

Online Communication in the Digital Age
Prof. Rashmi Gaur
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology
Lecture – 43
The Social Network: Navigating Ethics in Entrepreneurship

Good morning, dear friends and welcome to this module. In the context of our previous discussions, today we will be focusing on a 2010 film, The Social Network. We should of course ask why film is being introduced as a narrative text here?

Christian Metz, the famous French film theorist in his essays has said that film is not a conventional language, but another kind of semiotic system with articulations of its own. The first volume of his essays was published in French in 1968. However, the first English translations had come out in 1974 only. Critics like Constance Pendley clearly state that the modern film theory begins with Metz. Films construct reality and are a significant mode of narration. In general, film is a narrative medium or at least a medium of many narrative capacities simultaneously. By delving into the lenses of Barthes, Deleuze and Baudrillard, we can analyze how films transcend mere observation to become intricate and significant forms of narration that contribute towards producing reality.

Roland Barthes: Myth and Semiotics*

- Barthes's semiotic theory emphasizes how signs and symbols shape meaning in communication.
- He also discusses how myths are constructed through the elevation of everyday signs into culturally significant ideas.
- Films as a Mythmaker:
 - Films often take real events or subjects and elevate them to the level of cultural significance through cinematic techniques.
 - The selection of images, interviews, and narratives contributes to the creation of a film's "myth" – a narrative that constructs a particular understanding of reality for the audience.



Roland Barthes (1915-1980)
Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

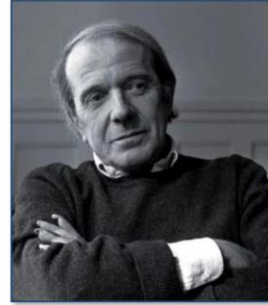
*Barthes, Roland. "Mythologies: The complete edition." NY: Hill and Wang, 2013.

Let us first of all look at the concepts regarding myth and semiotics as discussed by Roland Barthes. His semiotic theory emphasizes how signs and symbols shape meaning in communication. He also discusses how myths are constructed through the elevation of everyday signs into culturally significant ideas. We can also look at films as myth makers

as they often take real events or subjects and elevate them to the level of cultural significance through cinematic techniques. The selection of images, interviews and narratives contributes to the creation of the myth of a film, a narrative that constructs a particular understanding of reality for the audience.

Gilles Deleuze: Time-Image and Perception*

- Temporal Disruption:
 - Many films break away from linear narratives and introduce fragmented timelines, multiple perspectives, and non-linear editing.
 - This temporal disruption, typical of the time-image cinema, highlights how different subjective realities can coexist, challenging traditional notions of a singular and coherent reality.
- Perceptual Complexity:
 - Deleuze's concepts on the "crystal-image" and perceptual synthesis allows films to present a range of sensory and cognitive experiences, leading to a more multifaceted construction of reality.



Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995)
Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

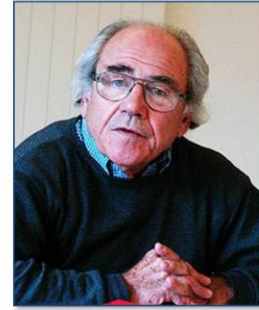
*Deleuze, Gilles. "Cinema II: the time-image." *Philosophers on Film from Bergson to Badiou: A Critical Reader*. Columbia University Press, 2019. 177-199.



When we refer to the philosophy of Deleuze, we can refer to temporal disruption and perceptual complexities in context of his theories. Many films break away from linear narratives and introduce a timeliness which is fragmented, perspectives which are multiple and editing which is non-linear. This temporal disruption which is typical of the time image cinema highlights how different subjective realities can co-exist, challenging traditional notions of a singular and coherent reality. Deleuze's concepts on the crystal image and perceptual synthesis allow films to present a range of sensory and cognitive experiences leading to a more multifaceted construction of reality.

