

# Michel Foucault's Gaze and Panopticism on Facebook-Shaming Posts

---

**Maria Noelle V. Motril**

University of Santo Tomas | noellemotril@gmail.com

**Abstract:** The emergence of social media platforms has brought about various changes in humankind's lived worlds. These platforms have changed the ways we connect and interact with each other, and along with it, changes in the spread of information. The modern tangible world as we know it has become technologically dependent - breeding about new cultures and sub-cultures, trends, and even crimes and forms of punishments. In the Philippine context, Facebook has become a platform not only for reconnecting with friends or kin, or for sharing updates of one's life, but also as a form of surveillance "body" – the body of the condemned criminal. Cases of robbery and/or theft, sexual harassment, and boisterous arguments (among others) in public have been uploaded by various individuals who claim to be "performing their duties" to raise awareness as "concerned citizens." Regardless of whether the uploaded incident (that is the content of the shaming post) has been verified or taken out of context, the power relations between the offended party (original uploader of the shaming post) and the individual causing offense, however overlooked, is evident. These posts would become "viral" and reach thousands of audiences, and would sometimes even garner national attention. I argue that online shaming on Facebook has become a part of our lived worlds, because Facebook users encounter these shaming posts, or have even been uploaders of the said content, as well. This phenomenon of Facebook-shaming has become normalized. It is discernible in Facebook-shaming that postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault's (1926 - 1984) Gaze and Panopticism manifest in daily human life, whether individuals are aware of its manifestations or these manifestations are merely dismissed as normalcy. Although Foucault's application of Panopticism was for surveillance and for analyzing disciplinary power in prisons (among others), I argue that Panopticism has taken a new form – that of online shaming in social media. Hence the primary objective of this paper is to demonstrate - through an interview with a respondent - how Foucault's power relations transpire within the communicative space of the shaming posts, and the ways in which Panopticism on Facebook is reproduced.

**Keywords:** Michel Foucault, Facebook Shaming, The Gaze, Panopticism

---

“I don’t feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning.” – *Michel Foucault*

This paper touches on two disciplines - Philosophy and Communication and Media Studies. It is interesting to note the ways in which people interact within the communicative sphere on Facebook. It is even more interesting when one analyzes Facebook’s communicative sphere under a philosophical lens. We shall first explore a brief history of online shaming, as well as backgrounds of social networking and social media.

Online shaming stems from the history of public shaming as a means of criminal punishment.<sup>1</sup> Public shaming was utilized as a popular means of punishment during the early and colonial periods of America. The popularity of public shaming as a criminal punishment contributed to its success and effectiveness as a means of criminal sanction. A factor that also contributed to its effectiveness is that societies from the said era were close-knit, making the spread of information easier. This resulted in the ridicule and/or alienation of the individual who has caused an offense or a crime. The criminal sanction was successful because public shaming has brought about exposure and community disapproval, stemming fear among individuals. Cost effectiveness is also taken into account, as it was more expensive to punish criminals by imprisonment than it is to publicly humiliate them. Lastly, the

amalgamation of religion and law in communities resulted in the negative views on criminals.

The impact of Social Networking websites has been influential in our life worlds. Individuals from different nations are now able to communicate with just one click of an application. The spread and exchange of information has become much easier, a feat and innovation that rattled the whole world with its convenience. However, with the birth of social media sites, new cultures and spaces have materialized. Individuals may now join online groups to connect with like-minded people who share the same interests; on an iniquitous utilization of the Internet, the “Deep Web” has brought about a “community” of smugglers, pedophiles, and has become a space for human trafficking; and Facebook’s advertising and marketing space has brought about profit and exchange, at the same time, theft and scam. Indeed, one may look at the dawn of the Social Media Era as a double – edged sword.

Facebook, being one of the most popular Social Networking sites, with a total of 1.86 billion active users as of recent,<sup>2</sup> has become a widely used platform for interaction with a broad array of audience. It is through these platforms that the use of public shaming has materialized, more commonly referred to as “online shaming.” The targets of this kind of punishment are not exclusively directed to criminals, but also to individuals who have violated another’s beliefs or who have deviated from societal norms. Oftentimes, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Lauren Goldman, “Trending Now: The Use of Social Media Websites in Public Shaming Punishments,” *American Criminal Law Review*, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Zephoria Digital Marketing. 2017. <https://zephoria.com/>.

individuals being shamed have no prior knowledge that his/her personal information is shared through social media platforms, as a means of punishing the individual for his/her actions of alleged wrongdoings. Regardless of whether the acts of the individual have been verified or not, Michel Foucault's Gaze/power relations and Panopticism is evident in the Facebook "community."<sup>3</sup>

I will be focusing on the manifestations of Panopticism between the offended party (the uploader of the Facebook-shaming post) and the individual who has caused offense (the subject of the shaming post). It should be noted that I would not include the operations of the Gaze/Power Relations and Panopticism on the audiences of the shaming post. While the discourse in the comments section of the shaming posts on Facebook would convey messages of sympathy for the offended party and even more chastising for the subject of the shaming post, focusing on the audiences'/commenters' reactions and comments on the said Facebook-shaming post would require a different approach on the research topic and a more in-depth study.

