

Producing Users Online: Facebook, Habit, Power

Niall Docherty

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Languages, Cultures and Area Studies, February 2020

Abstract

This thesis examines the scripting (Akrich, 1992) of Facebook's News Feed with ideal modes of usage, gathering discursive data through Facebook's PR materials, how-to-guides, and funded academic research, alongside a material analysis of the News Feed's "choice architecture" (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) to do so. This empirical analysis is combined with qualitative data gleaned from interviews with users as they scroll down the News Feed, exploring how its technical scripting becomes incorporated in the social networking habits of actual users. The thesis adopts a relational concept of habit informed by John Dewey (1930) and Foucault (1995) to explicate this data, arguing that quotidian, repeated News Feed activity is a learnt practice that entwines the social lives of users with contemporary relations of platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017). I argue that users are 'made' through their repeated activity on the News Feed, and question the extent to which Facebook can be considered as a technology of power as a result – understood as a socio-technical network of relations that prompts certain behaviours, affects and social relations at the expense of others. Through this discussion, the contemporary politics of social media apparatuses are located and explored on the relational level of social norms and governance through habit (Foucault, 1986, 2015; Pedwell, 2017). The approach advanced in this PhD offers fresh insights into the way datafication (Van Dijk, 2014) practices are generated and channelled through the micro-actions of localized users. Thus, the neutrality of Facebook as a 'tool' for human usage is challenged, suggesting a more nuanced approach to how we conceptualize the production of patterned usership of social media platforms today.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	5
Author's Declaration.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Chapter I: Facebook's affordances and the question of power: A literature review.....	23
1.1 Facebook's difficult definition	25
1.2 Affordances-in-practice.....	30
1.3 The generative effect of Facebook's affordances.....	37
1.4 Datafication and the question of power.....	49
1.5 Conclusion.....	58
Chapter II: Socio-technical scripts and habit: A theoretical framework for studying power relations on Facebook.....	61
2.1 Socio-technical scripts.....	63
2.2. Habit as relations.....	74
2.3 The micro-physics of power.....	79
2.4 Conclusion.....	88
Chapter III: Facebook's ideal user, social capital and the politics of well-being.....	90
3.1 "Good for people and good for society".....	94
3.2 "Natural" needs and "active" habits.....	98
3.3 Self-interested social capital.....	109
3.4 Neoliberal responsabilization.....	113
3.5 Conclusion.....	122

Chapter IV: Nudging on the News Feed and the configuration of active usership.....	125
4.1 Tracking the development of Facebook’s user-interface...	128
4.2 The “headlines” of Facebook.....	131
4.3 “News Feed Values”	141
4.4 News Feed nudges.....	147
4.5 The politics of nudge.....	153
4.6 Conclusion.....	158
Chapter V: A qualitative investigation of scrolling down the News Feed.....	161
5.1 Connection and relationship maintenance.....	166
5.2 Best selves.....	173
5.3 Seeking Likes.....	178
5.4 Measurement and affect.....	186
5.5 Conclusion.....	197
Conclusion.....	201
Bibliography.....	218
Appendix.....	256

Acknowledgments

The guidance of my supervisors Dr. Andrew Goffey and Dr. Jen Birks anchored my research throughout the course of my PhD, and I am grateful for their feedback, recommendations and support throughout. Likewise, my peers and colleagues at the University of Nottingham offered insightful challenges, fantastic conversation and, most importantly, camaraderie at all times. I am primarily thankful to my partner Sophie and to my family for giving my work a sense of perspective and meaning – without them none of this would've been possible.

This thesis is dedicated to my friend Beth, lost the year this PhD project began. My memory of you, although fractional of what you are, is immeasurably important, and I feel lucky to have known you.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own independent work, except where referenced to others. It was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Nottingham.

I further declare that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for any other degree

Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the politics of Facebook usership. While such a statement immediately brings to mind contemporary issues regarding fake news and misinformation on the site, filter bubbles, election interference, content moderation and proposals for governmental regulation, this thesis will instead consider the politics of everyday engagement with Facebook from a user-perspective. That is, as opposed to assessing the 'politics' of Facebook in terms of wider networked flows of political communication, Facebook will be presented as a political entity through its attempts to direct the activity of its users along certain pathways of interaction on the platform. Engaging with an alternative notion of governance found in the thought of Foucault (1986), which suggests that relations of power are located in the attempted conduct of humans through an environmental arrangement of intersecting interests (Hoy, 1986; Lemke, 2012; Lorenzini, 2016), this thesis will explore the implications of social life on Facebook being enacted in a technical environment designed to support Facebook's capitalist functioning as a data-platform (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017).

Prior to Facebook's involvement in democratic decision making procedures, its utilization as a tool for targeted political advertisements, or its algorithmic filtering of information, thus, Facebook usership itself will be treated as a political relation in the way that users, when engaged on the platform, necessarily enter into a negotiation with Facebook's discursive and material attempts to shape their behaviours, thoughts, and affects in ways amenable to its continued profitability. The resulting habits of Facebook usership enacted on the platform, produced via repetitious interactions with Facebook's various user-interfaces, will be considered as conduits of power (Foucault 1995, 2015) that generate certain forms of life in the world, while negating others. Refusing either deterministic or constructivist understandings of

technology, therefore, the view of Facebook usership advanced in this thesis suggests that social networking habits are the result of a relational combination of technical arrangement and agentic user activity. The politics of Facebook usership will be identified in the specific quality, possibility and limitations of these relations.

Before this introduction fully states why such an alternative analysis of Facebook's politics is a valuable and necessary endeavour, and details how this thesis will construct and approach its task, it is important to establish how Facebook has popularly been treated as a political entity in legislative, academic and media spheres before. The opening discussions below, in doing so, will help situate the research questions of this thesis against a clearer contemporary backdrop, specifying precisely in what ways the research submitted in the following chapters represent original contributions to our current understanding of Facebook as a politicized infrastructure.

The most obvious place to start toward this end involves the political consultancy firm Cambridge Analytica. In early 2018, *The Guardian* newspaper reported how the data of millions of Facebook users was sold to Cambridge Analytica by an app developer without the explicit informed consent of users (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). Using this data, which was scraped from Facebook profiles, a man working for the company, Christopher Wylie, claimed that Cambridge Analytica had developed software that could build psychometric models of individual users that could (supposedly) predict personality traits and political inclinations. Working in conjunction with the aims of the 2016 Trump presidential election campaign, Cambridge Analytica bought advertisement space on Facebook that targeted individual voters in the United States with specific political messages upon the basis of these psychometric predictions of their voting behaviour. Notwithstanding the veracity of these predictions, Cambridge Analytica targeted voters in swing states with specific political messages on Facebook – taking the form of news stories, photos, memes and videos for instance, that either encouraged or discouraged voting in their constituency according

to the goals of the Trump campaign. In the context of UK, furthermore, another whistle-blower, Brittany Kaiser, claimed that Cambridge Analytica had helped the Leave campaign during the European Union referendum in June 2016, using methods similarly employed in the 2016 US presidential election to tilt the outcome in Leave's favor (Hern, 2019).

The scale and granularity of the targeted political advertising produced by Cambridge Analytica on Facebook, involving data scraped from 87 million user profiles (Lapowsky, 2018), caused a political backlash that saw prominent Facebook executives questioned by governmental committees in the US, UK and European Union. At stake in these hearings was the principle of free and fair democratic political elections, whereby all members of the electorate can ideally access the same information in order to make rationally informed, and thus collectively binding, voting decisions (Berelson, 1952; Bohman, 1900; Splichal, 1999). For example, in April 2018, Mark Zuckerberg was called in front of a session of the United States Senate Committee for Commerce, Science, and Transportation to face questions about Cambridge Analytica, as well as issues concerning foreign interference in the same 2016 presidential election. Senator Dianne Feinstein focused on the way Facebook had been used to “manipulate public opinion and target individual voters” (Guardian Live, 2018) during the election, while Senator Maria Cantwell criticized Zuckerberg for not doing enough to stop “geopolitical forces trying to get data and information to influence a process” (ibid) of US democracy. Here, Senator Cantwell is referring to Special Counsel Mueller's 2018 indictment of the Russia-based Internet Research Agency [IRA] for alleged nefarious involvement in the same 2016 US presidential election. In Mueller's report, it had been suggested that Hilary Clinton's campaign had suffered due to the illegal spread of misinformation by foreign actors posing as US citizens on Facebook (Mueller, 2019). As democratic theorist James L. Hyland (1995) suggests, open access to neutral and wide-ranging information is one of the “qualitative conditions of full democracy” (ibid, p. 63) and

the “ability of a person to be a relatively autonomous, and hence a genuine, contributor to a decision-making process is critically dependent on access to relevant information” (ibid, p. 43). Accordingly, Cambridge Analytica’s provision of partial information to certain sections of the US electorate, and the IRA’s provision of contradictory information to other sections, was seen by members of the US Senate to delegitimize the very foundations of its democratic political process.

In his opening statement to the Senate Committee, Mark Zuckerberg directly responded to these related political issues. Zuckerberg characterizes Facebook as a “tool” that was misused by malicious and undemocratic forces beyond his control:

As Facebook has grown, people everywhere have gotten a powerful new tool for staying connected to the people they love, for making their voices heard and for building communities and businesses. But it's clear now that we didn't do enough to prevent these tools from being used for harm as well. And that goes for fake news, for foreign interference in elections, and hate speech, as well as developers and data privacy. We didn't take a broad enough view of our responsibility, and that was a big mistake. (Mark Zuckerberg, quoted from a video recording of the hearing found on the Guardian Live YouTube channel, April 10, 2018).

In his characterization of the platform as a neutral “tool”, Zuckerberg denies Facebook any active role in the Internet Research Agency’s 2016 election interference, the Cambridge Analytica scandal, or the spread of fake news on the platform. From this position, the moral and political value of Facebook, along with its perceivable effects in the world, implicitly depends upon *how it is used* by human individuals.

Following the attempted Russian interference in France’s 2017 presidential election, the spread of dubious information by interested political actors on Facebook was also a key issue in Mark Zuckerberg’s

hearing in front of EU MEPS in May 2018 (Stupp, 2018), while US Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, in a session of the House Financial Services Committee in October 2019, repeatedly challenged Zuckerberg for the spread of “disinformation” on the platform (Cadwalladr, 2019). While the level of scrutiny actually submitted in these respective hearings is up for debate, they do demonstrate how Facebook is commonly understood as a political entity in the legislative imagination: Facebook is a communication tool that can be, and has been, misused by harmful actors at times of political election. Mike Schroepfer, chief technology officer at Facebook, faced similar critiques from UK MPs during his hearing in front of a public Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee in April 2018. The ‘Fake News Committee’ – as it was named by Parliament, sought to investigate the spread of misinformation during the 2016 British E.U. referendum. Its final report states:

We have always experienced propaganda and politically-aligned bias, which purports to be news, but this activity has taken on new forms and has been hugely magnified by information technology and the ubiquity of social media. In this environment, people are able to accept and give credence to information that reinforces their views, no matter how distorted or inaccurate, while dismissing content with which they do not agree as ‘fake news’. This has a polarising effect and reduces the common ground on which reasoned debate, based on objective facts, can take place. Much has been said about the coarsening of public debate, but when these factors are brought to bear directly in election campaigns then the very fabric of our democracy is threatened. (House of Commons 2019, p. 5).

This quote encapsulates the main issues at stake within typical discussions of Facebook’s ‘political’ significance and epitomises how

Facebook's technological distortion of political communication is readily linked to "threats" to contemporary democracy.