Jean Baudrillard: Simulacra and Hyperreality*

- Films as Simulacra:
 - As films reconstruct reality through editing, manipulation, and selection, they create a representation that can become more compelling or impactful than the original reality.
 - This representation may eventually overshadow the original events or subjects.
- Hyperreal Nature of Films:
 - Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality: the line between reality and representation blurs.
 - Films may amplify certain aspects, omit others, or manipulate emotions and narratives to create a hyperreal version of reality that may not correspond to the unmediated experience.



Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007)
Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

experience. Baudrillard, Simulacra and simulation. University of Michigan press, 1994.



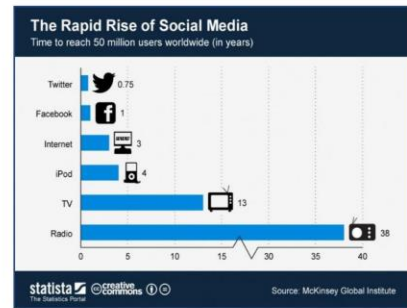
And of course, we have to refer to Baudrillard, his ideas about simulacra as well as hyperreality. So, how can we treat films as simulacra? Films reconstruct reality through editing, manipulation and selection and create a representation that can become more compelling or impactful than the originally stated reality. This representation may eventually overshadow the original events or subjects. Films also have a hyperreal nature. Baudrillard's idea of hyperreality alerts us to the line between reality and representation and how it can blur gradually through the medium of film. Films may amplify certain aspects, omit others or manipulate emotions and narratives to create a hyperreal version of reality that may not necessarily correspond to the unmediated experience.

The 2010 film, *The Social Network* depicts the journey of Facebook. It also explores the lessons from the perspective of an entrepreneur as well as ethical implications which we can learn from the journey of Facebook's inception. At a time when social media platforms were still in their infancy, we find that Facebook emerged as a groundbreaking platform that fundamentally changed the way people communicate.

Context: The Rise of Social Media

- In the early 2000s, social media platforms emerged as powerful tools for connecting people across the globe.
- Facebook, founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, quickly gained popularity and became a dominant force in the social media landscape.
- The site was conceived at a time when the web was altering from a place that was understood in terms of a metaphorical library or information highway – i.e., somewhere people went to get information – to what is commonly described as 'Web 2.0', characterized by user-generated content, a participatory culture, and increasingly social media (Tagg and Seargeant, 2015).

*Tagg, Caroline, and Philip Seargeant. "Facebook and the discursive construction of the social network." *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication*. Routledge, 2015. 339-353.



Source: <https://cdn.statcdn.com>

Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 and very quickly gained popularity and became a dominant force in the landscape of the social media. The site was conceived at a time when the web was altering. At the time when Facebook was formed, the web was understood in terms of a metaphorical library or only an information highway and gradually it was changing towards what is commonly described as web 2.0 which is characterized by a user-generated content, a participatory culture and increasingly associating social media tools.

As we have already discussed in previous modules, the influence of Facebook in today's digital era cannot be overstated. It has transcended its initial purpose as a social networking site only and has become a major player in shaping various aspects of society including communication, dissemination of information as well as commercial activities. Zuckerberg's role as the founder and visionary behind Facebook highlights the significance of his leadership and the spirit of entrepreneurship in shaping the platform's growth and success.

In our analysis of the film, we will also be referring to the ethical values explained in the previous modules and use incidents from the film, the portrayals of different characters as well as plot and take them up as case studies.

Overview

- *The Social Network*, directed by David Fincher and released in 2010, portrays the creation and growth of Facebook.
- The film is based on Ben Mezrich's book *The Accidental Billionaires* (2009) and offers a dramatized narrative of the events and individuals involved in the early stages of Facebook's development.
- It explores Mark Zuckerberg's entrepreneurial journey, legal controversies, the role of key figures like Eduardo Saverin and Sean Parker, and the social and cultural impact of Facebook.



