Facebook Use on Campus: A Social Capital Perspective on Social Network Sites

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Overview

- Social network sites
- Facebook on campus
- “The benefits of facebook friends”: Facebook use and social capital
- Educational uses of Facebook and blogs
Social Network Sites

“web-based services that allow individuals to

(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,
(2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and
(3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” - boyd & Ellison (2007)"
An estimated 79-95% of all undergraduates have Facebook accounts.
Facebook: More Popular Than Porn

By BILL TANCER

Wednesday, Oct. 31, 2007
Who is using Facebook on college campuses?

Demographic predictors of SNS usage:
- White students → Facebook
- Hispanic students → Myspace
- Parents with less education → Myspace
- Parents with more formal education → Facebook

When are students using Facebook?

Source: Golder et al., “Rhythms of social interaction: messaging within a massive online network”
What are students doing on Facebook?

Engaging in online self-presentation

(PROFILE HERE, omitted for online slides)
YOUR PRIVACY IS AN ILLUSION

Bank intern busted by Facebook

Who says Facebook is the province of the young? Increasingly, the 30something bosses of naive recent college grads are proving adept at turning the social network against its earliest adopters. Kevin Colvin, an intern at Anglo Irish Bank's North American arm, was busted when he told his manager, Paul Davis, that he'd miss work due to what colleagues took to be a "family emergency". Davis turned up the photo above, freshly posted to Facebook from the Halloween party Colvin apparently missed work to attend, and attached it to his reply, copying the rest of the office as he did it. The email thread is now spreading around the net. After the jump, the entire exchange, and the incriminating photo.
What are students doing on Facebook?
Data collection

● Surveys
  ● August, 2005: series of items in survey given to entire incoming first-year class at MSU (N=1440)
  ● April, 2006: random sample of MSU undergraduates (N=286)
  ● April, 2007: participants from 2005 survey (N=94) plus new random sample (N=482)

● Interviews and cognitive walk-throughs
  ● Spring, 2007: Focus on FB “Friendship” (N=18)

● Automated capture of web content
  ● Spring, 2006: Periodic downloads of the MSU Facebook site
Students are engaging in social behavior on Facebook

Converting latent ties to weak ties
Maintaining existing relationships
Resurrecting past relationships

Facebook use is implicated in the formation & maintainence of social capital.
Converting latent ties to weak ties

Facebook enables **learning about acquaintances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personal Info</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong></td>
<td>MSU Scuba Club; Jim Abernethy's Scuba Adventures; ZZ Underwater World; SCUBA Instructor; Photographer; Seapics.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interests:</strong></td>
<td>scuba diving; underwater hockey; photography; sharks; flip cup; chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Favorite Music:</strong></td>
<td>dave matthews band, weezer, guster, ray charles, the beetles, alkaline trio, the white stripes, ben harper, trick daddy, thelonious monk, black eyed peas, norah jones, guns n' roses, nirvana, outkast, miles davis, kanye west, gorillaz, john coltrane, electric six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Favorite Movies:</strong></td>
<td>i'm a james bond junkie; jaques cousteau's ocean adventures; blue planet; JAWS, the abyss, the italian job, mr. and mrs. smith, anchorman, bourne identity/supremacy, the usual suspects, ronin, pirates of the caribbean, fifth element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Favorite Books:</strong></td>
<td>Anything by Carl Hiaasen; National Geographic (I know it's not a book – shut up); The Metaphysical Club; Kurt Vonnegut's books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Favorite Quotes:** | "How inappropriate to call this planet Earth."

Dec. 7, 2007
Nicole Ellison | ECAR
Converting latent ties to weak ties

Facebook enables managing a large network of weak ties
“[Facebook] just makes it a little bit more intimate in your friendships with people. And gets more information out there that like maybe someone would feel weird asking me, like what I like to do.”
“I know people that use [FB] a lot, but I feel like they use it after they meet someone. If they meet them once they keep in contact after, even though they only knew them a little bit. But I don’t really know people that make friends through Facebook, but maybe they make better friends through Facebook…. I’ve never known someone who just looked for someone and made friends or went out with them.”
Maintaining existing relationships

“Honestly, I can’t remember what I did before Facebook. It sounds really pathetic, but it’s just so easy to access information about people…. Instead of, “do you have this person’s phone number?” or, “oh God, where do they live, they live in this dorm but I need the room number,” it’s just so easy to just go on there and find it.
Resurrecting past relationships

“I think [Facebook] is very good for networking . . . I guarantee every single person in [my] high school will make an effort to maintain those facebook friendships and so that when we’re all in our forties, go back to our reunion, and we’ll still be able to get in touch with each person we know. You know, “so and so is a doctor.” And, we wouldn’t hesitate to call on them for a favor, just because we went to the same high school . . . .”
Total estimated Facebook friends; est. actual friends