Facebook's PR machine has not sat still in response to these criticisms. In April 2018, on its public relations website 'Newsroom', for example, Facebook began running a feature called 'Inside Feed' that coincided with Mark Zuckerberg's appearances in front of US Senators in April 2018. 'Inside Feed' consists of a series of videos and blog posts relating to the technical workings of Facebook, information about new products and services, and developments made to address the type of socio-political issues introduced above. The blog conveys a narrative of openness, situating the designers, programmers and executives of Facebook as accountable for the products they create. For example, there are videos posted by Adam Mosseri, former head of News Feed, that describes (in general terms) how the News Feed's Ranking algorithm works (Newsroom, 2018a); blog posts from Product Managers such as Tessa Lyons that explains how Facebook addresses Fake News on the platform (Newsroom, 2018b); and podcasts with employees such as Dan Zigmond, Head of News Feed Analytics, that outline how harmful information is filtered on Facebook (Newsroom, 2018c). In this official content, echoing the responses given by Facebook's leaders in front of US and EU legislatures, Facebook's role in the distortion of Western democratic communication is that of an innocent dupe – a tool wielded by maleficent individuals for political advantage.

Analysing the resources found on Facebook's public facing websites such as 'Inside Feed' is a key element of this thesis. The findings of this analysis will establish how Facebook attempts to direct the narrative of its perceived politicization of its services, while also revealing how it enjoins users to engage with the platform 'correctly' according to its own discursive construct of ideal social-networking practice. Relatedly, in January 2018, Samidh Chakrabarti, Product Manager for Civic Engagement at Facebook, wrote a blog post found on Newsroom titled: 'Hard Questions: What Effect Does Social Media Have on Democracy?'

(Chakrabarti, 2018). In a video found on the blog, Chakrabarti states how “during the 2016 US election, organizations based in Russia turned social media into an information weapon to undermine American democracy” (ibid). In saying so, Chakrabarti develops the terms of battle employed by Facebook to frame these events. Here, the “weaponization” of social media indicates that Facebook had been transformed from a neutral object into something that could cause societal harm. In the post, Chakrabarti suggests that “If there’s one fundamental truth about social media’s impact on democracy it’s that it amplifies human intent — both good and bad” (ibid). Facebook’s positive role in spreading useful practical information during democratic elections in Iceland, the US and Japan, for example, are used to balance recent political controversies involving the platform (ibid).

As the literature review of thesis will explore in more detail, the idea that Facebook can positively facilitate processes of democratization, as opposed to only distorting them, is a key postulate that informs current scholarship on Facebook. However, this thesis will argue that the positioning of Facebook as either good or bad for democratic processes of communication, depending on its usage, adopts a very limited frame of engagement for engaging with Facebook’s political character. That is, such accounts largely ignore the fact that all activity on the platform, whether tended toward ostensibly political goals or not, is essentially commodified upon an asymmetrical basis. Specifically, insofar as Facebook seeks to make certain (profitable) interactions on the platform more likely than others through discourse and design (Foucault, 1986), this thesis will study Facebook as a “technology of power” (Hoy 1986, p. 132). In doing so, I will be able study the datafication processes of Facebook – understood as the transformation of user-activity into data sets which can then be sold to advertisers, political campaigners, marketers and other interested actors (Van Dijk, 2014), as decidedly political relations.

In principle, Facebook monetizes its services by collecting and then selling data generated by user activity on the platform. All user

interactions, communications and relationships are tracked on Facebook – cultural interests, relationship statuses, and education for instance, alongside all activity users engage in on the platform – for instance, user comments, likes and shares, the groups individuals are connected to, the geographical locations of their check-ins, the organizations they are affiliated with, their scrolling activity on the News Feed, the time spent on pages, and their private messages, (Cyphers & Gebhart, 2019). By aggregating the data gathered from each user's profile and social networking activity, Facebook is able to gather highly granular data on each user. From these data imprints, demographics of age, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, and myriad other categories can be approximated through a wide-scale comparison of all Facebook users and their respective activities. These various attributes of user identity and predicted preferences can then be sold as customized datasets by Facebook to advertisers (commercial, political, or otherwise) seeking to target particular demographics of users on the platform with messages. On the basis of these demographic groupings, which advertisers can further modify and categorise in relation to their specific goals and commercial aims, different groups of users are targeted with different advertisements at different times on the platform.

The extraction of economic value from user interactions on Facebook, therefore, results from the transformation of user-activity into data, which in turn is transformed into specific demographics that can be sold to marketers wishing to reach specific audiences on Facebook for their respective aims. Digital culture scholars Cristina Alaimo and Jannis Kallinikos (2017) claim that Facebook regulates social interaction on the platform exclusively for this reason. As a result, they suggest that Facebook should primarily be studied as a “data-platform” (ibid). Facebook users, as datafied bundles of clicks, interactions and predicted preferences, are constructed as “social objects” (2017, p. 187) whose existence solely depends upon the computability of the activities afforded by the platform. The digitized behaviours tracked and measured by Facebook, Alaimo and Kallinikos argue, would not exist

“outside the engineered context” (ibid) of the platform. Rather, the types of social interactions made possible by Facebook, as well as the ‘networked publics’ (boyd, 2014) facilitated by social media in general, are better considered as the result of a “designed sociality” (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017, p. 185) that only serves to produce users as “quantitative derivations of an engineered experience” (2017, p. 186).

Marxist interpretations of Facebook have led to its characterisations as essentially exploitative, as found in the work of Christian Fuchs (2015) for instance, while Jodi Dean (2005, 2015) and Shoshana Zuboff (2019) have similarly linked Facebook’s data-gathering protocols to wider developments of “communicative capitalism” and “surveillance capitalism” respectively. This thesis will draw upon this literature, yet will argue that it is only through the socio-technical relations generated by repetitious Facebook habit that users are produced as the so called “social-objects” (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017) that form the essential basis of Facebook’s functioning as a data-platform. Accordingly, I will argue that the question of how Facebook constructs ideal user habits in discourse and design, and how these habits are actually formed through agentic social networking activity, opens up as crucial areas of empirical study and critique. As a result, this thesis will not simply explore how Facebook users function as productive units within exploitative capitalist relations, but will orient its focus to analyse how users are actually *produced* as users of Facebook through the inculcation of social networking habits on the platform.

While Marxist scholarship examines Facebook as a political economic actor, other recent scholarship has also been concerned with tracing the potentially exploitative relations of Facebook datafication from a use-perspective. These accounts study the privacy rights of users in Facebook’s data harvesting environment (Sieber, 2019) and how best to govern platforms in terms of content moderation and truthfulness (Gillespie, 2017). Such calls for regulation are often expressed in terms of protecting user well-being on the site. For example, the *Center for Humane Technology*, comprised of former pioneers in the technology

industry, such as Tristan Harris, ex ‘Design Ethicist’ at Google, Roger McNamee, a venture investor of tech start-ups – including Facebook, and Aza Raskin, former head of user experience at Mozilla, suggest that social media companies such as Facebook are “designed to addict” (Center for Humane Technology, 2019) its users for primarily economic purposes. Specifically, this type of critique revolves around the so-called “persuasive” (Fogg, 2003) designs of Facebook that attempt to keep users interacting with the platform, functionally to produce the profitable data-traces necessary to fulfill Facebook’s current business model of data-driven targeted advertising. Conversely, other studies appear to show that Facebook can actually improve user well-being by cultivating bonds of social capital on the site (Ellison et al., 2014) and connecting users to distant loved ones (Burke & Kraut, 2016), thereby challenging the notion that Facebook usage is always detrimental to user well-being.

Even though engagement with Facebook directly entwines its users within relations of datafication, thus, this situation has been studied as both a constraint and an enabler of diverse user activity on the platform. For example, in the studies briefly mentioned above, the Facebook user is variously positioned as a democratic voter, a political activist, a revolutionary, a subject of social capital, a subject of well-being, and so on and so forth. All such studies, moreover, entail an assessment of how these users’ distinct goals are either enabled or restricted by the affordances of the platform. Furthermore, these different user groups are all expected to have respective wants from Facebook depending on the requirements of their assumed roles, with a corresponding capacity to autonomously enact their desires on the platform. Running parallel to Facebook’s own characterisation of its services as neutral “tools”, the Facebook user in much contemporary scholarship is often presented as wielding the platform for their own distinct ends, separate from, and in control of, the technical affordances of the platform itself. Facebook usership, as such, is seen to be instrumental, free from any sense of technological influence or direction.

While such assumptions can help facilitate certain types of studies of Facebook usership, following the insights of Bruno Latour (1994, 2005), which Chapter II of this thesis will explore in more depth, I will argue that such an account of Facebook's socio-technical relations is analytically and conceptually insufficient. Drawing upon the recent insights gleaned from scholarship broadly associated with platform studies, which explore how social media platforms productively shape the activity enacted upon it (Gillespie, 2010; Van Dijck, 2013; Van Dijck, Poell, De Waal, 2018), this thesis will argue that the types of usership enacted on Facebook, that is, cannot be seen to simply manifest with Facebook as a neutral intermediary, but, in fact, ought to be viewed as the result of a complex process of technological *mediation* (Latour, 2008). Here, mediation refers to the way that human action always implicates nonhuman objects. This process is so fundamental for Latour that separating out objects and subjects, of the Facebook platform and its users for example, is a conceptually fruitless task. Agency, that is, as opposed to being held solely by the human subject, is shared. "There is no sense", Latour writes, "in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce" (Latour 1994, p. 45) with a network of nonhuman entities to facilitate action of any kind. Here, it is important to recognise the way technologies organize how we experience, act in, and perceive the world around us. While this thesis will not engage in a fully-fledged ANT study of Facebook's socio-technical relations (a decision Chapter II will justify in more depth), this concept of mediation opens up new avenues to explore how Facebook and its users mutually produce each other, without recourse to engage in narratives of oppression or totalizing domination. In this way, this thesis is engaged in a broader effort to explore how technologies, such as Facebook, "actively shape the character of human-world relations" (Verbeek, 2005, p. 11) they support.

However, this approach is not always requisite for social media studies of Facebook. Instead, as outlined above, Facebook is often treated as an intermediary that simply facilitates existing social practices, forms of

human communication or political organization in the world. In this way, the habits of Facebook usership involved in these processes are not considered; it is sometimes only their cumulative effects in different socio-political spheres that are studied as variously democratizing or politically problematic. However, rather than study the politicization of Facebook usership in relation to existing governmental structures (Freelon, 2017), forms of political campaigning (Carlisle & Patton, 2013), or via biopolitical concerns of addiction (Andreassen et al., 2012), this thesis will use Latour's concept of mediation to shift the perspective to the relational formation of user habits themselves. This shift leads to specific research questions that this thesis will explore: How are habits of usership targeted on Facebook? In what ways does Facebook legitimate its inculcation of habit on the platform? And what norms of activity do these Facebook habits produce for users in their everyday engagement with the site?

The opening chapter of this thesis, 'Facebook's affordances and the question of power: A literature review', will show how the theoretical concept of the affordance (Gibson, 1979; Hutchby, 2001) has been applied by social science scholars to explore the ways that Facebook shapes the activity of users on the platform through its design. This investigation of the literature on Facebook's affordances will help this thesis present the habits of users as the result of a distinctly relational, co-constitutive, process, as opposed to simply the result of already existing, and discrete, human drives. This chapter will highlight the work of contemporary theorists such as Bucher (2016), Van Dijk (2014) and Hearn (2010) who argue that the 'sociality' observable on Facebook is irreducibly linked to processes of datafication. As a result, it will argue that examining *how* and *why* Facebook prompts certain modes of usership amenable to its business interests are important issues for this thesis to consider.