Source: <https://posterspy.com>

Directed by David Fincher in 2010, *The Social Network* is based on a book, *The Accidental Billionaires* which was published by Ben Mezrich in 2009. It offers a dramatized narrative of the events and individuals who were involved in the early stages of the development of the Facebook. It also explores Mark Zuckerberg's journey, controversies, the role of key figures like Eduardo Severin and Sean Parker and the social and cultural impact of Facebook.

Let us first take a look at the trailer of the film to get a better idea of the plot.

The Social Network: Trailer



Source: [@sonypictures](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I895KLmpLR4) Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I895KLmpLR4>

I want you to notice I need to do something substantial in order to get the attention of the clubs. Why? Because they're exclusive and fun and they lead to a better life. I'm not free. People want to go on the internet and check out their friends so why not build website that offers that friends, pictures, profiles. I'm talking about taking the entire social experience of college and putting it online. The site got 2,200 hits within two hours. Thousand. Twenty-two thousand. This idea is potentially worth millions of dollars. Millions! You stole our website. They're saying we stole the Facebook. I know what it said. So did we? A million dollars isn't cool. You know what's cool? A billion dollars. You're going to get left behind. It's moving faster than any of us ever imagined. Let's sue him in federal court. I can't wait to stand over your shoulder and watch you write as a chef. You guys were the inventors of Facebook. You've invented Facebook. Is there anything that you need to tell me? Your actions could have permanently destroyed everything I've been working on. We have been working on. Did you like being a joke? Do you want to go back to that? Mark! This is our time. You're being accused of intentionally breaching security, violating copyrights, violating individual privacy. Your best friend is suing you for 600 million dollars. As for the charges, I believe I deserve some recognition from this board. I'm sorry? Yes. I don't understand. Which part?

The social network is a loaded and incisive cinematic exploration of humanity's dark side that dives into the individual psyche when confined within a social structure that promotes individualism over community values.

- In *The Social Network*, set in America at the turn of the century, Fincher zooms into social institutions such as elite colleges and the nascent Internet-based industry.
- *The Social Network*'s principal character is an American white male antihero who navigates a dehumanizing system (an elite Ivy League school/Final Club) that often challenges his identity, manhood, and well-being (Castrillon, 2023).
- He is racing towards regaining his mental and emotional balance (learning the value of friendship and genuine interpersonal connection) by overcoming a difficult situation (the many court cases and losing his best friend and girlfriend) which operates as the protagonist's initiation towards recovering control over his life.

*Castrillon, Andres. David Fincher's White American Antihero, University of Colorado at Boulder, United States-Colorado, 2023

The film is set in America at the turn of the century. Fincher zooms into social institutions such as elite colleges and the nascent internet-based industry. The principal character of the film is an American white male anti-hero who navigates a dehumanizing system.

Andres has used the term dehumanizing system in the context of elite Ivy League schools or the final club that often challenges his identity, manhood and well-being. He is racing towards regaining his mental and emotional balance, learning the value of friendship as well as the significance of genuine interpersonal connections by overcoming a difficult situation, that is many court cases and losing the best friend and girlfriend, which operates as the protagonist's initiation towards recovering control over his life.

The social network as a film goes beyond the story of Facebook's founding to examine broader themes and messages. It delves into the complexities of human ambition, the consequences of success and the ethical choices that arise in the pursuit of success and sometimes in the pursuit of greatness also.

Themes and Messages Portrayed in the Film

- *The Social Network* explores themes such as ambition, innovation, and the complex nature of human relationships.
- The film delves into the consequences of success, including the strain it puts on personal connections and the ethical dilemmas that arise.
- It raises questions about the price of achievement, the nature of loyalty, and the blurred boundaries between friendship and business.
- The film also touches upon the societal impact of Facebook and the role of technology in shaping interpersonal connections.



Source: <https://flyntrok.com>

We can say that the film explores themes such as ambition, innovation and the complex nature of human relationships. It delves into the consequences of success including the strain it puts on personal connections as well as the ethical dilemmas that arise in the process. It also raises questions about the price of achievement, the nature of loyalty and the blurred boundaries between friendship and business. The film also touches upon the societal impact of Facebook and the role of technology in shaping interpersonal connections.

