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Title: The Social Cyborg: A Study of the Cyborgisation of Facebook Users and its Consequences

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Abstract:

This dissertation examines the notion that social networking technology turns its users into cyborgs. The paper also investigates how Facebook is changing its users over time in order to look for possible consequences of this cyborgisation.

The concept of the cyborg is explored, being tracked from a myth of science fiction, to a social metaphor and a social reality in the context of computer mediated communication. The notion of identity as a construct is then introduced, using the example of the personal homepage as a precursor to Facebook. The Internet is discussed as an alternative to real world interaction in the context of the public sphere and the community and a background is provided to some of the debate surrounding the value of computer-mediated relationships. Social networking technology is responsible for the breaking down of the boundaries between private and public, therefore emphasis is placed on attitudes towards privacy. A case is made for regarding seemingly excessive use of Facebook as a sign of strong affinity or technological dependency rather than addiction.

A sample of 416 Facebook users were surveyed using open and closed questions in order to gather data on their usage patterns and attitudes towards the site and online privacy. Users were found to have become fully integrated the technology to the point where long-term users seemed reliant on Facebook. Disparate attitudes towards privacy were also found between long-term users and recent adopters of the site, with the early adopters more likely to share personal information on the site.