Due to the novel possibilities of action afforded through Facebook's various technical features – its Timeline, News Feed, Marketplace, for example, who their ideal users are, and ought to be, requires

concurrent construction (Woolgar, 1991). This thesis will go on to analyse one of these technical features, the News Feed, as a habit-forming user-interface that necessarily pre-configures an ideal user, and modes of ideal usership, in directions amenable to Facebook's continued economic gain. In this way, this thesis will explore the ways that patterned modes of Facebook usership are produced via the coming together of a human agent and an economically incentivised machinic interface, as opposed to simply being manifestations of individual users wielding the platform for their own ends. It is within this space that I will suggest that the engineered quality of relationships and the production of users on Facebook can be usefully explored through a Foucauldian rubric of generative power (Foucault, 1995). Chapter II, 'Socio-technical scripts and habit: A theoretical framework for studying power relations on social media', will sketch out the concepts and analytical tools required to do so.

Facebook's attempted inculcation of user habit will be presented in Chapter II as a "technology of power" (1986, p. 132) – a term David Couzen Hoy borrows from Foucault to describe the arrangement of social environments in such a way that makes some actions more "probable" (ibid, p. 133) than others within them. Rather than habit denoting human routines of unconscious, automatic behaviours, I will instead present a concept of habit as the productive incorporation of human and enviroing world. This chapter will draw upon North American Pragmatist John Dewey's (1930) thought on habit as existing in the "organizations" (1930, p. 26) between human, environments and nonhuman entities in different spatial-temporal contexts. In this way, habit will allow me to explore the generative effects of Facebook usership, while also pointing toward the way habits delimit certain actions as normal or appropriate to certain situations. As such, although habits are not always restrictive, they will be shown to have certain identifiable and instrumental limits.

The way user habits are targeted and constructed on Facebook will be linked to a Foucauldian framework of governance. Here, governance

takes on a particular meaning, specifically referring to the attempted conduct of human conduct in different social spheres through looser or more tightly calibrated means (Foucault, 1986). This approach is able to locate the politics of Facebook usership in the relations of habit that are produced through everyday interaction with the platform. This works upon an idea of power as something that cannot be held or possessed by one individual, group or corporation. Rather, power is something that flows through the relations of force that are “exercised” (Foucault, 1995, p. 25) through various configurations of interested actors – institutional, individual, collective or otherwise, for “strategic” (Foucault, 1980, p. 195) purposes. Chapter II will provide a more involved discussion of power, yet will also bring in a notion of the socio-technical script in order to focus the attention of this thesis toward the discursive and material construction of Facebook’s ideal users (Akrich, 1992; Latour, 1994).

While not providing a strict methodological approach that this thesis will ‘apply’ to the study of Facebook, or indeed offering tools for critique, Chapter II will argue that an appropriately qualified re-purposing of the notion of the socio-technical script will allow this thesis to explore who Facebook envisages their ideal users to be, identify the means through which these users configured, and question how Facebook presents itself as a useful tool for their benefit. Chapter III, ‘Facebook’s ideal user, social capital and the politics of well-being’, will show how Facebook presents itself as a communication tool through which humans can fulfil their (supposedly) evolutionary grounded need for social connection. Through a close analysis of the early social psychology and HCI papers published by Facebook’s team of researchers, this chapter will demonstrate that *living well* on Facebook is said to be associated with increasing and intensifying levels of habitual social networking activity. I will argue that Facebook can only determine so-called “active” use of its services as “good” for users upon the basis of a dubious application of primate group dynamic theory (Roberts & Dunbar, 2010) and neoliberal theories of social capital (Coleman, 1988). This chapter will show, therefore, that the value

of interpersonal relationships within Facebook's ideal social network is configured through a peculiar blending of evolutionary psychology and neoliberal economic self-interest, thereby producing the ideal healthy habits of Facebook users as distinctly reductive and politicized practices.

Chapter IV, 'Nudging on the News Feed and the material configuration of active usership', will explore how modalities of healthy usership are built into the technical design of one Facebook's key user-interfaces: the News Feed. This chapter will explore how Facebook scripts the News Feed in terms of ideal 'active' usage in discourse and design. This chapter will demonstrate the ways that patterns of active usership on the News Feed are prompted through a technically designed "choice architecture" of nudges (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). I will highlight how Facebook's designers present their design decisions as beneficial to users' well-being, examining the links between Facebook's discourse of ideal use and the News Feed's publicly presented design. This chapter will investigate upon what grounds Facebook's designers feel authorised to recommend particular actions, such as increased comments, posting and news engagement, as more appropriate to the News Feed than other actions, such as passive scrolling or non-communication. The concept of the technological script will help this chapter draw attention to the values implicit in the News Feed's designation of appropriate usage and allow me to sketch out the "framework of action" (Akrich 1992, p. 208) and space within which Facebook's users of the News Feed are "supposed to act" (ibid).

Chapter V, 'A qualitative investigation of scrolling down the News Feed', investigates how actual users are responding to the discursive and material scripting of ideal "active" News Feed usership. This chapter will present the findings of twelve in-depth interviews with Facebook users while interacting with their News Feeds. Participants were asked to narrate their experiences while they scrolled down the News Feed's user-interface, answering questions about the type of content displayed on the News Feed and their own posting activity as they did so. This

chapter explores the extent to which users adopt Facebook's discourse of healthy use in their everyday interactions with the News Feed. In doing so, it will be able to shed light on how appropriate modes of user behaviour are formed through repetitious interactions with social media user-interfaces.

Through the research submitted in each of these chapters, this thesis will be able to more precisely locate the politics of Facebook usership in the potential and limits of the social networking habits generated on the platform, offering new critical perspectives on Facebook's current (profitable) mediation of social life for users around the world today. The conclusion will synthesise the findings and arguments of these chapters and discuss the extent to which users can effectively resist Facebook's attempted inculcation of active habits on the platform.

Chapter I: Facebook's affordances and the question of power: A literature review

The first half of this literature review will survey and critique existing research on Facebook that employs the affordance as a key conceptual and analytical lens of inquiry. Responding to a theory first developed by the environmental psychologist J. J. Gibson (1979) in the mid to late 20th century, technological affordances refer to the possibilities for action open to users through their engagement with machinic systems and technological devices. For Ian Hutchby (2001), affordances comprise the “functional and relational aspects, which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object” (2001, p. 444). The concept of affordances, as such, can allow the researcher to study Facebook activity as the *relational* product of technological design and agentic user engagement, and has been studied in this way by many social scientists in recent years (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Leonardi & Barley, 2008; Leonardi, Nardi & Kallinikos, 2012).

The selected studies below will be split up into two principle groupings. The first group of studies will be categorised as the affordances-in-practice view (Costa, 2018). I will argue that this grouping maintains a theoretical overemphasis of the human user as the determining variable in the effects and purpose of Facebook in various social contexts. The studies found in this grouping characterise Facebook's affordances as replicating existing human practices, with the user of Facebook retaining full autonomy in their use of the platform for their own ends. Such studies rely upon a conceptualization of the user as a figure with particular wants and desires, taking the user for granted in such a way that ignores the relational construction of users that the study of affordances can theoretically bring into focus. Following this critique, I will present a second grouping of studies that can provide a more nuanced, yet still partial, account of the dynamic social relationships

and modes of usership enabled by Facebook's affordances. These studies highlight that Facebook does not simply replicate existing human practices, but, in fact, generates novel forms of social being through the types of networked activity afforded by the technological features of the platform itself. Here, human engagement with Facebook's affordances are said to transmute human activities as opposed to simply mirroring them.

However, despite offering a more nuanced take on the generative quality of Facebook practice in different social contexts, this literature review will highlight the conceptual limitations of this second grouping of studies and open up a space within which I will situate the research questions of this thesis. Namely, I will argue that studies of Facebook ought to retain a specific focus on the construction of ideal users in the design of specific user-interfaces on Facebook – specifically in relation to Facebook's primary commercial purpose as a data-platform (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017). I will highlight contemporary scholarship which suggests that the 'sociality' observable on Facebook is irreducibly linked to processes of datafication – the transformation of user-activity on the platform into data sets which can then be sold to advertisers, political campaigners, marketers and other interested actors (Van Dijk, 2014). This literature review will ultimately claim that the engineered quality of relationships on Facebook raises further questions concerning power as a productive force that will require careful consideration throughout this thesis (Foucault, 1995). To make this link, I will present studies that investigate Facebook in relation to the historical development of platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017) within which Facebook is embedded, demonstrating how a Foucauldian rubric of disciplinary power has been employed to examine the "force relations" (Bucher, 2017) generated through user engagement with Facebook's affordances.

I will argue that current studies that explore Facebook's affordances with a concept of power do not focus closely enough on the specific

means through which disciplinary modalities operate through the inculcation of habit in individuals (Foucault. 2015). This chapter will situate the aims of this thesis within a broader academic context, thus helping establish the grounds upon which I can study the adoption of routines of usership as normalizing expression of disciplinary power. From this standpoint, the following chapters will be able to develop an argument that considers user engagement with Facebook's affordances as a process that simultaneously produces and entwines users within contemporary networks of platform capitalist power. I will argue throughout that it is in the quality, generative effects and limits of these relations that we should locate the politics of Facebook usership in the present age.

1.1 Facebook's difficult definition

The first literature reviews of social science research on Facebook, namely Wilson et al. (2012), Caers et al. (2013), and Rains and Brunner (2015), define Facebook as a social networking site (SNS), fitting into the category of social media more generally. A central reference in these initial reviews is boyd and Ellison's (2008) history of SNS from 2008, whose definition is highlighted as a key text in the scholarship on Facebook to date. SNS, boyd and Ellison write, are

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, 2008, p. 211).

In a more recent review of Facebook research, however, Stoycheff et al. (2017) suggest that boyd and Ellison's definition is insufficient to situate Facebook within the broader social media ecology as it exists today. Facebook's own technological development beyond the terms

above, alongside its integration with novel sub-genres of social media that share similarly communicatory and networked features, render boyd and Ellison's early definition of SNS as only a useful starting point for ensuing studies. The other sub-genres of social media sites Stoycheff et al. refer to include, but are not limited to, blogs (Tumblr, Word Press), content-sharing sites (YouTube, Instagram), online review sites (TripAdvisor, Yelp), discussion forums (Mumsnet, Letterboxd), bookmarking sites (Pinterest), microblogs (Twitter, Weibo) and virtual communities (Second Life) – reviews of these social media typologies can be found in the work of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Osatuyi (2013), and Treem and Leonardi (2012).

The ability for users to connect with other users via direct messages for instance (Twitter, Tumblr), or the creation of accounts with associated public profiles (Letterboxd, Tripadvisor), are common features shared by Facebook with other sub-genres of social media, moving the definition of Facebook away from boyd and Ellison's initial attempt. Moreover, the ability to link separate social media accounts together, such as between Instagram and Facebook, as well as the embedding of Facebook plugins on various external websites, extends the "bounded system" of social networking sites beyond clearly determined edges. Adding to this, the presence of businesses, celebrity profiles and other corporate entities now on Facebook stretches the definitional meaning of the "individual" actor on Facebook in boyd and Ellison's terminology. Thus, given the historical expansion of SNS it should not be surprising that, over a decade on, boyd and Ellison's definition of SNS is only helpful to initially establish how Facebook has been understood in the academic literature before, while not being singularly sufficient.