It portrays the intricate dynamics of friendship and business partnerships and raises thought-provoking questions about the impact of technology on society and the nature of interpersonal relationships as we have discussed. The social network as a film goes beyond the story of Facebook's founding to examine broader themes and messages.



It explores themes such as ambition, innovation and the complex nature of human relationships. It delves deep into the consequences of success including the strain it puts on personal connections as well as the ethical dilemmas that arise. It also raises questions about the price of achievement, the nature of loyalty and the blurred boundaries between friendship and business. The film also touches upon the societal impact of Facebook and the role of technology in shaping interpersonal connections.

The film makes us think about the intricate dynamics of friendship and business partnership and raises several thought-provoking questions about how should we really respond to the impact of technology as far as the nature of our interpersonal relationships are concerned. The film presents a fictionalized version of real-life individuals involved in the creation of Facebook.

Accuracy of Character Portrayal and Storylines

- The film captures the core narrative of Mark Zuckerberg's journey and the legal disputes involving Eduardo Saverin and the Winklevoss twins.
- However, it condenses and dramatizes events for storytelling purposes, taking creative liberties with the sequence and timing of certain events.
- The performances in the film, particularly Jesse Eisenberg as Zuckerberg and Andrew Garfield as Saverin, were highly acclaimed.



Andrew Garfield (left) and Jesse Eisenberg (right) in *The Social Network*
Source: Fincher, David, et al. *The Social Network*. USA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.

The film captures the core narrative of Mark Zuckerberg's journey and the legal disputes involving Eduardo Saverin and the Winklevoss twins. However, it condenses and dramatizes events for storytelling purposes, taking creative liberties with the sequence and timing of certain events. The performances in the film, particularly of Jesse Eisenberg as Zuckerberg and Andrew Garfield as Saverin, are highly acclaimed.

While the characters' personalities and motivations are captured, it is important for us to note that the film's characterizations are artistic interpretations rather than exact representations. The film's primary focus is on crafting engaging in dramatic storylines rather than presenting a documentary like accuracy. Thus, we will be analyzing the film adaptations of the real-life incidents behind the creation of Facebook and the ethical lessons we can learn from these events. The inspiration behind Facebook stemmed from

Zuckerberg's belief in the power of technology to bring people together and foster meaningful connections.

In February 2004, Zuckerberg, along with his college roommates, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes launched the Facebook.

Timeline of Facebook's Inception at Harvard University

- In February 2004, Mark Zuckerberg, along with his college roommates Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes, launched "Thefacebook."
- Initially restricted to Harvard University, the platform quickly gained popularity, and within a month, over half of the student population had signed up.
- In June 2004, the team expanded access to other Ivy League universities and eventually to universities across the United States and internationally.
- The rapid growth and engagement on the platform led to Zuckerberg dropping out of Harvard to focus on Facebook's development and expansion.



Source:
<https://www.thecrimson.com>



Initially, it was restricted to Harvard University, but the platform gained quick popularity and within a month, over half of the student population had signed up. In June 2004, the team expanded to other Ivy League universities and eventually to universities across the United States and internationally. The rapid growth and engagements on the platform led Zuckerberg to drop out of Harvard and to focus on the development and expansion of Facebook.

The timeline highlights the rapid adoption of the platform and the pivotal decision made by Zuckerberg to prioritize the development of the Facebook, eventually leading to its transformation into a global social media giant. The Facebook was conceived as a digital extension of the traditional college experience, bringing social interactions and connections into the online realm.

The Initial Concept of “Thefacebook”

- The original concept of "Thefacebook" was a digital directory that allowed Harvard University students to create profiles and connect with fellow students.
- The platform aimed to replicate the experience of traditional college facebooks, which contained photos and basic information of students.
- Users could create personal profiles, add friends, and join various interest groups to enhance social interactions within the university community.
- The initial focus was on providing a closed network exclusive to Harvard students, fostering a sense of community and familiarity.