- All Friends: 37% Actual
- MSU Friends: 34%
Social Capital

- In simple terms: benefits we reap from our relationships with others
- Putnam (2000) distinguishes between bridging and bonding social capital
Bridging Social Capital

linked to “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1982), loose connections who may provide useful information or new perspectives for one another, but typically not emotional support

“… technologies that expand one’s social network will primarily result in an increase in available information and opportunities — the benefits of a large, heterogeneous network” (Donath & boyd, 2004).
Bonding Social Capital

reflects strong ties with family and close friends, who might be in a position to provide emotional support or access to scarce resources
Maintained Social Capital


refers to social capital associated with acquaintances from a *previously inhabited* community (such as high school)
Survey Items: Facebook Intensity

About how many total Facebook friends do you have at MSU or elsewhere?

In the past week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day have you spent on Facebook?

Facebook is part of my everyday activity
I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook
Facebook has become part of my daily routine
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while
I feel I am part of the Facebook community
I would be sorry if Facebook shut down
Findings: Bridging Social Capital

“After first controlling for demographic factors, psychological well-being measures, and general Internet use, the extent to which students used Facebook intensively still contributed significantly (p<.0001) to bridging social capital” (Adj. $R^2=.46$)
Bridging Social Capital

With Facebook:

one’s extended social network (“friends of friends”) becomes visible
can more easily keep in touch with weak ties
communication is easier (technically and socially; online and offline)
Importance of Bridging SC

- Period between ages 18-25: “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2000)
  Period of frequent change, exploration of different possibilities and roles, relative freedom from social roles and normative explorations

- Bridging social capital may be especially important during this time
  Exposure to new perspectives and information
  SNSs may be especially useful for introducing emerging adults to new people and ideas
Findings, Continued

Facebook Intensity also significantly predicted bonding social capital (Adj. $R^2 = .23$) and maintained social capital (Adj. $R^2 = .17$)
Interaction of Facebook Use Intensity & Satisfaction with MSU Life on Bridging Social Capital
Interaction of Facebook Intensity & Self Esteem on Bridging Social Capital

Facebook Use Intensity

Bridging Social Capital

Low Self Esteem

High Self Esteem

Facebook Use Intensity

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Longitudinal data

Internet Use
- Hours/day:
  - 2006: 2:58
  - 2007: 4:04

Facebook Use
- Minutes/day:
  - 2006: 32.56
  - 2007: 53.76

Number of Friends
- 2006: 223
- 2007: 339

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Facebook in the classroom

Very little published research
National School Boards Association (2007)
Perkel’s “cut and paste” literacy

Potential benefits:
Already integrated into students’ daily practices
Higher level of engagement?
Potential to make identity information more salient during class discussions
Adds “social” peer-to-peer component
Digital literacy skills
Facebook as a course communication tool
The **Stanford** Facebook Class
Persuasive Apps & Metrics

**Update:** students—Check out the [private Facebook group.](#)
Everyone else—Join the [public Facebook group for the class.](#)
Press—Check out the [Press page.](#)

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**CS377W: Creating Engaging Facebook Apps**
Stanford University Computer Science | Fall 2007 | 3-4 units
Class Meetings: Thursday 2:15-5:05
Optional Lab: Tuesday 2:15-4:05

**Instructors:**
- **Dr. BJ Fogg**
  - Instructor
- **Dave McClure**
  - Instructor
- **Dan Ackerman**
  - Greenberg
  - Head TA
- **Yee Lee**
  - Team Coach

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**We're studying Facebook**
The Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab creates insight into how computing products—from websites to mobile phone software—can be designed to change what people believe and what they do. For that reason, we're studying Facebook—it's highly persuasive.
Concerns: FB integration into formal learning

Facebook: accountability to the University?
  - Terms Of Service, IP, privacy, archiving
Exposure to advertising messages
Non-users?
FERPA considerations?
Reshaping of instructor-student relationship?
Student resistance?
Potential Educational Benefits of Blogs

- Focus on critical skill of writing
- Encourages students to engage with positions divergent from their own
- Students are more invested because there is a larger audience
- Increases digital literacy
- Supports peer-to-peer learning and student-to-instruction knowledge sharing
- Learning becomes less time and space-bound
Final thoughts

Facebook is a privately held corporation and thus unaccountable to higher ed institutions

SNSs can have positive outcomes for students and the community
- social capital findings
- digital literacy skills
- critical professional skills

Don’t hide from SNSs or ban them. Figure out ways to use them in ways that benefit organization and students and as a “teaching moment”
- Alumni outreach, library holdings, event publicity, matching students as mentors or roommates.
Thank you!
nellison@msu.edu

