“I Have a Narrow Thought Process”: Constraints on Explanations Connecting Inferences and Self-Perceptions

Emilee Rader, Samantha Hautea, and Anjali Munasinghe
emilee@msu.edu, hauteasa@msu.edu, amunasinghe1620@gmail.com
Department of Media and Information, Michigan State University
I HAVE READ AND AGREE TO THE TERMS OF USE

A typographical critique of things I agreed to without reading.

Graham Reynolds on Control
Facebook Ad Preferences

Google Ad Settings

How your ads are personalized

Ads are based on personal info you've added to your Google Account, data from advertisers that partner with Google, and Google's estimation of your interests. Choose any factor to learn more or update your preferences. Learn more

- 45-54 years old
- Female
- Target
- Action & Adventure Films
- Apparel
- Apple iOS
- Autos & Vehicles
- Baseball
- Beaches & Islands
- Beauty & Fitness
- Books & Literature
- Business & Productivity Software
- Camera & Photo Equipment
- Car Rental & Taxi Services
- Cards & Greetings
- Casual Games
- Celebrities & Entertainment News
- Cats
- Casual Games
- Celebrities & Entertainment News
Our Approach...

• Show people the inferences Facebook or Google had made about them
• Elicit participants' explanations for the connection (or lack thereof) between themselves and the inferences
• Focus on why some inferences may be easier for them to relate to themselves than others
• Understand what makes inferences make sense to people
• Identify implications for informed consent to inferences
Step 1: Survey to rate inferences
95 respondents, 44 Facebook and 51 Google

• **sensible**: It makes sense that [inference] is associated with me.
• **relevant**: [inference] is relevant to who I am as a person.
• **accurate**: [inference] is an accurate description of my everyday activities.
Step 2: Interviews about reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Aware?</th>
<th>Inferences</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P01</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>43</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3.07</td>
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</table>

**Facebook Participants**

**Google Participants**

**Arts & Entertainment**
- Science Fiction & Fantasy Films
- Photographic & Digital Arts
- Performing Arts
- Folk & Traditional Music
- Visual Art & Design
- Indie & Alternative Music
- TV Documentary & Nonfiction
- Classical Music
- Rock Music
- Pop Music
- Metal (Music)
- Jazz
- Dance & Electronic Music
- Country Music
- Celebrities & Entertainment News
- Blues

**Autos & Vehicles**
- Custom & Performance Vehicles
- Vehicle Shopping

**Computers & Electronics**
- Home Automation
- Camera & Photo Equipment
- Distributed & Cloud Computing
# Types of reactions

**Plausible, Implausible, and No Connection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plausible reactions: were believable, with specific evidence for why it made sense</th>
<th>Implausible reactions: were initially not believable, but then rationalized</th>
<th>No Connection reactions: did not make sense, and participants were certain it did not apply to them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: [Parents (All)] Because I have three kids, <strong>well, a lot of my posts are about my kids.</strong> – P13, Woman, Facebook</td>
<td>Example: [Coffee &amp; Tea] I don’t drink coffee. My husband does though. <strong>So again maybe, you know?</strong> – P18, Woman, Google</td>
<td>Example: [Golf Equipment] I don’t know why that’s on there... golf equipment? <strong>I don’t golf. That’s weird.</strong> – P04, Woman, Google</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acceptance and Discomfort Coexist

“I mean, there’s a level of acceptance that it happens, but then the more you think about it, it kind of starts to disturb you a little bit more... some of the things that they make connections for, it takes you a while in your head to get to how they got to that. And it’s a little bit, I don’t know, disconcerting or something. It’s just a little bit uncomfortable.”

–P22, Woman, Google
Platforms which place a priority on obtaining truly informed consent should restrict the inferences they make about users to those which provoke plausible reactions.
Thank You!

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This presentation is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. CNS-1524296.