The primary purpose of this paper is to explain how The Gaze and Panopticism is manifested and reproduced in these Facebook-shaming posts. I will be discussing the said concepts and theories, as well as presenting the data I have gathered from an interview with a respondent for this study.

---

<sup>3</sup> Collectively referring to social media users as a "community" is still up for debate as of date. Readers may refer to this link as an example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crzn4sxhzhk>.

<sup>4</sup> Non – verbatim.

## MICHEL FOUCAULT'S PANOPTICISM WITH THE GAZE/POWER RELATIONS AS ITS BACKBONE

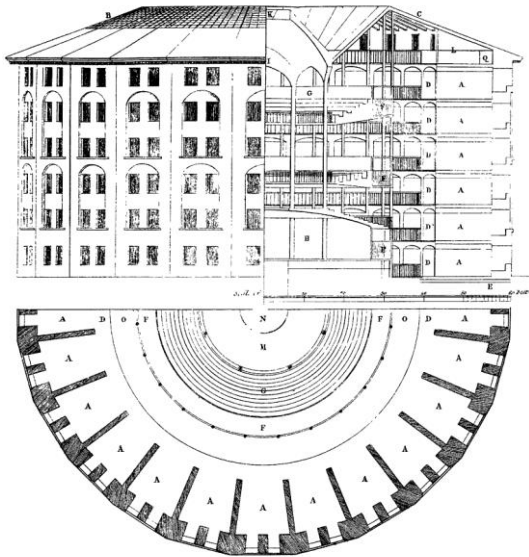
"Discipline may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or 'anatomy' of power, a technology." – *Michel Foucault*.

I may deviate from Michel Foucault's "older" definition of Panopticism, specifically with his application of Panopticism in prison, and the comparison of prison environment and school environment (I am referring to his famous statement which gist is, "Schools are like prisons" <sup>4</sup>). However, I will discuss these concepts briefly for the reader to have a background on what Foucault meant by Panopticism.

English philosopher Jeremy Bentham first proposed the Panopticon in the late eighteenth century. He described it as a circular building with, "the prisoners in their cells, occupying the circumference – The officers in the center. By blinds and other contrivances, the Inspectors concealed... from the observation of the prisoners: hence the sentiment of a sort of omnipresence – The whole circuit reviewable with little, or... without any, change of place. One station in the inspection part affording the most perfect view of every cell."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bentham, Jeremy. *Proposal for a New and Less Expensive Mode of Employing and Reforming Convicts*. London, 1798. Accessed July 2018. <https://www.utilitarianism.com/panopticon.html>.

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon penitentiary by Willey Reveley, 1791.<sup>6</sup>



With Foucault, Panopticism is the surveillance “body,” as described in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, published in 1975. Panopticism analyzes the disciplinary power/s of “punishment, proto – psychiatry, criminology and race war,” and “Foucault attempted to articulate disciplinary power in contradistinction to sovereign power.”<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault narrates in his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, the security measures taken when a plague befell a town in the seventeenth century, according to a town order.<sup>8</sup> As an illustration of Panopticism, a brief narrative, some of it quoted, on the security measures taken by the said town and the manifestations of Panopticism are as follows:

Firstly, a strict “spatial partitioning” was implemented: “the closing of a town and its outlying districts, a

prohibition to leave the town on pain of death, the killing of stray animals; the division of the town into distinct quarters, each governed by an intendant. Each street is placed under the authority of a syndic, who keeps it under surveillance; if he leaves the street, he will be condemned to death... Each family will have made its own provisions; but for bread and wine, small wooden canals are set up between the street and the interior of the houses, thus allowing each person to receive his ration without communicating with the suppliers and other residents... If it is absolutely necessary to leave the house, it will be done in turn, avoiding any meeting... Only the intendants, syndics and guards will move about the streets... It is a segmented, immobile, frozen place. Each individual is fixed in his place.<sup>9</sup>

In its original Foucauldian definition, Panopticism is therefore, an apparatus of control to impose discipline on various individuals. In Foucault’s conceptualization and when Foucauldian academics and thinkers write about Panopticism, it is usually applied in the context of the law, politics, government, and other authorities. However, I argue that all aspects of our lives are already considered politics in themselves; as well as sub-lived worlds in our lived worlds exist in the sphere

<sup>6</sup> Tait, W. *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*. Vol. IV. 172-3. 1843. PDF.

