CS 4803 Social Computing: Social System Design I

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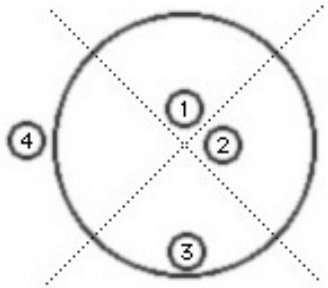
"Social Translucence: An Approach to Designing Systems that Support Social Processes"

- "Socially translucent systems" – visibility, awareness, accountability
- Many analogies to physical world social encounters
- "Translucence" stands for the power of constraints
  - In face to face interactions, physical space is translucent (and not transparent) to socially salient information; it is an important resource for structuring interactions

- Concept of *knowledge community*, a place within which people would discover, use, and manipulate knowledge, and could encounter and interact with others who are doing likewise.

- Design of socially translucent systems:
  - *Making activity visible*
  - *Conversation Visualization and Restructuring*
  - *Organizational Knowledge Spaces (managing visibility and privacy)*
- Design of a system called Babble, a knowledge management system which makes social information visible, aware, and accountable
  - Social proxies
  - Group awareness



(a) proxy layout

(b) animation rule

Instant messaging for collaboration: A case study of a high-tech firm

- Analyze instant messaging in a high-tech firm.
- Identify the collaborative practices of individuals in mediated work environments by looking at uses of IM
- Discern what social processes are reflected in employees' use of IM
- Investigate how three factors proposed by Erickson and Kellogg (2000) to support social processes—visibility, awareness and accountability—are used in an IM system
- Findings:
  - IM breaks down social barriers and allows individuals to engage with others more easily
  - IM facilitates collaboration
  - IM extends community awareness to patterns of behavior, allowing users to become more conscious of—and potentially more involved with—the dynamics of their groups and social networks

- IM does not always create greater connectivity. Employees saw IM as a useful tool because it creates distance between themselves and their superiors
- Highlights some of the challenges of social translucence theory in the IM context – "employees feel compelled to reply to messages because as receivers they know that the senders are aware that they have received the messages"
  - The IM system provides occasion for both disclosure and concealment
- "The downside of social translucence in IM is that a user may not always want to convey social information about him- or herself."
  - If close ties link employees, then they use visibility information to stay aware of each other's online activities. However, if workers do not know each other or do not share strong ties, visibility does not result in awareness

Your reflections…

Both studies look at STT in the context of a corporate environment.

How would these considerations of STT change if it were a different environment?

How is it different now that different corporations are adopting social media platforms?

Johnnie: “Facebook does not come with an instruction manual, so how do they develop a system that acts as a glass door?”

Kevin: In the design of socially translucent systems, how can we factor in “the hierarchy and roles involved in being available online”?

Can Twitter and Facebook be considered socially translucent systems?

Simplistic venues like IRC chats (back in the day), Google talk (today), and 4chan forums are hugely popular, though not socially translucent. Why have they worked?

Important principles of design of socially translucent systems (environment, history, comm. channel etc.). Are these situations when these principles may not benefit candid social exchange?

Social media platforms have been enforcing a culture of awareness of a "community" and identification with a "community" of people, rather than individuals. Visibility is also often in terms of whether a "community" is there. How do you think these features revisit the assumptions of the social translucence theory?

Where do you place the social of IM and other semi-synchronous forms of social exchange in a workplace setting? How about in an academic setting and a social setting? *Think in terms of the attributes of socially translucent design (visibility, awareness, accountability)*

How do privacy issues play out in terms of allowing one to be “visible” per the social translucence theory?

Quan-Hasse et al. point out that "different types of ties link people and that each type of tie requires them to communicate differently". How would a socially translucent system adapt to fit these subtleties of ties?

New Twitter Activity Viz

- Link: https://ads.twitter.com/user/<your_username>/tweets
- Tell me two interesting things you learn from this?