Source: Fincher, David, et al. The Social Network. USA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.

The original concept of the Facebook was a digital directory that should allow Harvard University students to create profiles and connect with other fellow students. The platform aimed to replicate the experience of traditional college Facebooks, which contain photos and basic information of students. Users could create their own personal profiles, add friends, and join various interest groups to enhance social interactions within the university community. The initial focus was on providing a closed network exclusive to the students of Harvard University only, fostering a sense of community and familiarity.

This emphasis on creating a closed network allowed for a more personalized and tailored experience, mirroring the existing social dynamics on the campus. The expansion to other Ivy League universities marked a significant milestone in Facebook's growth trajectory. It showcased the scalability of the platform and its potential to transcend individual institutions, paving the way for the future expansion and global reach of this platform.

Expansion to Other Ivy League Universities

- Encouraged by the success at Harvard, "Thefacebook" expanded to other Ivy League universities, including Yale, Columbia, and Stanford.
- The expansion beyond Harvard allowed for a broader user base and increased opportunities for inter-university connections and collaborations.
- Each new university's inclusion required adapting the platform to accommodate different student populations and their respective networks.



Source: <https://www.aninews.in>

The expansion to other Ivy League universities, including Yale, Columbia, and Stanford, allowed for a broader user base and increased opportunities for inter-university connections and collaborations. The inclusion of each new university required adapting the platform to accommodate different student populations and their respective networks.

The positive response from these expansions further fueled the growth of Facebook and encouraged the team to consider broader accessibility. The success of these expansions also validated the appeal and value of Facebook social networking concept among university students. Opening the platform to a wider audience across the Ivy League universities, not only increased the user base of this platform, but also diversified its demographics, making it a platform for individuals of all ages and all backgrounds.

Facebook's Expansion Beyond Universities

- Following the success among Ivy League universities, Facebook gradually expanded its accessibility to other universities across the United States.
- The platform's expansion beyond universities started in 2006, allowing high school students to join and connect with their peers.
- In 2007, Facebook opened its doors to the general public, becoming available to anyone with a valid email address.
- This expansion democratized access to the platform, leading to a rapid increase in user adoption and establishing Facebook as a mainstream social networking platform.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com>

The expansion of the platform beyond universities started in 2006, allowing high school students to join and connect with their peers. In 2007, Facebook opened its doors to the general public and became available to anyone with a valid email address. This expansion democratized access to the platform, leading to a rapid increase in user adoption and establishing Facebook as a mainstream social networking platform.

This sparked a significant shift in Facebook's positioning, transforming it into a platform that transcended educational institutions and catered to a global audience. However, this endeavor was not without controversies. In the film, *The Social Network*, the portrayal of Mark Zuckerberg's actions vividly underscores the importance of integrity and honesty in business relationships, and it is demonstrated through his manipulation of his prints and collaborators. Several sequences in the film exemplify this theme, shedding light on the ethical lapses and negative consequences that can arise from deception. For example, in 2003, while still a student at Harvard University, Zuckerberg developed FaceMesh, a controversial website that allowed users to compare and rate the attractiveness of their peers based on photos.

Creation of Facemash

- In the opening sequence of the film, Mark Zuckerberg creates "Facemash," a website game that allows users to rate the attractiveness of female students by comparing their photos.
- He hacks into Harvard's student directories without permission to gather the photos.
- After spamming several internal emails and involving thousands of players, Harvard's internet system crashed.
- The incident earned Mark a six-month probationary period.
- His actions not only infringe upon the privacy of the individuals whose photos he uses but also breach the trust of his fellow students.



Source: <https://cdn.trendhunterstatic.com>

The website game FaceMash had allowed users to rate the attractiveness of only female students by comparing their photos. He hacked into Harvard's students' directories without permission to gather the photos, and after spamming several internal emails and involving thousands of players, Harvard's internet system ultimately crashed. This incident earned Mark a six-month probationary period. His actions not only infringe upon the privacy of the individuals whose photos he uses, but also a breach of trust as far as his fellow students are concerned.