<sup>7</sup> Dianna Taylor. *Michel Foucault Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2011. p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*. First English ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 1977. p. 195.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

of politics.<sup>10</sup> Thus, we are all subjected to manifestations of Panopticism at any time and in any place. Presently, “mass surveillance has become a norm in developed countries, through both the proliferation of overt measures like security cameras but also more subtle and invasive means like data trawling, wherein governments, corporations and other powerful entities are able to comb through large volumes of data on specific people or larger demographics in order to gather information on them and exert control over them.”<sup>11</sup> More examples of these manifestations of Panopticism may be in the form of synchronized activities for a certain group of individuals (for instance, lunch breaks or recess in schools that are given at the same time for all students), parents and teachers observing a child’s performance and behavior in school and in home, or even the act of allowing one’s romantic partner access to private messages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram when dubious of the other’s activities. Those are some of the few examples of the manifestation of Panopticism in our own lives, which we have oftentimes regarded as simply part of routine or the status quo.

Foucault, in the same book (*Discipline and Punish*), proceeds to add in the narrative “the gaze alert is everywhere.” I hypothesize that surveillance bodies have become normalized in modern times: the omnipresent

use of close – circuit televisions (CCTVs) in both private and public establishments (such as homes, neighborhood streets, schools, businesses), and rules and regulations imposed by institutions, to name a few of its manifestations. In addition to that, I also hypothesize that a new emergence of a platform for Panopticism is evident – the use of social media sites. Online shaming posts, specifically those on Facebook, are a display of modern Panopticism, as they raise “the gaze alert” by monitoring and chastising individuals who have committed an offense or who deviate from societal norms. Panopticism will help the researcher in determining how Facebook, as a “surveillance”<sup>12</sup> body, helps to replicate the “gaze alert” that is occurring in the tangible world into the “online world.”

This paper will explore how Michel Foucault’s Panopticism is manifested and reproduced in Facebook-shaming posts – the discourse dynamic between the “criminally condemned”<sup>13</sup> and the offended individual/s. The objectives of this study will mainly focus on the power relations and panoptics that manifest in the Facebook-shaming posts. I include Foucault’s power relations, as it is almost inseparable with Panopticism under the Foucauldian lens.

In its most basic definition, to “gaze” is to “look steadily, intently, and with fixed

<sup>10</sup> I am arguing that everything that comprises our lived worlds in this tangible life is already politics itself.

<sup>11</sup> Sheridan, Connor. *Foucault, Power, and the Modern Panopticon*. Master's thesis, Trinity College, Spring 2016. Connecticut: Trinity College Digital Repository, 2016. 1-89. <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1564&context=theses>.

<sup>12</sup> I am implying that Facebook has become a platform for surveillance, functioning similarly to close – circuit televisions (CCTVs) for monitoring purposes.

<sup>13</sup> The term “criminally condemned” does not necessarily pertain to individuals who have violated laws. For this paper, I have taken the liberty to define “the criminally condemned” as individuals (the subject of the Facebook-shaming posts/the person being shamed) who have deviated from societal norms or who have caused offense.



attention.”<sup>14</sup> However, this research paper will explore the postmodern and more philosophical definition of “gaze” using Michel Foucault’s concept. The Gaze, in Foucault’s terms, is not something that one uses, but is a relationship into which someone enters. Quoting Foucault in an interview, “It’s clear that power should not be defined as a constraining act of violence that represses individuals, forcing them to do something or preventing them from doing some other thing. But it takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon.”<sup>15</sup> Readers may refer to the Appendix for my interview with a respondent for this study to be able to fully grasp the Gaze/power relations between the “criminally condemned” and the offended party in Facebook-shaming posts. It should be noted that there are specific questions in the Appendix that narrates how the respondent perceives the criminally condemned after the latter has caused offense, which comprises of The Gaze.

Foucault emphasizes that freedom plays an integral role in the power relations dynamic. By his use of the phrase, “allows himself to be acted upon,” it is clear that individuals within the power relations dynamic

both participate in the discourse of power through conversation and the circumstances that they are in. In our own lived worlds, we may not be consciously aware of the power relations we partake in, for these exchanges and relationships have been normalized, among other reasons. Power is “always there.” I argue that while we participate in power relations through our daily conversational exchanges<sup>16</sup>, many individuals are merely forced to enter into in causing unbalanced power relations. This is evident in cases of abuse, as an example. Clearly, in some cases, there is the *oppressed* and the *oppressor*. Such as in the objective of this paper, the original uploaders<sup>17</sup> of the Facebook-shaming post may have felt oppressed by the subject<sup>18</sup> of the shaming post.