Media scholar David Beer (2008), moreover, writing contemporaneously and in direct response to boyd and Ellison, further suggests that the advancing technological features of Web 2.0 applications (Beer & Burrows, 2007) – which expand users' capacities to connect, share and communicate with others online, alongside the

emergence of new demographics of users with more varied geographical access points, undermines the potential precision of a priori definitions of SNS. The wide-scope of boyd and Ellison's use of the term SNS results in a "difficulty" for Beer:

it becomes too broad, it stands in for too many things, it is intended to do too much of the analytical work, and therefore makes a differentiated typology of these various user-generated web applications more problematic. (Beer, 2008, p. 519)

Consequently, Beer argues that researchers ought to adopt platform specific approaches when analysing social media technologies in order to scrutinize how different social networking practices emerge and play out on different sites.

In a recent longitudinal study of Facebook usage in young adults in London, for instance, communication scholars Sujon, Viney and Toker-Turnalar (2018, p. 2) highlight that "Facebook has become almost unrecognizable from what it was in 2004, as has its user base, how it is used, and what it can do" (ibid). Facebook

has transformed from a web-based, exclusive site for college and university students, to a multi-purpose, mobile-first platform extending a multitude of services and partners across the web and open to the world. (Sujon et al., 2018, p. 2)

Niels Brügger (2015) provides one of the few historical accounts of these changes in Facebook's services through a textual analysis of the platform over time. Using screenshots and HTML versions of Facebook found on the Danish web archive *Netarkivet* and the US Library of Congress Web Archives, alongside a survey of Facebook's own Timeline, blogs, interviews, and press releases, Brügger charts Facebook's development from 2004-2013. His analysis documents Facebook's early iteration at Harvard as 'Thefacebook' in 2004 – which simply comprised of individual user profiles and the ability to search

these profiles within a university-bound social network, to its position as a global mobile media platform connecting users through direct messaging, 'liking', 'commenting', and posting on the 'News Feed' and 'Timeline', as well as providing a space for news consumption, video hosting and business profiles – to name but a few of its current features. This history will be explored in more depth in Chapter IV of this thesis.

In the period of Brügger's analysis, "the number of possible functionalities, interaction options and digital presences" (2015, section 5, para 3¹) grew on Facebook, the "information complexity found in the individual profiles, connections and content flow" (ibid) widened, and the "integration and flexibility between the many elements in and outside the Facebook universe" (ibid) became more extensive. Brügger's history of Facebook, therefore, provides an analysis of Facebook centred around the development of its technological features and the growing types of user activity made possible on the platform. Brügger's work suggests that the study of Facebook is possible through an analysis of its interactive features as it appears to users at any given time. Although Beer warns that such studies focusing "solely upon the user" (Beer, 2008, p. 526) and their possible activities run the risk of neutralizing the commercial purpose of SNS within structures of digital capitalism (Schiller, 1999) (an issue I will address in the second half of this literature review), Brügger shows that examining the social networking activities made possible through the technological features of Facebook offers a means to define, and then analyse, Facebook as an object of academic inquiry.

In a later text, moving beyond their initial definition, danah boyd (2010) suggests that social networking sites such as Facebook can be examined through the types of social relationship its technological

¹ As this article has no page numbers, I have used the numbered sections of the piece (S) and the paragraph (para) to reference the quotes taken from it.

features can support. These *networked publics*, as boyd terms both the space and form of social groups found on Facebook, are defined as:

- (1) the space constructed through networked technologies
 - and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice.
- (boyd, 2010, p. 39)

For boyd, Facebook, by offering a common space whereby users can congregate and communicate online, “functions” (2010, p. 39) in a similar way to other public spaces extant in human societies. Following this, boyd claims that SNS “allow people to gather for social, cultural, and civic purposes, and they help people connect with a world beyond their close friends and family” (boyd, 2010, p.39). boyd suggests that the technological structure of networked publics introduce “distinct affordances that shape how people engage with these environments” (2010, p. 39). As such, “the properties of bits – as distinct from atoms – introduce new possibilities for interaction” (ibid) between humans on Facebook. Because of this structuring of interaction, it is said that “new dynamics emerge that shape participation” (2010, p. 40) online. In saying so, boyd draws attention to the way that SNS such as Facebook architecturally shape activity by virtue of their technological affordances – the actions made possible by environmental factors. Investigating SNS through their affordances, for boyd and other theorists looking to engage with the possibilities of networked sociality, therefore, suggests “the architecture of a particular environment matters” (2010, p. 40) in shaping the human activity observable within them.

Media scholars Evans et al. (2017) suggest that the concept of affordances is appealing for researchers by being able to move beyond purely technological deterministic or social constructivist accounts of technology. Evans et al. write that the theoretical lens of affordances is “attractive”, in the way it

suggests that neither materiality (e.g., an object) nor a constructivist view (e.g., human agency) are sufficient to

explain technology use, [and instead] advocates focusing on relational actions that occur among people and technologies. (Evans et al., 2017, p. 37)

However, as I will show below, existing research of Facebook's affordances often fall back upon social constructivist theorisations of its significance in different social settings, ignoring the limitations of activity technically built into the platform itself that can, in fact, be said to shape the types of activity observable on the site.

1.2 Affordances-in-practice

One strand of current Facebook research studies Facebook's affordances through their imagined social function. Communication theorists Sumner, Ruge-Jones and Alcorn (2017), for example, treat the Like button as a mode of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). Building upon Hayes, Carr and Wohn's (2016) study of Facebook likes as a type of "paralinguistic digital affordance" (Hayes et al., 2016, p. 173) – defined as social tools that "facilitate communication and interaction without specific language associated" (ibid). Sumner et al. argue that the communicatory features of Facebook, such as status updates, commenting, and Liking, "can be best understood by exploring their functional purpose" (2017, p. 1452) within existing patterns of human communication. More specifically, Sumner et al. treat the Like button "as a social cue that allows individuals to efficiently engage in both phatic and more goal-driven communication" (2017, p. 1456). Phatic communications are defined as a non-verbal communication similar to waving, representing a "low-cost" (ibid, p. 1469) way to interact with others in social situations. This focus on efficiency, alongside the notion that humans are engaged with "goal-driven communication", assumes and implies a rational subject consciously interacting on Facebook for their own social gains – an idea similarly purported by Facebook to explain its social role that I will explore in

more depth in Chapter III. In alignment with this inference, Sumner et al. argue that the functionality of the Like button should be understood in parallel to theories of social capital – expounding the notion that maintaining relationships through liking will be valuable to the individual insofar as it keeps open the flows of social resources potentially available in the future (Coleman, 1988). In this framework of social capital, for Sumner et al., liking friends' posts can be viewed as “a low-cost way to facilitate the growth and maintenance of social ties” (2017, p. 1459). The Like button, therefore, is said to serve an instrumental *purpose* in aiding the maintenance of users' existing human relationships online.

In another study of the communicatory significance of the Like button in terms of social capital, Ellison et al. (2014) argue that maintaining strong social bonds through the practices of liking can be understood as a form of social grooming – defined as the public expression of kinship with social ties. Social grooming is considered as a key process in upholding the bonds of emotional and material support open to individuals within social networks. A user liking another friends' post, for instance, can be considered as a public display of support for other users to witness. Further expanding this presentation of the Like button as a tool of social grooming toward the accretion of social capital, another study by Ellison and Vitak (2015) describe Likes as “micro-transactions” (2015, p. 220) – specific actions that “help create an environment in which reciprocal attention and low-level social grooming is productively enacted” (Ibid). Such studies of CMC on Facebook suggest that the Like button serves a function within the distinct social networks of users, with other studies of Facebook's affordances in relation to social capital extending to the scrolling feature of the News Feed (Wise et al., 2010) and the ability for users to comment on posts (Gilbert & Karahalios, 2009).

In these types of studies, the Like button, as a communicatory affordance alongside commenting, sharing statuses, or tagging friends for instance, is presented as a social tool able to express and

supplement prevailing human communication patterns. Specifically, these existing forms of human practice are linked to a presentation of the self-interested human subject, theories of social capital and the mutually beneficial nature of human relationships. In order to treat the affordances of Facebook as tools that facilitate existing human social needs, thus, specific distinctions of human needs, as well as a correlated figure of the human as such, is required. That is, studies that solely treat Facebook as an instrumental communication tool contain implicit assumptions about what the human being essentially is and what it ought to be. By way of response, Chapter III of this thesis will critique these theorisations of social capital on Facebook in greater depth, demonstrating how such studies tacitly relay a normative figure of the Facebook user grounded in behavioural economics and neoliberal social psychology. I will reveal how Facebook itself utilizes theories of social capital to expound the supposed social benefits of its services in its construct of ideal healthy users, showing how social capital operates as a discursive node through which Facebook legitimizes its (profitable) mediation of everyday life.

Other research of Facebook has similarly framed the communicatory affordances of the platform as facilitating assumed-to-be-existing social patterns, as opposed to significantly transmuting those patterns in any way. For example, communication scholars Stevens et al. (2017) sought to investigate how the networked connectivity of Facebook reproduced existing racial, gendered and class inequalities faced by youths living in disadvantaged urban areas of in the USA Stevens et al. suggest that “negative social interactions in the geographic neighborhood are reproduced and amplified on social media” (2017, p. 950). Offline “dramas”, as the researchers termed the challenging situations, relationships and events found in the disadvantaged neighborhoods in question, were replicated on Facebook, with posts, comments and likes extending the communicatory grounds for such negative interactions to occur. Liking was considered as “the currency of social media” (2017, p. 958) – as a paralinguistic digital affordance

used “both supportively and aggressively, with varied intensity” (ibid). The researchers argue that “Facebook primarily operates as a digital community where social problems are magnified” (2010, p. 964) for the users interviewed.

In Stevens et al.’s study, as with other similar studies that have followed (Marwick, Fontaine & boyd, 2017; Stevens et al., 2018) the affordances of Facebook amplify and magnify existing issues faced by disadvantaged youths in their geographical neighbourhoods. Here, the networked publics constructed through shared Facebook usage constitutes a reproduction of existing communities, relations and problems – only in digital form. It is a matter of increasing intensity and widening scale as opposed to transformation. The notion that SNS open up new spaces where deep-rooted socio-cultural patterns are reproduced also appears in other sociological studies, including the literature on Facebook and bereavement. For instance, information theorists Brubaker, Hayes and Dourish (2013) argue that Facebook offers users a space within which experiences of grief were temporally, spatially, and socially expanded. Facebook offered the “*expansion of death-related experiences*” (2013, p. 152), granting a new space for mourning online as opposed to radically changing the practices of bereavement within the North American context in which the study took place. Brubaker, Hayes and Dourish did not conceptualize bereavement behaviours on Facebook as “disruptions of social practice” (2013, p. 158) but as *continuations* of grief online – something that subsequent studies have researched as the “digitalization of grief” (Moyer & Enck, 2018).

Drawing upon extensive interviews with teenagers, parents and teachers between 2000 and 2010, boyd (2014) similarly argues that the networked publics of SNS expands the terrain of existing social structures within digital contexts. For boyd, the internet, social media, and Facebook in particular,

mirrors, magnifies, and makes more visible the good, bad, and ugly of everyday life. As teens embrace these tools and incorporate them into their daily practices, they show us how our broader social and cultural systems are affecting their lives. When teens are hurting offline, they reveal their hurt online. When teens' experiences are shaped by racism and misogyny, this becomes visible online. (boyd, 2014, p. 24)

This quote from boyd's study encapsulates the logic behind many contemporary studies of the affordances of Facebook: the forms of social relations manifest in networked publics mirror corresponding social relations in the 'offline' world. Although the research discussed above privileges UK and North American users of Facebook, perhaps indicating that Facebook's technological affordances are only able to emulate ostensibly Western cultural experiences, anthropological research of digital cultures in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia also argue that Facebook exists as a mirroring tool through which culturally and ethnically distinct social relations manifest online.