- Facemash's creation serves as a foreshadowing of the ethical challenges Zuckerberg would face as he built Facebook.
- It hints at his willingness to prioritise personal gain over ethical considerations and the potential to exploit users' information.
- This sequence underscores the importance of recognizing early signs of ethical dilemmas and making responsible choices to mitigate potential harm.
- The film's depiction of Facemash's impact on individuals' lives underscores the ethical lesson of considering the potential consequences of one's actions, especially when wielding power.

This particular incident hints at Zuckerberg's willingness to prioritize personal gain over ethical considerations and the potential to exploit users' information. Perhaps the creation of FaceMash serves as a foreshadowing of the ethical challenges he would face as he built Facebook. This sequence in the film underscores the importance of recognizing early signs of ethical dilemmas and making responsible choices to mitigate potential harm. The film's depiction of FaceMash's impact on individuals' lives underscores the ethical lesson of considering the potential consequences of one's actions, especially while wielding power of any type.

Additionally, the introduction of Sean Parker into Zuckerberg's circle further exposes the complexities of honesty and integrity.

Sean Parker as a Mentor

- In *The Social Network*, the meeting between Mark Zuckerberg and Sean Parker serves as the turning point in Zuckerberg's entrepreneurial journey.
- Sean Parker's arrival marks a pivotal moment, as he introduces Zuckerberg to the world of venture capital, strategic networking, and visionary thinking.
- Parker's role as a mentor is emphasized by his experience as a co-founder of Napster and his ability to navigate the complex tech landscape.



Justin Timberlake as Sean Parker
Source: Fincher, David, et al. *The Social Network*.
USA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.

In the film, the meeting between Zuckerberg and Sean Parker serves as the turning point in Zuckerberg's entrepreneurial journey. Parker's arrival marks a pivotal point as he introduces Zuckerberg to the world of venture capital, strategic networking, and visionary thinking. Parker's role as a mentor is emphasized by his experience as a co-founder of Napster and his ability to navigate the complex tech landscape.

While Parker brings strategic insights and networking opportunities, his influence also leads Zuckerberg down a path of greater ambiguity in terms of ethical behavior. Let us take a look at a clip from the film that highlights when Mark starts to envision Sean Parker as a mentor.

Betrayal of Eduardo Saverin

- Eduardo's character plays the role of Mark's moral foil who constantly cautions Mark of the possible consequences of his questionable actions for most of the film.
- As the film progresses, Zuckerberg's manipulation becomes evident in his relationship with Eduardo Saverin, his friend and co-founder of Facebook.
- Zuckerberg dilutes Saverin's ownership stake without his knowledge, effectively pushing him out of the company.



Source: Fincher, David, et al. The Social Network. USA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.

Don't be impressed by all this. I read your blog. Oh, oh, you know, no, that was for web creams. You know why I started Napster? The girl I loved in high school was with the co-captain of the Varsity Lacrosse team and I wanted to take her from him, so I decided to come up with the next big thing. I didn't know that. Napster wasn't a failure. I changed the music industry for better and for always. It may not have been good business, but it pissed a lot of people off. And isn't that what your face mash was about? They're scared of me, pal, and they're going to be scared of you. What the VCs wanted to say, good idea, kid. Grown-ups will take it from here, but not this time. This is our time. This time you're gonna, you're gonna hand them a business card that says, I'm CEO, bitch. That's what I want for you. So where the hell is Eduardo? He's in New York. Sucking up to ad execs. He's got an internship. Companies here. A billion dollar companies here. Do you live in brief Facebook? Yes. I know you do. Eduardo wants to be a businessman and for all I know he's going to be a good one, but he shouldn't be in New York kissing Madison Avenue's ass. This is a once in a generation, holy shit idea. And the water under the Golden Gate is freezing cold. Look at my face and tell me I don't know what I'm talking about. Do you ever think about that girl? What girl? The girl from high school who was with the lacrosse thing. No. You guys are going to talk about bandwidth. We need Sean. 100 schools by the end of the summer? Yeah. Tell you what, gesture in good faith. While you're getting into 100 schools, I'll put you on two continents. Two continents. If you don't have a place to crash, I think you should definitely come and live with us. Let's line up some shots. Excuse me.

