

Technology and Ethics Lecture Series, Ethics + Emerging
Technologies Group, California Polytechnic State University,
May 13th, 2011.

Facebook Revisited

How the Business of Social Networking May
Redefine Our Sense of Right and Wrong



Facebook Revisited: How the Business of Social Networking May Redefine Our Sense of Right and Wrong

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

With more than 500 million members, Facebook is the largest social science database ever compiled in the history of the world.



Facebook Revisited: Overview

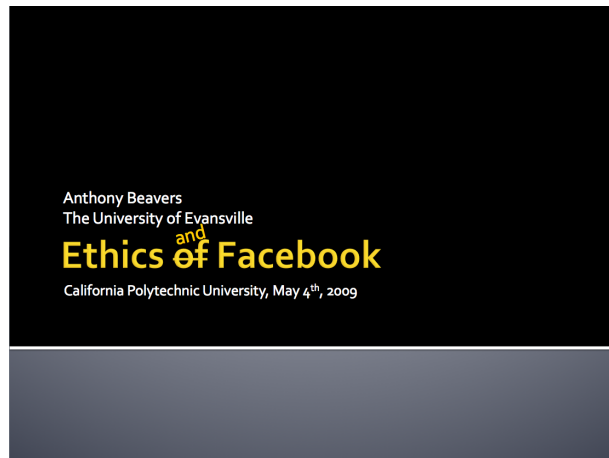
- Ethics and Facebook @ California Polytechnic – Spring 2009
- Playing around with Identity – Summer 2009
- Typicality Effects @ Carnegie Mellon – Summer 2010
- IATDH @ The University of California, Los Angeles – Summer 2010
- Just What Is Facebook? @ University of Evansville – Fall 2010
- Facebook Revisited @ California Polytechnic – Spring 2011



California Polytechnic / May 4th, 2009

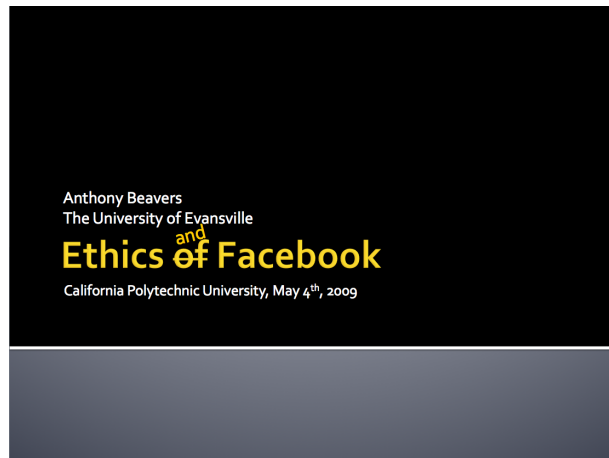
Five “Ethical Issues” concerning Facebook

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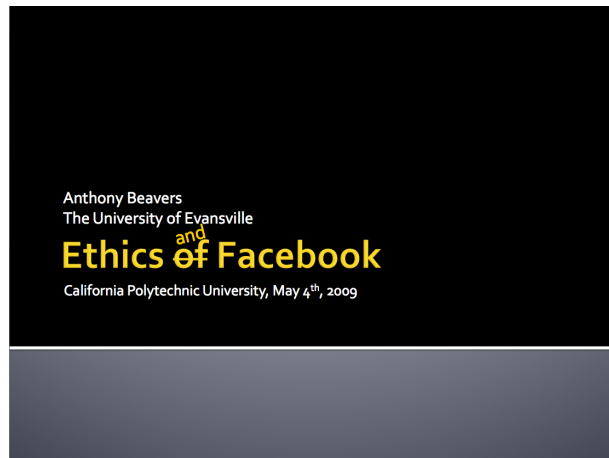