*Power/Knowledge* is a work by Michel Foucault that contains his interviews (interviewed by various interviewers) and other writings. As a primary source, this work will reinforce the power relations that occur in a modern and “new” platform – social media, particularly, Facebook. Although considered a somewhat distorted view on power, I will be focusing on Michael Foucault’s writing on Power’s manifestation in “the pure form of “Thou shalt not.”” For a brief explanation of Power as “Thou shall not,” Foucault himself has stated that reducing power into the “love of the master” is problematic.<sup>19</sup> Power as “love

<sup>14</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “Gaze,” definition 1.

<sup>15</sup> “Power, Moral Values, and the Intellectual.” Interview by Michael Bess. Michaelbess.org. (Michael Bess’ interview with Foucault was conducted on 3 November 1980 at the University of California, Berkeley.)

<sup>16</sup> I have made use of daily conversation as an example through which we enter into power relations, as it is the most instinctive and obvious application of the Gaze and Power.

© TALISIK  
Volume V, Issue no.1  
ISSN 2362-9452



<sup>17</sup> The “original uploaders” will henceforth be referred to as “Victim.” This is following the logic that these individuals would not be narrating a Facebook-shaming post without a violation of their person or property.

<sup>18</sup> The “subject” of the post will henceforth be referred to as “Criminal.” This is following the logic that these individuals would not be shamed on Facebook without them causing offense.

<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault. *Power/Knowledge*. 1972 ed. Worcester: The Harvester Press Limited, 1980. p. 139

of the master” has caused Power to be reducible to the law. This then breeds new problematic roles, one of which “enables power to be never thought of in other than negative terms: refusal, limitation, obstruction, censorship.”<sup>20</sup> Despite discouragement from Foucault himself on the reducibility of Power as a form of “Thou Shall Not,” I hypothesize that the “prohibition” aspect of power is partly what drives the uploaders of the viral Facebook shaming posts to act on a violation of their person or another person committed by an individual through online shaming. “Thou Shall Not” or the “prohibition” aspect of power is almost always evident in these shaming posts. It usually manifests itself in the captions written by the Victims that go along the lines of, “Person X should not be doing Y.” Foucault himself states, power is “‘always already there,’ that one is never ‘outside’ it, that there are no ‘margins’ for those who break with the system to gambol in.”<sup>21</sup> In short, Power is omnipresent. It is this definition of Power that fortifies the Panoptics that is manifested in these shaming posts. The Victim’s posts on the Criminal – which almost always includes the Criminal’s name along with his/her photo or video clip – warns others of these individuals, with a chastising caption that can be summarized to, “One should not be behaving the way the Criminal did,” as stated above. Foucault’s statements on power will strengthen this research on the manifestations of The Gaze, Panopticism, and power relations in Facebook-shaming posts. I will further discuss the other concepts and narratives of Michel Foucault in the coming chapters and as the research progresses.

By combining The Gaze and Panopticism by Michel Foucault, the researcher will be able to use these concepts in applying Postmodern philosophical theories in social media, particularly through Facebook-shaming, a research area that is modern and relevant.

## THE MANIFESTATION OF PANOPTICISM ON THE RESPONDENT’S FACEBOOK-SHAMING POST THROUGH AN INTERVIEW

“Knowledge doesn't really form part of human nature. Conflict, combat, the outcome of the combat, and, consequently, risk and chance are what gives rise to knowledge.

Knowledge is not instinctive; it is counter instinctive, just as it is not natural but counter natural.” – *Michel Foucault*.

I intended to interview three respondents who are Victims.<sup>22</sup> My categories for selected and interviewing Victims are as follows:

- The Victim (the original uploader) must have posted a photo and/or a video clip of a person in the act of causing offense/s, regardless of their relationship, with a purpose to publicly shame the individual. In the absence of a photo and/or a video clip, the Criminal (the person being shamed<sup>23</sup>) must be named in the shaming post.
- The Criminal’s actions must be perceived as something that has violated a certain social norm or law.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*. p. 195.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

- The privacy settings of the post must be made Public and has at least one hundred (100) likes or other Facebook “reactions”<sup>24</sup>, one hundred (100) shares and comments condemning the Criminal.
- The incident that has caused the Victim to shame the Criminal must have occurred within Metro Manila.<sup>25</sup>

However, at the time of writing, I was only able to interview one respondent so far. After much research, I was able to correspond with **VINZ**. Vinz is an officer in Anakbayan Manila. For its background, Anakbayan is a leftist mass organization in the Philippines, whose main demographic is Filipino youths from the ages of thirteen (13) to thirty – five (35) years old. Anakbayan “holds the belief that Philippine society today is not truly free nor democratic. It is under the control of U.S imperialism, along with local landlords, big capitalists, and corrupt government officials.”<sup>26</sup> Vinz was recruited on 2013 and has since been part of mass protests and other various mobilizations across Metro Manila and Luzon.