For instance, in a comparative ethnographic study of Facebook usage in a rural community in southern England and a village in south India, anthropologists Miller and Venkatraman (2018) argued that the way participants interacted with Facebook, and how they understood their activity, reflected the "specific local factors" (2018, p. 8) of each region. Miller and Venkatraman suggested the different modes of patterned Facebook usage found in these two locations were said to respond to localized differences in social norms, historical cultural antecedents, working occupations and living routines. In this way, Facebook was presented as an empty space within which local customs and values played out online. In other anthropological studies that study the localized differences of Facebook usage, Costa (2016) argues that Kurdish populations in south-east Turkey primarily use Facebook to re-establish traditional forms of kinship or tribal association that have been fragmented due to economic or political exigencies; Diepeveen's (2019)

study of a political youth Facebook group in Mombassa argues that interactions facilitated by Facebook *reinforces*, rather than *reconfigures*, established Kenyan ideals of citizen/state relations in its members; and Venkatraman (2017), in a more extensive study of social media in south India, suggests that Facebook is a space where customary caste and familial relations play out online. In this way, these types of anthropological study treat the communication practices observable on Facebook as reflections of existing social practices in the offline world. The affordances of Facebook are assumed to be and theoretically rendered as tools wielded by distinct individuals from distinct cultures enacting their respective identities online.

Although the concept of technological affordances does not privilege the human user in technological relationships, it would appear as if the types of study I have presented above do, in fact, install the Facebook user as the determining factor in Facebook's actual usage and imagined purpose in the world. This theoretical re-orientation is exemplified in the thought of digital anthropologist Elisabetta Costa (2018), who argues that the concept of affordances should be amended in order to account for the primary role of the human agent. Costa proposes the term "affordances-in-practice" to theoretically re-bias the relationship between humans and social media. Affordances-in-practice, for Costa, is a term that can

account for the multiple and varied realizations of the social technical potentialities of social media in different places and social groups around the world. Affordances-in-practice stress the idea that affordances are not intrinsic properties that can be defined outside their situated context of usage, but ongoing enactments by specific users that may vary across space and time. (Costa, 2018, p. 3653)

On the surface, Costa's amendment does not develop the study of affordances in any radically new direction. For instance, as Evans et al.

claim, the “attributes and abilities of users [...] and the contexts of technology use” (2017, p. 36) have always been part of the theoretical basis of affordances. However, in claiming that social media technologies have no “intrinsic” properties – taken as design features that set limits to what users can and can’t do with them in certain situations for instance, *existing beyond their take up in different social circumstances*, Costa negates the relational dynamic of affordances to come to the fore. As such, I argue that such a view negates the theoretical value of the affordance and instead falls back upon a conceptually limited social constructivist view of technology.

The concept of affordances is able to explore the boundaries of human agency and technology, exploring technologically mediated human practices as *emergent relations* between users and technologies, rather than, as Evans et al. state, “privileging any one aspect as deterministic” (ibid) in any given system. This re-balanced ontology offers the researcher a means to question the bifurcations of subject/object that have historically structured the dominant narratives of technological development found in the social sciences in the past (Kember & Zylinkska, 2012; Latour, 1993; Nimmo, 2012; Reed, 2014). In Costa’s terminology of affordances-in-practice, however, the technological structure of Facebook comes secondary to the way users *choose* to engage with the platform, establishing a sequential binary of user/technology as a result. As the following chapter will explore in more depth, this dualism is open to critique in the way it replicates the controlling, hierarchical relationships installed in other binaries such as culture/nature, human/animal, mind/body and man/woman – a process of distinction the philosopher Félix Guattari has termed “subject conservatism” (Guattari, 2000, p. 47).

In prioritizing the human application and utilization of Facebook’s affordances-in-practice, Costa and other like-minded thinkers negate the possibility for technology to re-shape the parameters of human activity in any meaningful way, reinforcing a social constructivist view that prioritizes the human as a tool-wielding agent autonomously

determining the pathways of their own activity – supposedly toward the fulfilment of a somehow innate human essence (Latour, 1994). However, other studies of Facebook do not simply present its technical affordances as facilitating existing human practices that maintain the stable order of the world. Rather, the types of social networking facilitated by Facebook are said to be generative of new types of social relations, political practices and cultural organizations. In these studies, Facebook, as I will show below, does not simply mirror the activity of the offline world in an online context, but, instead, is said to produce the very forms of human activity enacted and observable on the site. These studies, to a certain extent at least, can challenge the theoretical separation between modes of ‘pre-existing’ human sociality and its imagined-to-be secondary technological mediation.

1.3 The generative effect of Facebook’s affordances

As an opening example, US sociologist Alecea Standlee (2018) studied the role of Facebook in forming new friendships at US universities. In qualitative interviews with US university students, Standlee discovered that participants used the information gathered from online Facebook profiles as a means to vet their fellow students before committing to offline friendships. Standlee called this process “doing homework” (2018, p. 1) on potential friends. Specifically, Standlee’s interview data revealed that participants were identifying the political affiliation of classmates before speaking to them at college in order to “filter” (2018, p. 2) the ideological composition of their friendship group. The collection of information from Facebook profiles, Standlee argues,

is used to accelerate understandings and shape perceptions of a potential friend’s social and political attitudes. This knowledge is then used to filter potential friends into, and out of, offline social networks based on perceived ideological compatibility. (Standlee, 2018, p. 2)

Standlee calls this the “techno-integration of social practices” (ibid), arguing that the compositions of offline friendship groups are less likely to be ideologically diverse as a result of this online filtering process. Standlee suggests that this could result in a “potential increase in social and political homogeneity within offline social networks” (2018, p. 1). Although the tendency toward political homophily in social groups is, of course, not a novel development wrought solely by Facebook usage, as Haim et al. (2017) would suggest, Standlee’s study demonstrates that the offline human communities manifest on Facebook could not develop without their technological mediation, instead being formed through an integrated, relational process of shared production. Other studies, such as Flaxman et al. (2016) and Sunstein (2017) argue more forcefully that the production of ideologically homogenous networks on Facebook create increasingly partisan social silos, and I will explore congruent issues found in the literature surrounding echo chambers and filter bubbles later on in this chapter.

Lincoln and Robards (2016) relatedly examined how the affordances of Facebook were integrated with the courtship, maintenance and closure of romantic relationships. Twenty three Facebook users from Australia and the UK were interviewed as they scrolled back through their Facebook Timelines. Lincoln and Robards asked the participants to narrate and “consider how critical moments, like the beginning and end of relationships, anniversaries, and so on, are documented on the site” (2016, p. 2). The interview data suggested that the affordance of declaring a ‘relationship status’ on the profile created a new site of friction related to various stages of romantic relationships. “Making it Facebook official”, as Lincoln and Robards termed the process of linking together two Facebook profiles through a romantic relationship, was viewed by users as a defining moment in their romantic relationships by constituting an important public declaration of commitment. Conversely, breaking up on Facebook introduced new challenges to the participants.

Lincoln and Robards suggest that the affordance of the relationship status offers a moment of decision into romantic relationships that would otherwise be absent. By introducing a clear public binary of romantic involvement, Lincoln and Robards argue that

Facebook troubles the complexity and messiness of [romantic] relationships simply by asking for them to be named, making them visible in different ways, and by privileging specific kinds of normative relationships.

(Lincoln & Robards, 2016, p. 9)

Lincoln and Robards argue that entering into an official Facebook relationship is “performative” (ibid) of a certain heteronormative, linear progression from courtship to dating to lasting public engagement and commitment. The various categories of romantic involvement found in Facebook relationship statuses, although differentiated, such as single, in a civil partnership *with*, married *to*, etc. still require a common declaration that entwines, or not, romantic partners together in a public union. Therefore, while the affordances of Facebook relationship statuses produce new sites of romantic practice, Lincoln and Robards also show how normative cultural values are in-built into these affordances, as reflections of prevailing romantic forms. This study demonstrates that the relationship between user and technology is generative of novel social practices despite often relaying existing cultural norms.

Although the studies above indicate that Facebook usage could contribute to the entrenchment of ideological partisanship and normative relationship statuses in users, other studies have shown that Facebook can facilitate social movements that potentially challenge dominant cultural narratives in a way not possible without the technological affordances the platform offers. For example, in order to explore how Facebook was integrated into the practices of social movements, Mundt et al. (2018) interviewed Facebook users who were members of the activist group Black Lives Matter (BLM) alongside an

analysis of their Facebook activity. The researchers found that Facebook provided a platform where local BLM activists could “form coalitions and [...] amplify and disseminate non-dominant discourses about police brutality and Black liberation” (2018, p. 1). In the vast geographical area of the USA, local BLM groups were often isolated from other groups. Mundt et al. argue that the “sense of connectivity” (2018, p. 12) provided by the accessibility and searchability of other likeminded activist groups on Facebook produced a “collective identity” (ibid) in the BLM movement, despite the various clusters being separated by disparate geographical locations. Moreover, for Mundt et al., the presence of BLM on Facebook provided a base from which activists could generate monetary support for their groups, build coalitions with other social movements with online presences, and organise local protests and marches in a way that would not have been possible without Facebook. J.M. Cox (2017) has also identified this process of social media communication across the USA as a characteristic feature of the BLM movement. Here, in contrast to the studies of grief and urban issues outlined above, the affordances of Facebook are said to be productively integrated within social movements, producing new opportunities for development in variegated directions, as opposed to simply maintaining or continuing existing offline practices online.

Bennet and Segerberg (2012) claim that social media sites provide spaces of “connective action” for social movements, arguing that, compared to conventional activist groups, social movements with a social media presence “have been frequently larger; have scaled up more quickly; and have been flexible in tracking moving political targets and bridging different issues” (2012, p. 742). Likewise, Paulo Gerbaudo (2015) has suggested that the affordances of Facebook, and social media sites in general, have allowed formerly isolated radical social movements to “scale up to the level of mass politics, and become concerned once again with claiming mass support for their proposed lines of actions” (2015, p. 82). Furthermore, in a review of political

activism online, Murthy (2018) argues that social media platforms “have fundamentally changed the landscape of organizational communication” (2018, p. 1) by expanding the reach, depth, type, and quality of activist messages. In studies such as these, the scaling up of communication between social movements develops the nature and possibilities of action for the political actors involved; consensus can be built that would otherwise have been impossible; reactions to political events in real-time can be accessed by wider audiences (Bode, 2016); and larger numbers of members can be cultivated and gathered in collective protest (Juris, 2012). While some scholars have argued that the scale of social movements online result in high-levels of noise, inhibiting collective decision making and productivity (Hemp, 2009), and others have suggested that the ease of joining an online social movement could negate some of the political value of such an enterprise, a process that has been termed “slacktivism” (Gladwell, 2009; Morozov, 2011), it remains that such studies demonstrate that new forms of political activism result from the integration of Facebook and social movements, whether such change is framed positively or negatively.