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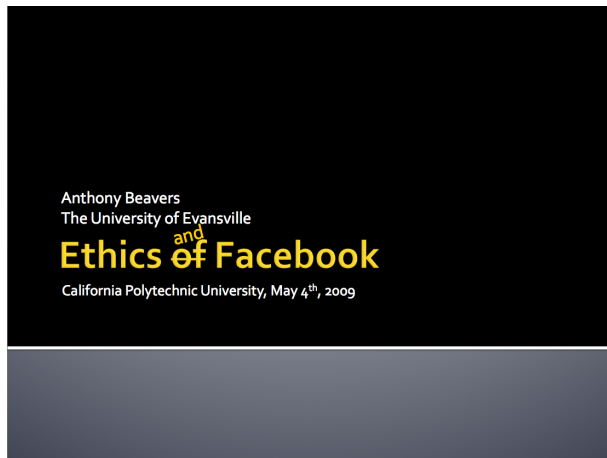


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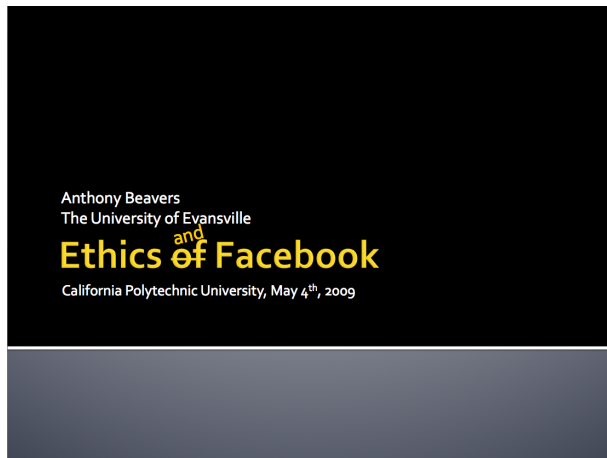
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4. Does Facebook contribute to remembrance and the coherence of one’s life for older users and will it eliminate the need for this for younger users?

5. Will the openness of our private lives on Facebook lead to restructuring the social and moral expectations placed on us as human beings and, in turn, help us better understand and accept ourselves for who and what we are?



Playing around with Identity



“Does the opportunity for self disclosure in Facebook put us more in touch with ourselves, as we struggle between a representation of self that is something we ourselves can accept and that others will also accept? Is it possible that the opportunity for constructing a public self-portrait in front of multiple constituencies carries with it the necessity of accountability? And might authentic self-identity be established in the interactivity between persons and less so in any finished self-representation?” (Wandel and Beavers, 2009)

Quoted in the Huffington Post, June 24th, 2010 in an article addressing, “What Would the Buddha Say to Mark Zuckerberg?”



Playing around with Identity



“In our quest for who we are and what our purpose is, we should not lose sight of the spirit of the game. We allow toddlers to play, to experiment and to try on roles. As lifelong learners, should we not be afforded this same level of experimentation? One could argue that Facebook is shaping our cultural norms by forcing binary choices of gender or providing limited categories of what is considered important—movies, books, etc. However, a more expansive way of looking at this is to see that the very idea of looking into what others have chosen to emphasize in these categories allows us to question our own unique interests, hobbies, political ideals, religious beliefs and sexual preferences. And if we enjoy ourselves as we explore the diversity of opinions that exist on Facebook in a range of frivolous to serious subjects, let us relax. As Plato is widely quoted as saying, ‘Life must be lived as play.’” (Wandel and Beavers, 2010)



CMU Network Model / July 2010



“More Fun with Jets and Sharks: Typicality Effects and the Search for the Perfect Attractors” – Presented at Carnegie Mellon University, July 26th, 2010

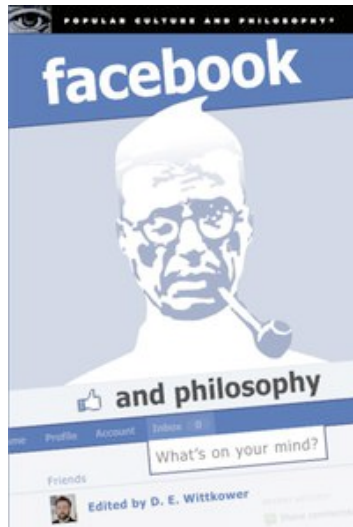
The computer model I presented at CMU was basically a network profiling machine, and in early May, 2010, while preparing my CMU presentation, I realized something of vital importance ...