For this study, I have chosen Vinz’s viral Facebook-shaming post dated 20 October 2016. The status he posted was his narrative of the US Embassy 2016 incident, where a certain police officer purposely ran over student – activists and Lumads, just as they were about to disperse after a major protest. I have recorded the interview using my smartphone,

however, the interview transcript will not be provided due to time constraints at the time of the writing. I will provide the interview questions with Vinz’s responses, and will narrate what transpired in the US Embassy 2016 incident with Vinz as my first-hand source.<sup>27</sup>

On 19 October 2016, various activist groups such as Anakbayan (which Vinz is a member of) and the League of Filipino Students, among others, were organized for a major protest at the US Embassy located at Roxas Boulevard, Ermita, Manila. With them, were Lumads coming from various places in the country.<sup>28</sup> The prominent leftists groups and the Lumads were gathered at the US Embassy to protest against capitalism, US imperialism, and the destruction of the Lumads’ ancestral lands to provide space for foreign companies, among others. Vinz, being a bonafide member of Anakbayan, was present in the said protest/action. During the mobilization, various members of the leftists groups gave speeches; the Lumads narrated how they were forced to flee their ancestral lands to provide space and resources for foreign companies; and both the Lumads and the activists participated in cultural movements, where many of them gave performances.<sup>29</sup> The police, in Vinz’s narrative, was not particularly antagonistic towards them. According to Vinz, the neutral and civil correspondence among the activists and the police was the status quo, as he even

---

<sup>24</sup> Aside from “Likes,” the other Facebook reactions are “Haha,” “Love,” “Wow,” “Sad”, and “Angry.”

<sup>25</sup> This is to emphasize that this research is conducted under the lens of the Philippine society.

<sup>26</sup> “About.” Anakbayan. Accessed January 20, 2018. <http://www.anakbayan.org>.

<sup>27</sup> Please refer to the Appendix.

<sup>28</sup> The Lakbayan was also being held on October 2016, hence the presence of the Lumad groups in Manila. The Lakbayan occurs annually, usually during the month of October.

<sup>29</sup> We collectively refer to these activities as “Program/s.”



stated that some activists and some police officers have maintained friendly relations with each other. As the protesters and the Lumads were about to disperse at the end of the Program, Vinz and other protesters were startled when some police officers were roaming around saying, "*Oh, kung may mangyari*

*po, nautusan lang po kami... Trabaho lang po*"<sup>30</sup> ("In case anything unfortunate happens, we are merely following orders and doing our job"). A few minutes later, a police car started speeding up in the direction of the Lumads and protesters.

**Figure 1.** A screenshot of the video clip from when PO3 Franklin Kho started running over the protesters and Lumads.<sup>31</sup>



According to my interview with Vinz, PO3 Franklin Kho was the driver of the police car that ran over the protesters and the Lumads. He adds that the incident was clearly intentional, as the Manila police was aware of the fact that the rally was about to be dispersed. The police officers' "warning" ("*Kung anong mangyari, trabaho lang po.* / If anything unfortunate happens, we are merely following orders") implies that the incident was planned.

Vinz was nearly run over by the moving police car. He describes that as he watched the moving police car speed closer and closer to him and his other comrades, everything felt surreal. It was fortunate that he had agency, hence, he was able to dodge the moving police car, operated by a raging maniac, as he narrated.

<sup>30</sup> Non-verbatim, but that is the gist.

<sup>31</sup>ABS-CBN News. "WATCH: Police car runs over protesters after US embassy scuffle." ABS-CBN News. October 19, 2016. Accessed January 20, 2018.

<http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/19/16/watch-police-car-runs-over-protesters-after-us-embassy-scuffle>. Updated as of Oct 19 2016 05:21 PM

**Figure 2.** Vinz (encircled in red) nearly run over by the police car driven by PO3 Franklin Kho.



**Figure 3.** Vinz dodging the police car.



**Figure 4.** Vinz getting himself to safety.



After the chaos subsided and after Vinz had gotten himself to safety later that night, he browsed through his Facebook Newsfeed and found that the incident was not given much importance at the time. Hence, he decided to “share” a post by Pinoy Weekly (a Facebook page) regarding the incident, as seen on **Figures 5 - 6**.

