as a momentary relief of boredom rather than anything more ambitious. Three of the ten interviewees supplemented the information about themselves in the standard MySpace template with a variety of self-descriptive questionnaires created by third parties. But these were not done in order to increase the depth of the profiles—rather they added inconsequential details. In the cases where answering might provide a meaningful insight into the profile-owner's self, questions were just dodged or skipped. For example, Tom's answer to 'Do you have any regrets in life?' is simply 'yes'. The space available on the forms used to generate these supplementary questionnaires tend to be even more limiting than the ones MySpace uses—the one used by Tom (<http://www.123mycodes.com/myspacesurveys/9.php>) allows just 30 characters for each response. Moreover, some of these profile additions only hint at the profile-owner's answers by aggregating them to indicate—for example—what kind of superhero the author would like to be. As Tom says, 'They don't ask questions that are really important. It's just, I think they're just comfortable questions.' To which Claire adds, 'You can be honest, but you don't want everyone knowing every detail of your life'.

***The profile as a minimally self-reflexive space***

I don't really tend to say, 'today I think this and this'. Some people do it, but I think among certain peer groups it's frowned upon as if maybe you look just a bit sad, to tell you the truth. It's not actually that much of a common thing. I haven't noticed many of my friends having blogs either.

Darrell

As Darrell suggests, self-examination in front of others is not just risky because of the particular aspects of the self which might emerge (see the section on Relations above)—it is also challenging if practised in depth and it is a practice which can be seen as intrinsically self-absorbed and therefore embarrassing.<sup>10</sup> As noted in the introduction, however, it is impossible to create a profile with-

out examining one's self. Could it therefore be that the aspects of MySpace's code that seem to limit the amount of self-reflection required for participation on MySpace are in fact an important factor contributing to its popularity?

MySpace and sites like it provide a means for individuals to have a 'presence' online under their control without having to invest a significant amount of time in creating or maintaining it. They do not have to decide where (on which server) to host their presence, what (if anything) they should pay (the service is free), how their site should be structured (in terms of pages and sub-pages). Thanks to the default questions offered by MySpace they do not even have to ask themselves what a profile should consist of. Although the interviewees did not themselves allude to this point, it is arguable that part of the appeal of services like MySpace is that users do not have to concern themselves overmuch with determining which aspects of themselves best reflect who they are. The questions deemed relevant—who their peers are, what bands they like and so on—have already been decided and are presented to the potential profile maker by the service. Indeed, one service—<http://www.elfriendo.com>—has already emerged claiming to further streamline the process of MySpace profile creation. The site's home page says, 'It's called MySpace, not EmptySpace. Since no one is waiting around for another blank profile, and you don't have the hours it takes to list your DVD collection, we'll do it for you.'

## Conclusion

The preliminary research conducted for this chapter suggests that the creation of MySpace profiles is framed—though not determined—by factors that can be usefully grouped into the categories identified by Schmidt—rules, relations and code. These do not stand alone but inter-relate with each other. For example, rules governing how MySpace profiles are created and maintained are influenced both by the nature of the relations with those reading—both intended and unintended—and by the code of the site—both directly by the capabilities it does or doesn't provide and indirectly through the interface embedded in the code of the site.

Increasingly individuals and groups are turning to existing digitally mediated spaces in which they are constructing self-related texts without institutional support. As mentioned in the introduction, research on personal home pages and weblogs suggests that some individuals can find them useful tools for the kind of self-understanding digital storytelling projects also often seek to foster. We do not know, however, what proportion of webloggers or personal home page creators choose to use these tools in that manner, nor about the

particular combinations of structural elements that encourage it.

The creation and maintenance of SNS profiles are much more widespread than blogging or home page maintenance, so widespread adoption of SNSs may represent an important potential opportunity for users—and young users in particular—to reflect on their lives through writing about them. But the analysis in this chapter suggests that the practices enabled by these new technologies are not the simple product of a meeting between needs and technological affordances but the products of complex, situated interrelationships. More research is therefore needed to understand the contexts which frame and enable differing uses of online self-related spaces and to suggest ways in which these contexts might be changed to encourage richer uses.

This suggests in turn a new potential role for the organizations which run institutionalized storytelling projects. Their traditional approach has been to draw groups in and to create their own spaces in which highly structured forms of storytelling can take place, often using digital media. There may be an opportunity for storytelling organizations to reach out from their traditional project-based work and address the much larger number of potential digital storytellers who have been attracted to these new spaces. There they could apply the wealth of experience they have accumulated to encourage the users of sites like MySpace to adopt practices that maximise the creative and self-reflexive potential of these spaces.

## Notes

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1. Nielsen Netratings 'Netview' data for September 2007 suggests that Facebook overtook MySpace in the United Kingdom for most age groups, and that SNS adoption—in the United Kingdom at least—has risen considerably since the figures given above. (Broughton, Pople & Human Capital, 2007)
2. To remain consistent with Schmidt's typology this chapter uses the term 'rule' to apply to the social norms and influences governing practices, though the word tends to imply a more rigid and determining power than most of these 'rules' have.
3. In addition to the informal, tacit norms described later in this chapter he includes formalized norms in his framework (p. 1414)—for example the terms of service of hosting services and laws about freedom of speech. These also bear on the interviewees as they would any MySpace users—interviewees would have been warned by the site owners not to post pornographic pictures during the process of signing up for the service, for example, and all members have to be willing to have advertising carried on their profiles over which they have no control. Those interviewed did not allude to these constraints in the interviews,

- however, so this chapter will not analyse them further.
4. This is a pseudonym as are all other interviewees' names given.
  5. In rough order of importance, MySpace 'messages'—a kind of proprietary service like email but in which only MySpace members could be contacted, 'commenting'—messages left publicly on another's profile page and 'bulletins'—a separate service which sends a message to all of those on a user's 'friends' list. There are other communication facilities like forums and groups, but they were not alluded to by interviewees.
  6. Three of those interviewed had MySpace pages not principally aimed at friends but at potential customers for their creative works—this framing is dealt with in the section on Rules.
  7. Charlie created a false profile but only as a prank—it was not based on himself in any way. Ann listed her age as 92 and Darrell gave a false income (250,000+) and profession, but these, too, were not meant to be read as anything but humorous experiments.
  8. Although naturally not all pseudonyms are intended to protect the identity of the writer, and not all that are so intended are effective.
  9. As with other measures this is an approximate figure based on default font sizes on a Windows PC running Internet Explorer—different browser/OS configurations could result in different outcomes.
  10. It is this and not unhappiness that Darrell is suggesting with the word 'sad' in this context.

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