The Tahir Square protests in Egypt in 2011, for example, have received particular attention by scholars seeking to explore the relationship between new political movements and social media. Khamis and Vaughn (2012) and Eltantawy and Wiest (2011), for instance, suggest that Facebook was utilized by protestors to disseminate information and mobilize participants in solidarity against Mubarak’s presidency, which sparked the drive for his ultimate resignation that same year and the beginning of the process of democratization in the country. Balancing these studies, however, Wolfsfeld et al. (2013) argue that the importance of Facebook in relation to the events of the Arab Spring (the collective term for political uprisings in the region in 2011, such as in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen, for example) have been exaggerated, arguing instead that the citizens of each nation mobilized around distinct socio-political issues that were not necessarily

expressed via social media. Notwithstanding the debate surrounding the actual efficacy of democratization in the region following these uprisings (Hashemi, 2013; Moghadam, 2013), these studies of the Arab Spring demonstrate how Facebook's large scale communication affordances are said to have contributed to revolutionary democratic movements in the region. However, Facebook has not only been studied through its activist and revolutionary potential in the literature, but has also been studied in relation to more traditional democratic procedures, such as campaigning at times of election or during referendums. As I will show below, the integration of Facebook with these established democratic processes is considered, both empirically and theoretically, to generate, rather than replicate, new forms of contemporary political activity in democracies around the world.

For example, an early study by Williams and Gulati (2009) of the 2006 US congressional elections found that successful candidates had used social media to communicate with constituents, disseminate information about their policies and organise rallies, while their follow up study of the 2012 US Senate elections found that 97% of all those who successfully ran for Senate adopted a Facebook page during their campaign (Gulati & Williams, 2012). This large scale adoption, for Williams and Gulati, demonstrates that Facebook has developed into a crucial space for the dissemination of political information at times of democratic election in the USA, linking together the success of campaigns with the respective candidates' ability to appeal to the perceived priorities of different online voter demographics. While Williams and Gulati empirically prove that official Facebook campaign pages were common features of successful US democratic election campaigns, which subsequent research of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential campaigns by Freelon (2017) can support, other researchers have suggested that the integration of Facebook with the everyday lives of voters lead to new communication strategies, informational formats and aesthetics emerging from grassroots campaigners.

Moody-Ramirez and Church (2019), for instance, argue that the ability for users to post user-generated content on Facebook produces a new space for, and new forms of, citizen expression, discussion and debate. Moody-Ramirez and Church suggest that the use of memes in Facebook groups during the 2016 presidential election campaign was an important avenue of grassroots involvement in the candidates' respective campaigns. Often using humour to either insult or support Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, Moody-Ramirez and Church argue that memes were able to undermine official party messages, and produce new popular slogans and images in order to generate discussion surrounding the campaigns. The researchers suggest that

Facebook political-themed meme pages enable average citizens to bypass traditional gatekeepers to share user-generated content. In this case, Facebook users shared political memes with end-users who were able to comment, share, and repost content in real time. (Moody-Ramirez & Church, 2019, p. 9)

Thus, the affordances of Facebook groups to host images of memes, and the subsequent interactions between grassroots campaigners, enable new forms of user-generated content to be shared at times of election, creating the development of new networked publics centred around a digital visual culture.

Other political science studies that have explored the use of Facebook at times of democratic political decision-making procedures include Strandberg's (2013) study of social media in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary election; Bossetta et al.'s (2017) study of political participation on Facebook during the UK EU referendum in 2016; Lev-On and Havela-Amirs' (2018) analysis of the parliamentary election campaigns of Israel in 2015; and Jacobs and Spiering's (2016) comparative study of political parties' use of social media during elections in the Netherlands, the UK and the USA. Although the limited selection above cannot, and does not, represent the vast literature

exploring the impact of social media within contemporary democratic processes, it should be able to indicate how researchers have studied the affordances of Facebook by empirically assessing how its features were used by various political actors during specific political campaigns. Whether it be the ability of political parties to share policy information through official Facebook pages, individual candidates to share statuses to their followers, or of grassroots members to create alternative commentaries on campaigns in meme groups, these studies demonstrate that Facebook's affordances have become integrated with Western liberal political communication in a way that changes the quality, style and breadth of democratic political campaigns in such contexts. Facebook usage, in other words, is deemed to be productive of new modes of political activity, albeit limited within particular mode of liberal democratic practice in Western regimes, as opposed to simply extending established forms in an online context.

Other studies that consider how the modes of political communication afforded by Facebook produce certain forms of networked political publics revolve around the related concepts of 'filter bubbles' and 'echo chambers'. The 'filter bubble' is a term that was first made popular by internet activist Eli Pariser (2012), describing a situation whereby algorithms tailor the user-experience of websites according to predictions made about individual users' personal preferences. Based on patterns of previous online behaviour, these algorithms build up a set of preferences specific to each user that decide the display and ordering of information on websites. Internet users are said to be inoculated from contradictory views to their own as a result of such algorithms only showing content it predicts each individual user would want to see. On Facebook, the algorithm that enacts this filtering of information is called 'Ranking'. As will be outlined in more depth in Chapter IV of this thesis, the Ranking algorithm decides where each post produced within each Facebook user's network is positioned on the News Feed. The more relevant the algorithm deems each post to

be to each user, the higher up and thus more prominently it is placed on the News Feed.

In doing so, Ranking has been criticized by Pariser due to its propensity to flood the top of the News Feed with stories that reinforce a certain world-view consistent with the users own. This process of algorithmic personalization, therefore, is said to create 'filter bubbles' on Facebook that have been explored in subsequent academic studies in relation to democratic theory. For instance, Dominic Spohr (2017) argues that the filtering of information on Facebook leads to increasing political polarization, fragmentation and the spread of sensationalist, and often misinformed, news stories. By only showing stories to users that it thinks each user will be interested in, the Ranking algorithm, Spohr argues, limits the access to information necessary for each user to partake in rational political debate. As reasoned public argument is said to be a prerequisite for valid political decision-making in democratic theory, Facebook, by only providing access to filtered views and selective information to its users, is said to undermine one of the core processes of active citizenship, and is presented as a potential threat to democracy as a result. This argument stands in contrast to the democratizing potential of Facebook explored in many of the studies above.

A related phenomenon resulting from the personalization of the Ranking algorithm, as well as the affordance of joining shared interest pages on Facebook, is the 'echo chamber' effect, whereby users gather in groups around shared cultural interests, ideological views and political affiliations. Although the algorithmic filtering of information on Facebook exacerbates the tendency toward social homophily, as research by North American sociologists Boutyline and Willer (2016) suggests, echo chambers have been identified in media theory long before the advent of social media. For instance, media theorists such as Ksiazek, Malthouse, and Webster (2010) have studied echo chambers that occur through newspaper readership, and Iyengar and Hahn (2009) explore how the consumption of different media formats

correlates with ideological preferences. Such research often relay theories espoused by social psychologists such as Festinger (1957), who claims that humans display a tendency to avoid cognitive dissonance and instead seek agreement in social groups, or Klapper's (1960) selective exposure and self-reinforcement theory, which suggests that humans avoid contradictory information and instead seek rounded conclusions to understand the world around them.

Quattrociocchi et al. (2016), in a study that explores the personalization effects of Facebook's News Feed algorithms through the theoretical lens of the echo chamber, argue that the "aggregation of favored information within [online] communities reinforces selective exposure and group polarization" (2016, p. 1). They posit this phenomenon as a manifestation of "confirmation bias" (ibid) – a supposed human psychological tendency related to Klapper's above. This appeal to psychologized accounts of the Facebook user is characteristic of many studies that seek to examine the potentially damaging effects of the ordering of information on the News Feed (Bakshy, Messing & Adamic, 2015; Borgesius et al., 2016). This type of study, similarly to the studies of online social capital outlined above, assume a human subject with certain needs, wants and proclivities in order to draw out the implications of engagement with Facebook's affordances. In this way, the activity identified in these types of study, while deemed to be politically transformative in some way, as opposed to simply mirroring the world, can still said to be an expression of some innate human psychological tendency.

When I come to provide a study of the News Feed in Chapter IV and V, therefore, rather than assume a Facebook user as a natural entity prior to my investigation, I will seek to examine how the Facebook user as such is necessarily constructed both in discourse and through the design of the News Feed's user-interface. In doing so, I hope to move beyond psychologized accounts of Facebook usership as either the fulfilment or manipulation of innate human need. Before any claims about the potential political implications of the types of usership

observable on the site can be made, that is, this thesis will argue that it is first necessary to examine how the user is constructed, circumscribed and, indeed, produced on Facebook through its discursive and material design. This analytical focus, as will be outlined in greater length in the following chapter, is informed by Foucault's anti-essentialism, which rejects the existence of an ahistorical, transcendental human subject in an effort to instead examine "the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1986, p. 208) in time.

Undoubtedly, then, Quattrociocchi et al.'s assumed psychological grounding restricts the validity of their argument. Nevertheless, the researchers' appeal to democratic theory provides another buttress through which Quattrociocchi et al. can claim that users who are only being connected to information that is 'relevant' to their interests, and who only form bonds with those that hold similar views to their own, is democratically problematic. That is, human confirmation bias purportedly limits the access to diverse information and alternative opinion necessary for reasoned conclusions about current affairs, political events, and the world at large. Moreover, the homophily of echo chambers restricts the rational argument that diverse social groups are said to facilitate, curtailing the production of shared knowledge and public opinion required for consensually binding democratic decision-making (Sunstein, 2009). As many newspaper articles have argued, implicitly based upon the theoretical assumptions presented above, Facebook's News Feed is said to trap users in echo chambers and filter bubbles (Dredge, 2015), to the detriment of reasonable political deliberation (Leith, 2016) and due democratic process (Bermaway, 2016). However, the studies of the democratic threat posed by Facebook's filtering of information outlined above, notwithstanding their often dubious constructions of Facebook users of a particular psychological ilk, also contain implicit assumptions about the existing efficacy of the ideal public sphere in the present day (Habermas, 1989; Calhoun, 1992). For example, such criticisms

overemphasise the theoretical equality of individual actors to shape the direction of public conversation within the globalized political economy of corporate news media (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), do not take into account the gendered and racialized processes of hegemonic news discourse production (Creedon & Cramer, 2007; Saha, 2012) and underplay the globally unequal access to communication technologies sometimes referred to as the “digital divide” (Selwyn, 2004).

So far, I have identified two major threads within the academic literature on Facebook and its technological affordances, highlighting their limitations and pointing toward theoretical gaps that this thesis can address. I have critiqued the studies centred around the affordances-in-practice viewpoint – constituting the first of these threads, through their overemphasis on the human user as an autonomous agent that is said to ‘wield’ Facebook as a ‘tool’ for their own ends. I have argued that this bias toward the user discloses a social constructivist standpoint, negating any serious theoretical consideration of the technological elements constitutive of Facebook use. In contrast to this viewpoint, I have presented studies that show the way in which Facebook’s affordances produce new types of social practice that would not have been possible without its technological mediation via Facebook. In this second group of studies, the productive, relational dynamic that studies of affordances can highlight come to the fore. The coming together of the user and the technological features of Facebook have been shown to intermingle existing cultural practices with novel modes of mediation, producing new forms of human being in the world, such as novel types of communication, romantic involvement, friendship, and political participation.

However, while this second grouping of studies are able to highlight the transformative nature of Facebook in different cultural contexts, and can open up a more nuanced discussion surrounding the generative relations between users and social media apparatuses as a result, in their failure to deal with the explicit economic incentives that drive Facebook’s technical mediation of user activity on the platform, and

their theoretical reliance on an a priori user with innate psychological or political motivations of use, they can only offer a partially valid account of the productive relations engendered by Facebook usership in the present age.