On 20 October 2016, a day after the US Embassy incident, Vinz decided to post a status narrating what had transpired. It was the first post that he has set to “Public,” intending to reach a wider audience. **Figures 7 – 9** are the screenshots from Vinz’s status.



**Figure 5.** Pinoy Weekly's post that Vinz shared after the incident occurred

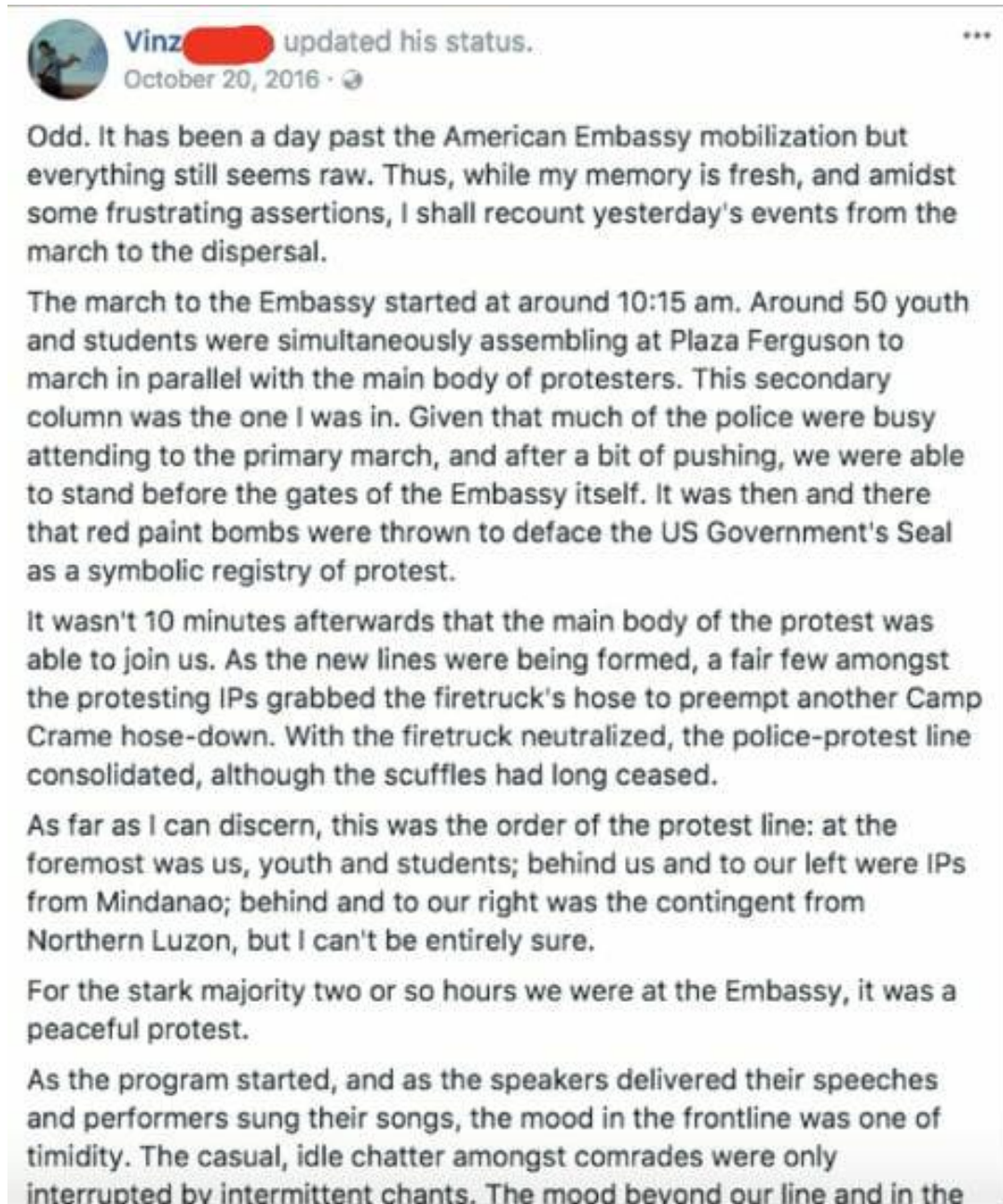


**Figure 6.** Pinoy Weekly's caption on the post that Vinz shared on his timeline.





**Figure 7.** The first part of Vinz's status.



**Figure 8.** The second part of Vinz's status.

ranks of the police was also of calm. We could hear the same manner of small talk from the police. The atmosphere was so easy that laughs were actually shared between us and the police.