Mark is very impressionable here. He's extremely impressed with Sean's attitude and foresight into business and sees something in Sean that he truly wants to be confident, charismatic and intelligent.

When Sean talks him up by bringing a FaceMash, Mark tries to feebly explain that it had been a mistake. However, that is quickly overridden by Sean's better version of events. We can see Mark readily accepting that fact to bolster his ego. Parker's past controversies, including his involvement with Napster and legal issues, underscore the complexities of mentorship in the tech industry. The film's portrayal prompts viewers to consider the ethical dimensions of mentorship, especially when mentors bring their own baggage and values to any relationship. This is especially noted in Parker's involvement in Eduardo Severin's removal from the co-founder position of Facebook.

- While Eduardo goes to New York to find advertisers for the site, Mark and Sean get a half-a-million-dollar investment from Peter Thiel, a Silicon Valley-based investor.
- The company is incorporated, and in a new contract Sean Parker and Peter Thiel join as shareholders, while Eduardo's shares are sneakily set up to depreciate as new investors join in.
- The portrayal of Zuckerberg's decision to dilute Eduardo Saverin's ownership stake in Facebook also speaks to the theme of respecting intellectual property (the lack thereof in this case).



Source: Fincher, David, et al. The Social Network. USA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.

Eduardo's character plays the role of Mark's moral foil, who constantly cautions him of the possible consequences of his questionable actions for most of the film. As the film progresses, Zuckerberg's manipulation becomes evident in his relationship with Eduardo Saverin, his friend and co-founder of Facebook. Zuckerberg dilutes Saverin's ownership stake without his knowledge, effectively pushing him out of the company. While Eduardo goes to New York to find advertisers for the site, Mark and Sean get a half a million dollar investment from Peter Thiel, a Silicon Valley-based investor. The company is incorporated and in a new contract, Sean Parker and Peter Thiel join as shareholders, while Eduardo's shares are sneakily set up to depreciate as new investors join in. The portrayal of Zuckerberg's decision to dilute the ownership stake of Eduardo in Facebook also speaks to the theme of respecting intellectual property and the lack thereof in this case.

The betrayal of Saverin highlights the negative consequences that can result from unethical behavior as it leads to a legal battle and damages their friendship. The film also depicts Zuckerberg's interactions with the Winklevoss twins, who accuse him of stealing their idea for a social networking platform. The Winklevoss twins lawsuit against Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook became a prominent part of the narrative portrayed in the film, *The Social Network*.

The Winklevoss Twin's Lawsuit

- Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, former Harvard classmates of Mark Zuckerberg, sued him for allegedly stealing their idea for a social networking platform.
- The Winklevoss twins claimed that Zuckerberg, while working for them on a similar project called "HarvardConnection", used their ideas to create Facebook.
- The lawsuit, depicted in *The Social Network*, resulted in a legal battle that garnered significant media attention and scrutiny.



The Winklevoss Twins
Source: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk>

Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss were Zuckerberg's classmates in Harvard and they sued him for allegedly stealing their idea for a social networking platform. The twins claim that Zuckerberg, while working for them on a similar project called Harvard Connection, used their ideas to create Facebook. The lawsuit depicted in the film resulted in a legal battle that garnered significant media attention and scrutiny.