... and dropped off of Facebook.

FWIW, I'm now back on, though cured of my Facebook addiction ... thanks to Dr. Lin.



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Just Say No to Facebook



If I can build a network profiling machine, so can Facebook ... and Google.

Facebook in particular is the most appalling spying machine that has ever been invented ...

- Julian Assange, May 2nd, 2011



NEH IATDH @ UCLA / August 2010

Networks and Network Analysis for the Humanities

Speakers included representatives from Google, Yahoo and Facebook, along with leading experts in network science from mathematics and computer science.

Aaron Koblin from Google showed us some of the most fascinating information visualizations imaginable. Jonathan Berger introduced us to information sonification.

Just what are these people and organizations up to?

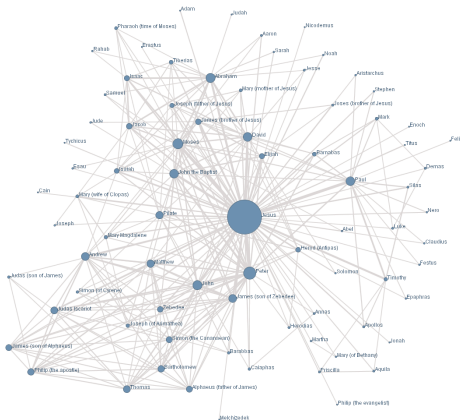


Image from <http://gii2.nagaokaut.ac.jp/gii/index.php?itemid=1088>



NEH IATDH @ UCLA / August 2010

“Innocuous” Facebook Quote



“Isn’t it cool that we can tell the political leanings of every individual in our 500 million person dataset.” – Jonathan Chang of Facebook, August 20th, 2010

Mr. Chang also explained why Facebook does not support a “dislike” button.



Just What Is Facebook? / Fall 2010

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“The thing that we are trying to do at Facebook, is just help people connect and communicate more efficiently.” - Mark Zuckerberg

“Advertising on the Web is less about just hitting someone with a message... It's about engagement [with that user].” — Mark Zuckerberg

“In reality, we wouldn't share your information in a way you wouldn't want ... The trust you place in us as a safe place to share information is the most important part of what makes Facebook work.” — Mark Zuckerberg



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"They trust me — dumb fucks," says Zuckerberg in one of the instant messages, first published by former Valleywag Nicholas Carlson at Silicon Alley Insider, and now confirmed by Zuckerberg himself in Jose Antonio Vargas's *New Yorker* piece. Zuckerberg now tells Vargas, "I think I've grown and learned a lot" since those instant messages. – September 13th, 2010



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“Already on the path to becoming an advertising powerhouse, the social networking company is laying the groundwork for its second act: a virtual currency system that some day could turn into a multibillion-dollar business.” – NY Times – September 22nd, 2010



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“More than 175 million people use Facebook. If it were a country, it would be the sixth most populated country in the world” – Mark Zuckerberg

On May 18th, 2010, Facebook passed the 500 million member mark, making it the third largest “country” in the world after India and China.



Just What Is Facebook? / Fall 2010

I pledge allegiance ...

More than half (57%) of the women polled said they communicate with people more online than they do face to face, and 39% called themselves Facebook addicts, according to a report from The Oxygen Media Insights Group, which is part of a company that focuses on television channels and Web sites for women. Moreover 34% of those between 18 and 34 said that checking Facebook is the first thing they do in the morning -- even before brushing their teeth or using the bathroom....

"Even more surprising is the 26% of women 18 to 34 who get up in the middle of the night to read text messages and the 21% who confessed to checking Facebook during the night," the report noted.

According to the survey, 31% of those polled said they are more confident about their online personas than they are about their real-life selves. Nineteen percent said they've gotten into arguments with loved ones about how much time they spend using their cell phones and PDAs (personal digital assistants).