However, as the program drew to a close, we noticed a number of changes in the ranks of the police. For one, the police line has received reinforcements. Two, truncheons were being distributed to the officers opposite us. It was clear then that they were going to push us. In the conduct of protests, this is to be expected and comrades are oriented to steadily withdraw to keep the cohesion of the protest line. By now, the police were repeating lines such as "Ma'am/sir, kapag may nangyari po, nautusan lang po kami ah".

But the development that rang alarm bells was the presence of SWAT teams, black-clad, and armed with long arms - assault rifles. I heard an address from the police to step a bit back. We couldn't, those behind us is yet to budge as the command to withdraw was yet to be given. Not even a minute passed, we heard a command for the police to raise shields. Thus commenced the pushing and shoving that the media loves to capture. We held ground as preparations to withdraw were being completed. A singular bang was heard and I saw a puff of smoke descend on us. It was teargas. I looked to my right and my rear and saw that our lines were broken, people were fleeing. A large gap between us and the police was present.

At the corner of my eye, I saw a speeding vehicle. I turned and saw the subject of yesterday's terror. Events from the numerous videos transpired, and I was eventually pulled to the side. People were fleeing and the police were in hot pursuit. Our small group of four decided to cross Roxas Boulevard to avoid the police. Officers caught on to us, beating us with shields and sticks - while we were running away. We rested at a cafe whose employees were kind enough to dispense care. Police were rushing past us to Kalaw en masse so we rightly decided to head the other way and go back to Plaza Ferguson. From there, we were

**Figure 9.** The third part of Vinz's status.



While I was conducting the interview with Vinz, he stated that he felt it was his ethical imperative to raise awareness on the issue. Clearly, the Gaze/Power Relations and Panopticism have manifested in this selected Facebook-shaming post. The “gaze alert” was clearly raised, hence, Vinz’s decision to share the Pinoy Weekly’s post and to write a status update narrating the incident. Based on the number of reactions on **Figure 9**, it is clear that Vinz has achieved his goal of informing “netizens” of the injustice. The presence of the unbalanced power relations between Vinz and PO3 Franklin Kho is evident on how Vinz feels, views, and “gazes at” the subject of his Facebook-shaming post.<sup>1</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Gaze/Power Relations and Panopticism is clearly evident in this study, specifically in my interview with Vinz. Although I was unable to meet my goal of conducting interviews with three respondents,<sup>2</sup> I can assume that the two other respondents would also feel that it has become their ethical imperative to warn other individuals of a certain Criminal who has violated the norms or has committed a crime. It should be noted that in this study, Vinz posted the status updates on Facebook on his own imperative. The “prohibition aspect” of Power, as I have hypothesized in the earlier paragraphs, is what also drives Victims such as Vinz, to narrate the incidents with the Criminal on Facebook. The

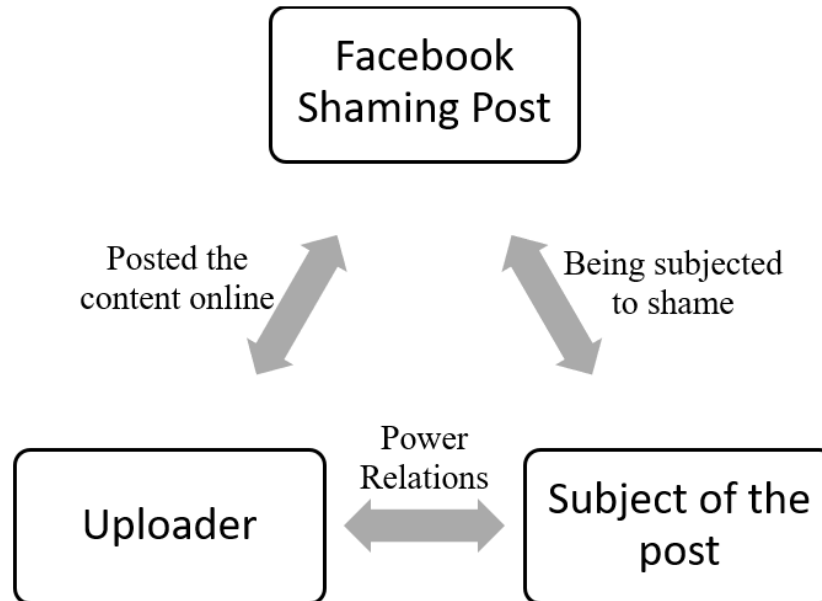
effect and manifestation of Panopticism on the Facebook-shaming phenomenon in the Philippines is regulatory and normalized. Panopticism regulates people’s behaviors in the tangible life as they driven by the fear of being shamed online. They may now be more mindful of their behavior in the “real world” to avoid being shamed online and becoming viral. Panopticism has normalized the Facebook-shaming phenomenon, as users of the site would frequently encounter the said posts. Vinz, himself, has stated in the questionnaire that he “usually encounters viral shaming posts on Facebook.” One can assume as well that like public shaming in the past (as discussed in the Introduction), cost effectiveness may also be a reason why people nowadays would shame people on Facebook, since it is cheaper than having Criminals imprisoned. Since our society does not practice public shaming as societies from the past have done so (this is thanks to human rights laws), individuals continue to chastise, condemn, and persecute Criminals through the emergence of a (relatively) new platform – Facebook. It is through Facebook that individuals exercise a new Panoptic eye.