The following section will survey other studies that explore how the design of Facebook is configured to promote certain forms of user-practice in relation to Facebook's commercial purpose as a profitable data platform. This survey will be able to reveal how the Facebook user is channelled along pathways of action that prompt certain forms of behaviour at the expense of others for a distinctly economic purpose. From an examination of these studies, I will show how the digital architecture of Facebook not only modifies the existing social connections of users but can be shown to *construct* those social connections in order to create profitable data sets. Thus, the design of Facebook cannot be considered as a neutral configuration through which various networked publics are said to manifest, either as emulations or transmutations of the so-called 'actual' world. Rather, these studies argue that Facebook produces users of a certain type whose activity ensures the continued profitability of Facebook as a commercial entity. As opposed to simply facilitating social relations between individuals – whether framed as a mirroring or transforming process, therefore, these studies argue that the user interactions observable on Facebook are only 'social' to the extent that they are amenable to processes of profitable datafication.

1.4 Datafication and the question of power

As outlined in the introduction, Facebook monetizes its services by collecting and then selling data generated by user activity on the platform. For Alaimo and Kallinikos (2017) as a result, social media platforms

move beyond simply impersonating communication and social ties. They rather forge a context of social participation in which the ties of participants are, in most essential respects, data deductions and scores. (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017, p. 186)

Moreover, the forging of these new contexts of social participation, the liking of posts, sharing of statuses and commenting on photos for example, although essentially abstracted from existing social processes, operate as “recursive feedback loops” (2017, p. 186) that acquire social relevance by their continued entrenchment in the everyday experience of human relationships and communication. The quantified interactions of Facebook, although only existing as such to create the data sets necessary for monetization, in other words, actually create new modes through which users express themselves as users on the platform. Therefore, Alaimo and Kallinikos argue that social media data platforms should primarily be seen as “post-transactional spaces that compute and trade the expressive and communicative social fabric they engineer” (2017, p. 177) creating Facebook users as *users* in the process.

Alaimo and Kallinikos suggest that Facebook operates as a commercial entity “by carefully organizing user platform participation along specific activity corridors [...] that heavily stylize and shape user interaction” (2017, p. 176). In other research that considers Facebook as a data-platform, Beverley Skeggs and Simon Yuill (2016) “study the imperative of Facebook to monetize social relationships” (2016, p. 1356), exploring “what happens when one of our significant forms of communication [i.e. Facebook] is driven by the search for profit, by the logic of capital” (ibid). Skeggs and Yuill developed custom software that was able to track how Facebook scraped user activity both on the platform and via social plugins across the Internet, revealing how Facebook gathered user data on websites via social plugins embedded on other websites. Skeggs and Yuill then visualized this data in a way that presented the flows of data emergent from user-activity on Facebook and external

sites in real-time, producing a snapshot of Facebook's datafication processes as generated during the user experience.

Similarly to Alaimo and Kallinikos, Skeggs and Yuill suggest that Facebook's affordances simultaneously "construct and instrumentalize" the "particular forms of sociality" (2016, p. 1358) observable on the platform, claiming that Facebook incites "users to reveal information about themselves which can then be algorithmically disaggregated for the purposes of monetization" (ibid, p. 1362). This incitation of users to behave in a certain way on the platform has prompted the study of Facebook's affordances as persuasive or even coercive relations. As a result, the quantification of interaction on Facebook is often considered as an expression of power. Such an approach often focuses on the related processes of datafication, understood as the primary transformation of user-activity into data as espoused by Jose Van Dijck (2014), and social analytics, which, according to Nick Couldry and Allison Powell (2014), "cover both basic analytics (the automated measurement and counting installed within the operation of digital platforms and associated websites, apps and tools) and the adjustments made by actors themselves in response to such measurement and counting operations" (p.2)

Together, Van Dijck and Couldry (2015) have argued for the need to study Facebook, and social media generally, beyond

merely describing how the latest platforms work, let alone celebrating their supposedly positive potential (democratic? expressive? socializing?). It must mean at least researching how social media platforms (and the plural production cultures that generated them) have come to *propose* a certain version of "the social" and how users go on to *enact* it. (Van Dijck & Couldry, 2015, p. 2)

Van Dijck and Couldry argue that researchers must respond to the monetized aspect of Facebook as a data platform to understand the ways in which forms of digital capitalism entwine with contemporary

social relations on the level of everyday habitual activity. “We need a combination of theory, analysis, and observation” (2015, p. 6), Van Dijck and Couldry argue, to empirically track the mechanisms “by which today’s space of social appearances is being built, its entry and exit points, and rules of operation” (ibid). The incorporation of Facebook’s communicatory affordances “into the habits of individual actors” (2015, p. 2, original emphasis), which aggregate to produce the networked publics outlined so far in this literature review, fuse Facebook’s continued success as a business with the micro-social relations entered into by users. That is, the upkeep of contemporary friendships, family life, or romantic relationships, alongside the success of social movement groups such as Black Lives Matter and democratic political campaigns, depend upon their mediation by Facebook for their continued efficacy in the world. This incorporation of monetized sociality with developing forms of social relations is described by Van Dijck and Couldry as a “knot of power” (2015, p. 6), entangling large scale economic processes with everyday user interactions to produce varied, differentiated and wide-spread effects in the world.

Thomas Poell and Van Dijck (2013) have explored the synchronised monetization of engineered social media relations through the concept of datafication. Poell and Van Dijck’s primary argument is that social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are “never neutral channels for data transmission (2013, p. 10), but should instead be understood “as sources of transformation’ (ibid, p. 11). Developing the work of Viktor Mayer-Schoenberger and Kenneth Cukier (2013), who examine datafication as the ability of networked platforms to quantify formerly unquantifiable domains of the world into data, and the work of Lisa Gitelman (2013), who’s explores the axiom “raw data is an oxymoron”, which describes the way that data is always prefigured in the gathering mechanism of such platforms, Van Dijck and Poell argue that social media constructs the conditions of user sociality upon the basis of a primary profit-motive, similarly to Alaimo and Kallinikos (2017). The transformation of social relations into data conjoins the four

primary aspects of “social media logic” that Van Dijck and Poell have proposed as a rubric to study Facebook with. These other aspects are programmability, popularity, and connectivity respectively.

Programmability refers to the algorithmic infrastructures of social media that “trigger and steer users’ creative or communicative contributions” (2013, p. 5) in certain directions. For instance, the way the ‘People you may know’ feature on Facebook prompt users to expand their social network, or, as outlined above, how the Ranking algorithm predicts and prioritizes ‘relevant’ stories in users’ News Feeds. Secondly, popularity refers to the use of metrics to establish the basis of these algorithmic predictions, and encapsulates the way in which ‘relevance’ to users is established by measuring the frequency and intensity of interactions on the platform. What is relevant to Facebook users are those digital objects and social connections that take up the *most* time, or those functions that are interacted with *most*. The logic of popularity is therefore a grading system, determining what is most relevant for each user based upon the statistical measurement of their activity in digital environments. Finally, connectivity denotes the logic of the digital social network; the idea that datafied users exist as nodes connected only by their interactions on the platform and its extended online services. Van Dijck and Poell argue that this connectivity is not bounded only by the relations apparent on distinct platforms, but should instead be “seen as an advanced strategy of algorithmically connecting users to content, users to users, platforms to users, users to advertisers, and platforms to platforms” (2013, p. 9). These social media logics will be explored through an empirical analysis of the News Feed’s user-interface in Chapter IV of this thesis.

The tenets of social media logic, thus, demarcate potential avenues of theoretical investigation through which I will situate the study of Facebook advanced in this thesis. Moreover, these tenets are tied together through the principle of datafication – the transformation of social relations into profitable data. As Van Dijck (2014) argues elsewhere, the process through which social media platforms

“concomitantly *measure, manipulate, and monetize* online human behaviour” (2014, p. 200) via datafication must constitute a key aspect of research into Facebook. Christian Fuchs (2015), for instance, has explored this issue in relation to the concept of “digital labour”, applying a Marxist lens to understand the commodification of social interactions on SNS. Fuchs states:

The notion of digital labour signifies that the time spent on Facebook and other corporate platforms is not simple consumption or leisure time, but productive time that generates economic value. (Fuchs, 2015, p. 93)

Users, in this framework, are viewed as “prosumers” (ibid) – consumers that simultaneously produce economic value through their consumption – in this case the user-generated content and networking afforded by Facebook interactions. While the concept does not originate with Fuchs, instead attributed to US entrepreneur Alvin Toffler for instance, and is not strictly limited to discussions surrounding social media (Ritzer, Dean & Jurgenson, 2014), Fuchs claims that the profitable datasets cleaved from user activity on Facebook result from the unpaid labour time of users. Thus, for Fuchs, “users are productive consumers who produce commodities for profit” whose “labour is exploited” (2015, p. 108).

However, as Fuchs writes, this online “exploitation does not feel like toil; it is rather more like play and takes place during leisure time outside of wage labour – it is unpaid labour and play labour” (ibid). Therefore, Facebook users are characterized as exploited prosumers, whose activity on the platform is viewed as a form of “continuous primitive accumulation of capital” (2015, p. 116) for the owners and shareholders of Facebook. The transformation of non-commodified leisure time into productive labour is, for Fuchs, vital to the understanding of Facebook as it operates within contemporary structures of capitalism (Pace, 2018). What feels like social connection for the users involved is actually presented as an exploitative process that greases the cogs of

digital capitalist expansion. Time spent on Facebook, Fuchs argues, directly implicates the user with the dominating processes of primitive accumulation that keeps unequal class structures in place; as Ben Agger (2011) similarly argues, users as prosumers are said to be the unpaid origin of their own class subordination.

Nick Srnicek (2017) considers Facebook, alongside other social media platforms, as primarily “economic actors within a capitalist mode of production” (2017, p. 3), arguing that Facebook’s extraction of value from the prosumption activity of its users is characteristic of “platform capitalism” – the historical development of large-scale technology companies who have created data as a resource akin to oil, something to be “extracted, refined, and used in a variety of ways” (2017, p. 40) for profitable trade. In this way, the datafication of social interaction on Facebook is tightly linked to the economic conditions of its existence. However, I agree with Couldry, Fotopoulou and Dickens (2016) when they suggest that datafication on Facebook, specifically the use of social analytics to enumerate user interactions on the platform, both on the surface of, and behind, the user-interface, also transforms the “image of self” (2016, p. 121) open to Facebook users, beyond the terms of class and capitalist exploitation explored by thinkers such as Fuchs. Specifically, the “material infrastructure of calculation, data-processing, and data-presentation” (ibid) found on social media platforms produce new ways for users to measure and value their social relationships. “Social actors today face many pressures to use analytics” (2016, p. 122) on social media, Couldry, Fotopoulou and Dickens state, which shape how users understand and evaluate the ways “they exist for and are known by others” (ibid) on the platform.