A full 37% of women between the ages of 18 and 34 reported falling asleep with their PDA in their hands.

- Computerworld – July 12th, 2010



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Facebook is a country, the first virtual one of its kind, a complement or corollary to other virtually-organized political units (e.g., Al-Qaeda?), that, in the modern world, have necessitated military action over civic control. It has its virtual citizens who are more loyal to Facebook than they are to their own “real-life” governments, with an emerging currency, and hence, its own emerging economy.



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But as its citizens engage in political, social and economic action, playing around on Facebook, just what does Facebook know about you, what can it do with that information and what is that information doing to you?



Facebook Revisited / Spring 2011

“Facebook has always focused on giving people control over their experience so they can express themselves freely while knowing that their information is being shared in the way they intend.... Facebook provides simple and powerful tools that allow people to control what information they share and with whom they share it.”

- From the Facebook Factsheet, Downloaded on May 10th, 2011

This is **simply false**, as any Facebook user who has been paying attention already knows.



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Peak Break-up Times according to Facebook Status Updates



By Lee Byron & David McCondless



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4. If Facebook is indeed a kind of “virtual country,” should it be governed as a political entity (perhaps a democracy) and not as a business?

5. Is the openness of our private lives on Facebook restructuring our social and moral expectations without due critical consideration, and, if so, are we handing ownership of our personal identity and the power to reshape it over to a business?



Acknowledgements



National Endowment for the Humanities



National Science Foundation

Also the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics, University of California, Los Angeles; the Cognitive Science Program, the Library Science Program and the Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, Indiana University, Bloomington; and the University of Evansville. For their critical comments as interlocutors in shaping my thoughts for this presentation, I wish to thank Christopher Harrison, Patrick Lin, Tamara Wandel, Dylan Wittkower and the several students who have taken my courses in ethics and information technologies over the years.



Past Work Related to this Presentation

Typicality Effects and Resilience in Evolving Dynamic Networks. In FS-10-03, AAAI Press, 2010.

Playing Around with Identity (with Tamara Wandel). In *Facebook and Philosophy*, edited by Dylan Wittkower (Chicago: IL: Open Court, 2010), 89-96.

Can Virtue Be Safe in an Online World?: The Problems and Perils of Ungoverned Social Networking. Province Psi Leadership School & Convention, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity, November 6th-7th, 2010.

When Your Profile Knows More about You than You Do: The Power of Cognitive Computing, or Why I Left Facebook. Crick Lecture in the Cognitive and Neural Sciences, The University of Evansville, September 27th, 2010.

More Fun with Jets and Sharks: Typicality Effects and the Search for the Perfect Attractors. North American Meeting of the International Association for Computing and Philosophy (IACAP), Simulations and Their Philosophical Implications, Carnegie Mellon University, July 24th-26th, 2010.

The Ethics of Facebook. Technology and Ethics Lecture Series, Ethics + Emerging Technologies Group, California Polytechnic State University, May 4th, 2009.



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Forthcoming Work

In the Beginning Was the Word and Then Four Revolution in the History of Information. In *Luciano Floridi's Philosophy of Technology: Critical Reflections*, edited by Hilmi Demir (Springer, Philosophy of Engineering and Technology Book Series, 2011), forthcoming.

When Networks Know Us Better than We Know Ourselves: Information Monopolies, Information Brokering and the Need for Public Policy Governance (with Jesse Miller). In *Ethical Guidance for Emerging Pervasive Information and Communication Technology (PICT): Challenges, Opportunities, and Safeguards* (working title), edited by Kenneth D. Pimple, in process, forthcoming.

Hybrid Networks: Transforming Networks for Social and Textual Analysis into Teleodynamic and Predictive Mechanisms (with Christopher Harrison). Institute for Advanced Topics in the Digital Humanities, Networks and Network Analysis for the Humanities, follow-up meeting, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics (IPAM), University of California, Los Angeles, October 20th-22nd, 2011.