---

<sup>1</sup> Please see the Appendix for Vinz’s responses on the Interview Questions.

<sup>2</sup> I will still conduct the interviews with the two remaining respondents.

**Figure 10.** The depiction of power relations that transpire in Facebook-shaming posts.



While this paper does not explore the manifestations of Panopticism from the audience of these Facebook-shaming posts, the power relations that transpire between the Victim and the Criminal is still interesting to note, observe, and study.

It is indeed interesting how the emergence of the World Wide Web and social media platforms have created numerous cultures and sub – cultures. I see much potential in the application of Postmodernism, Post-structuralism, Critical Theory, and other philosophical concepts and theories to social media.

## APPENDIX

### • VINZ'S RESPONSES TO THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Vinz S.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF SHAMING POST: US Embassy 2016

AGE: 23

SEX: Male

CITY OF RESIDENCE: Manila

Disclaimer: All information you provide will remain between the researchers and within the academe. It will not be publicly discussed. In the case of presenting the research, all names will be acronymically presented, as follows: first name, surname initial (ex. Maria Cruz will be presented as Maria C.)

1. Do you usually encounter viral shaming posts on Facebook?

YES

No

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What motivated you to upload the said incident on Facebook?

(No answer, but stated reasons in the interview)

3. Do you think that the subject of your post deserves to be chastised online through your post?

YES

No

If yes, why: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Upon the occurrence of the incident, what were your thoughts on the subject of your post?

I figured that posting about the incident was an absolute imperative. I strongly felt that people had to know about the post's subject and the unique insight I had into the matter.



5. How did you feel upon the occurrence of the incident? (Did you feel that you were powerless and unable to fight back?)

I felt horrified and for a moment the incident was very surreal, impossible even. I had agency, hence my actions during that encounter, but the odds were stacked against me.

6. Did you plan on immediately uploading the said post to Facebook?

No.

7. What made you decide to set the privacy settings of the post to “Public”?

To reach a wider audience.

8. After uploading the post about the incident, what were your thoughts on the subject of your post?

I still render the subject of my post as an absolute dreg to humanity, among the worst specimens our species ever had.

9. What were your thoughts on the subject of the post after the said post has incited reactions from Facebook users?

The rage and indignation regarding the subject and his actions are well – justified but ultimately (a) futile effort towards gaining a sense of justice.

10. Do you encourage people who have experienced similar incidents to post about it on Facebook?

YES

No

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABS-CBN News. "WATCH: Police car runs over protesters after US embassy scuffle." ABS-CBN News. October 19, 2016. Accessed January 20, 2018. <http://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/19/16/watch-police-car-runs-over-protesters-after-us-embassy-scuffle>. Updated as of Oct 19 2016 05:21 PM
- Anakbayan. "About." Anakbayan. Accessed January 20, 2018. <http://www.anakbayan.org/about/>.
- Bentham, Jeremy. *Proposal for a New and Less Expensive Mode of Employing and Reforming Convicts*. London, 1798. Accessed July 2018. <https://www.utilitarianism.com/panopticon.html>.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. 1977 ed. New York City, New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*. 1980 ed. Worcester: The Harvester Press Limited, 1980.
- Foucault, Michel. "Power, Moral Values, and the Intellectual." Interview by Michael Bess. Michael Bess. [michaelbess.org](http://michaelbess.org). Michael Bess' interview with Foucault was conducted on 3 November 1980 at the University of California, Berkeley.
- Goldman, Lauren. "Trending Now: The Use of Social Media Websites in Public Shaming Punishments." *American Criminal Law Review*, 2015, 52.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Gaze," definition 1.
- Sheridan, Connor. *Foucault, Power, and the Modern Panopticon*. Senior's Theses, Trinity College, Spring 2016. Connecticut: Trinity College Digital Repository, 2016. 1-89. <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1564&context=theses>.
- Tait, W. *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*. Vol. IV. 172-3. 1843. PDF.
- Taylor, Dianna. *Michel Foucault Key Concepts*. Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2011.
- Zephoria Digital Marketing. 2017. <https://zephoria.com/>.