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December 2007

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Recommended Citation

Pike, Jacqueline; Butler, Brian; and Bateman, Patrick, "Boundaries in Social Computing Environments: The Effect of Environment Characteristics on Publicness and Self-Disclosure" (2007). *ICIS 2007 Proceedings*. 49.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2007/49>

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BOUNDARIES IN SOCIAL COMPUTING ENVIRONMENTS: THE EFFECT OF ENVIRONMENT CHARACTERISTICS ON PUBLICNESS AND SELF-DISCLOSURE

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Abstract

Web 2.0 technologies are changing the way users interact with the Internet. Users play a growing role in the generation of content, and while doing so reveal a piece of themselves. In this research, we seek to provide a theoretical link between the HCI characteristics of a social networking website, perceived publicness, and self-disclosure. Utilizing Communication Privacy Management Theory, we focus on two forms of boundaries: mode of entry boundary and ingroup/outgroup boundary. We propose that these interface characteristics present in social computing environments help create psychological boundaries between private information disclosed by users and potential viewers of the information. This influences users' perceived publicness of the space, which influences their self-disclosure behaviors. It is believed that by recognizing the public aspect of participation in online social networks, we can provide suggestions on how its perception can be managed to encourage, or discourage, contributions and disclosures of information by users.

Keywords: Social computing, social networking, publicness, disclosure, boundaries, Internet, Web 2.0