Zuckerberg had initially agreed to help them, but instead he creates his own platform, Facebook. This portrayal raises questions about the ethical implications of taking advantage of others' ideas and expertise for personal gain. The impact of the lawsuit was twofold. It added to the controversy surrounding Facebook's origins and highlighted the challenges faced by Zuckerberg and the company in its early stages. The legal battle not only created a public perception of Zuckerberg's character and integrity, but also raised questions about the true origins and ethical implications of Facebook's creation. Accusations of intellectual property theft added a layer of complexity to the legal battle between Zuckerberg and the Winklevoss twins.

Accusations of Intellectual Property Theft

- The Winklevoss twins accused Zuckerberg of intellectual property theft, claiming he used their ideas and coding to develop Facebook.
- They alleged that Zuckerberg, while working on HarvardConnection, had access to confidential information and deliberately used it to create a competing platform.
- The accusations of intellectual property theft further fueled the legal dispute and added complexity to the narrative surrounding Facebook's founding.



Source: Proceedings of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit
Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XyZmpGwuU8g>

The Winklevoss twins accused Zuckerberg of intellectual property theft. They alleged that while working on Harvard Connection, which was their project, Zuckerberg had access to confidential information and deliberately used it to create a competing platform. This accusation had fueled the legal dispute and added complexity to the narrative surrounding Facebook's founding.

These allegations on the one hand raise questions about the ethical practices, but also highlight the competitive nature of the tech industry and the significance of intellectual property rights in the context of digital innovation. The settlements reached between Facebook and the Winklevoss twins brought an end to the legal battle depicted in this social network.

Settlements and Legal Implications

- In 2008, Facebook reached a settlement agreement with the Winklevoss twins, granting them financial compensation and shares in the company.
- The settlement effectively resolved the legal dispute between the parties, putting an end to the litigation process.
- The legal implications of the settlement were significant, as it allowed Facebook to move forward and focus on its rapid growth and expansion.



The Winklevoss Twins Settlement (*The Social Network*)
Source: Fincher, David, et al. *The Social Network*. USA:
Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.

The 2008 settlement ultimately agreed to pay financial compensation and shares in the company to the Winklevoss twins. This settlement effectively resolved the legal dispute between the parties. The legal implications of the settlement were significant however, as it allowed Facebook to move forward and focus on its rapid growth and expansion.

While the exact terms of the settlement remain private, it allowed Facebook to move forward without the burden of ongoing litigation.

In conclusion, the social network serves as a thought-provoking canvas for exploring the intricate web of ethical challenges that accompany the journey of creating a tech giant like Facebook.

Conclusion

- As Zuckerberg's power and influence grow, the film invites contemplation about responsible power usage.
- The ethical responsibilities that accompany such influence, highlighted through decisions about expansion, monetization, and data privacy, emphasize the critical need to weigh personal gain against the broader impact on users and society.



Source: Fincher, David, et al. The Social Network. USA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.



24

As Zuckerberg's power and influence grow, the film invites contemplation about responsible power usage. The ethical responsibilities that accompany such influence highlighted through decisions about expansion, monetization and data privacy emphasize the critical need to weigh personal gain against the broader impact on users and society.

- The film's portrayal of ethical challenges in a competitive industry reminds us of the boundaries that should be observed even in the quest for success.
- Reflecting on character, both early and as power grows, is a recurring theme.
- The film suggests that ethical considerations must guide decisions even before the pinnacle of power is reached.
- This reflection extends to accountability for actions, as portrayed through legal proceedings, urging individuals to recognise their ethical responsibilities in the face of challenges.



Source: Fincher, David, et al. The Social Network. USA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2010.



25

The film's portrayal of ethical challenges in a competitive industry reminds us of the boundaries that should be observed even in the quest for success. Reflecting on character both early and formative years and also during the growth of the power is a recurring theme in the film. The film suggests that ethical considerations must guide decisions even before

the pinnacle of power is reached. This reflection extends to accountability for actions as portrayed through legal proceedings using individuals to recognize their ethical responsibilities in the face of challenges.

In next week's modules, we will be covering the concept of digital deception and continue this discussion also in greater detail. Thank you.