Rather than submit a detailed macro analysis of the global flows of capital produced by Facebook engagement, consequently, this thesis will instead provide a closer inspection of the micro-relations of Facebook activity said to collectively contribute to the entrenchment of a broader economic system, chiefly through the prism of everyday, habitual usership. This thesis will develop Helen Kennedy and

Rosemary Hill's (2017) exploration of the way humans make sense of processes of datafication through emotions. This is a process they term the "feeling of numbers" (Kennedy & Hill, 2017). Elsewhere, Kennedy (2016) has described this emotional response to social analytics as an "intimate" (2016, p. 26) process, arguing that users are personally invested in the connective, and enumerated, affordances of their social media profiles – an idea that will be shown to resonate with the interview data presented in Chapter V of this thesis. In another study that explores the integration of Facebook analytics and the emotional lives of its users, Taina Bucher (2017) conducted interviews to see how Facebook users responded to the algorithmic ordering of their relationships on the platform. Primarily, Bucher sought to understand how users *felt* about the various functions on the platform. The results of the interviews indicated that engagement with Facebook's interface "generates a plethora of ordinary affects" (2017, p. 42) in users. These affects included frustration, recalled by users who did not receive likes on their posts, surprise at being put into contact with forgotten friends, or happiness at being tagged in a photo by a member of their family. These various affective responses, for Bucher, demonstrate that the technological affordances of Facebook give users a "reason to react" (2017, p. 41) on Facebook in way that is productive of "different experiences, moods and sensations" (ibid) in users. Bucher describes the production of novel user affects as becoming part of the "force-relations" (ibid) of Facebook: generative moments weaving the emotional experience of users with particular technological functions.

Alison Hearn (2010) has argued that the enumeration of interactions on Facebook, acting as force-relations that produce novel ways of feeling in users, concurrently work to create a certain type of subject concerned with modalities of reputation, ranking, and self-measurement. Utilizing the thought of Warren Sussman (1984), who has asserted that historical modes of self-expression reflect the dominant economic and political interests of their time, Hearn argues that the measurement of interactions on Facebook posts rank users

against each other in a way akin to competitive markets. Specifically, likes, comments and shares can be viewed as markers of attention that are used to differentiate the respective users' influence and popularity within neoliberal social networks. Moreover, Hearn explicates the social quantification inherent to Facebook as a disciplinary process that prompts users to compare themselves with other users on the platform.

Hearn writes:

When we consume the list, rating or ranking, we simultaneously individuate and fit ourselves into the logic of the market; we find our 'selves' in the list. (Hearn, 2010, p. 429)

Recalling Foucault's insight that disciplinary power operates through examinations, rankings and public tests that fix the individual in relation to others in institutional environments (Foucault, 1995), Hearn sees the visible ranking of interactions on Facebook as reputation scores that display the success of each user as a *Facebook user* to others on the platform. This process of self-measurement in relation to others in a shared environment, specifically, is said to produce disciplined neoliberal Facebook subjects. As Facebook is seemingly able to objectively measure the social value of individuals in relation to others through numbers, users are subject to market principles that locate the highest value in that which is *most* in an equal field (Davies, 2014). Elsewhere, Hearn (2008) has suggested that the selves produced through the quantified interactions on Facebook become 'brands' vying for attention within their respective social networks. Here, Hearn draws upon Foucault's (2010) analysis of neoliberalism as a mode of government that addresses entrepreneurial subjects – competitive individuals striving for constant self-improvement.

As such, Hearn's work can be situated within an area of literature that discusses the "force-relations" (Bucher, 2017) emergent on Facebook through a notion of neoliberal subjectification advanced by Foucault, understood as the reflexive process whereby the human individual

comes to know their self in relation *to* and as their self through historicized social practices, forms of cultural transmission and ideologies. More precisely, the gesture toward *neoliberal* subjectification acknowledges the dominant model of state/citizen relations that have structured successive Western governments since the late 1970s (Harvey, 2007; Prasad, 2006). More than simply referencing a policy framework attuned to a certain citizen that, for instance, prioritizes the marketization of public services, the installation of the enterprise form as a model of government and social organisation, the dissolution of social insurance and the welfare state, and the safeguarding of competitive financial markets, neoliberal subjectification refers to the production of particular subjects that are led toward a *neoliberal way of life* entwined with these governmental regimes. (Crouch, 2011; Dardot & Laval, 2013; McGuigan, 2013). It follows that Facebook, as a technology embedded within the historical milieu of neoliberalism, has been extensively studied in the literature through its analytical prism – an issue I will turn to now in the conclusion.

1.5 Conclusion

While Facebook has been studied as part of a process of neoliberal subjectification, disciplinary power always theoretically entails the erection of so-called ‘normal’ modes of behavior that direct the activities of the individuals who inhabit certain environments (Foucault, 1995). Moreover, as the following chapter will argue, the disciplinary normalization process identified by Foucault always functions through the inculcation of habits in individuals (Foucault, 1995, 2015). Yet, how these habits are formed through Facebook usership, and what these habits actually constitute, are not clearly delineated in the final grouping of studies presented above. These studies do not explicate in any detail precisely how Facebook itself employs a discourse of ideal usership

that functions as the norm around which users can model their behavior and *become* ideal users as such in the process.

Moreover, existing studies on Facebook's disciplinary effects cannot fully account for how these norms manifest in the design of Facebook's various affordances found upon its distinct user-interfaces. This therefore represents a lacuna in the literature that opens up questions surrounding Facebook's effects of power that requires further consideration. To address this gap, this thesis will examine how Facebook can be understood as a disciplinary apparatus specifically through its discursive and material configuration of ideal habitual usage. Following the findings of this literature review – which reveals the ways that Facebook exists as a series of connected yet heterogeneous user-interfaces with distinct economic purposes, this thesis will go on to circumvent its analysis to a singular user-interface: the News Feed.

However, the findings of this literature review also suggest that users and social media technologies come together in a relational manner that is not unidirectional, offering space for this thesis to consider the different user-responses to the News Feed in different contexts. As opposed to a claiming that Facebook 'creates' neoliberal users simply by virtue of its identifiable neoliberal embellishments, therefore, which would amount to a technological determinist position, this thesis will also present qualitative interview research that examines how users respond to the affordances of the News Feed as an engineered space of sociality. Rather than applying a neoliberal framework to the study of Facebook's effects in the world, this analysis will rather seek out the patterns that structure Facebook's discursive and material configuration of ideal use and question the extent to which these are linked to the neoliberal milieu of their enunciation. Therefore, situated in the literature as such, the key research aims of this thesis will examine Facebook's discursive configuration of ideal usership of the platform, and explore how actual users respond to this structuring in their habitual Facebook activity in its material design.

This literature review has provided an extensive account of the academic literature that examines Facebook through the conceptual lens of technological affordances. Because of this conceptual focus, I have been able to link together studies from a wide-range of disciplines that cover a range of topics, offering an up-to-date account of the current academic field on Facebook in the process. I have argued that the concept of affordances has been used by researchers to explore the emergent relations between Facebook, its users and the networked publics formed through social networking practices. I have divided this body of literature into two strands that I have surveyed and critiqued in succession– the affordances-in-practice view, and the relational view respectively. I have suggested the need to move beyond these types of study that simply focus on the user-perspective of affordances, arguing that is necessary to understand how and why Facebook is designed the way it is for a primarily economic purpose. To this end, I have presented studies that treat Facebook’s affordances as technical functions that solely exist to create data sets on users that can then be sold to interested parties.

However, while the processes of datafication on Facebook primarily responds to an economic purpose that can be situated within current forms of platform capitalism, the studies I have explored in the closing sections of this literature review indicate that the metrification of interaction necessary for the extraction of value on the platform can also be said to produce disciplinary effects beyond the intentions of Facebook’s supposed profit motive. As a result, I have shown that the habitual entwinement of Facebook with the social relations of its users – whether producing affective, romantic, or political bonds, entangle users with networks of power that require closer inspection beyond a simple declaration that such entanglement is concretely neoliberal in character. The following chapter will construct the theoretical framework necessary for this endeavour, establishing the core concepts, thinkers, and methods I will use to explore the questions opened up by this literature review.

Chapter II: Socio-technical scripts and habit: A theoretical framework for studying power relations on Facebook

The previous chapter has established the need to consider the production of users on Facebook as entwined with disciplinary power relations. Specifically, the study of *how* Facebook's technological affordances could function as part of a normalizing apparatus – precisely through the inculcation of user habits, is lacking in the current literature. As such, it remains to be seen how and through what specific discursive and technical processes the preconditions of ideal habitual user activity are established and, indeed, actually enacted on Facebook. To reiterate the research questions set out in the introduction of this thesis: How are habits of usership targeted on Facebook? In what ways does Facebook legitimate its inculcation of habit on the platform? And what norms of activity do these Facebook habits produce for users in their everyday engagement with the site?

This chapter will set out the key thinkers, concepts and analytics this thesis will engage with in order to approach the research questions set out above. The work of Woolgar (1991) serves as a useful starting point. Woolgar suggests that the creators, designers and marketers of technical devices “attempt to define and delimit the user's possible actions” (Woolgar 1991, p. 61) in discourse and design. Rather than the user existing prior to the release of different technological products, Woolgar argues that “by setting parameters for the user's actions [...] the evolving machine effectively attempts to configure the user” (ibid). This means that technologies relay “basic assumptions” (ibid, p. 60) about both its purpose and how this purpose can fulfil the imagined needs of its potential users. This is presented as a process of configuration, whereby certain human and nonhuman entities are positioned in relation to each other in an attempt to produce certain predictable patterns of usership in consumer markets.

Developing Woolgar's initial study of the construction of ideal users, the opening section of this chapter will demonstrate how elements of the socio-technical script (Akrich, 1992; Latour, 1994) can help this thesis investigate the way Facebook discursively and materially configures ideal modes of usership of the platform. Similarly to Woolgar, Madeline Akrich (1992) and Bruno Latour (1994) claim that the various interested actors involved in the design and dissemination of technological products – the manufactures, corporations, and marketers for instance, work to “inscribe” (Akrich, 1992, p. 208) technologies with a “script” (ibid) of ideal usage. Latour, a key exponent of Actor Network Theory (ANT), relatedly discusses this process as “inscription”, whereby “programs of action” are incorporated into the design of, and discourse surrounding, particular technologies (Latour, 1994, pp. 31-39).

Following the findings of the literature review, the concept of the socio-technical script can help challenge the notion that Facebook simply offers users an opportunity to fulfil their ‘innate’ communication needs and social dispositions on the platform. Supplementing Woolgar's (1991) suggestion that technology companies configure users in the designs of marketable technical objects, the scripting of technologies is a process that simultaneously creates and services the imagined needs of its users. While this thesis will not submit a fully-fledged “script analysis” (Fallan, 2008) of Facebook per se, which could, for instance, demand a comprehensive empirical study of Facebook's research and development stages, actor networks and actual technical functions, the concept of the socio-technical script will instead offer a valuable theoretical focus that will facilitate the study of the Facebook user as in a necessary process of construction.

Specifically, the notion of the script will help me examine how Facebook projects pathways of ideal usership in discourse and design, while not adhering to the strict methodological procedures, or, indeed, the apolitical quality (Whittle & Spicer, 2008; Winner, 1993) of ANT type analysis. Instead, I will show how the socio-technical script can be theoretically re-purposed to explore how Facebook demarcates

appropriate usership, going on to argue that such a demarcation implies a process of normalization that purely ANT type script analyses cannot theoretically address. As a result, I will suggest that further critical resources are necessary to explore the scripting of Facebook's ideal usership alongside the contemporary issues identified in the previous chapter - issues surrounding social media logic (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013) for instance, potentially exploitative relations of digital capitalism (Pace, 2018) and the production of disciplined users on Facebook (Hearn, 2010).

Specifically, I will bring in Foucault's (1995, 2015) consideration of habit as the tangible "micro-physics" (1995, p. 25) of power to explore Facebook's socio-technical scripting of ideal use through a more politically engaged theoretical rubric. Toward this end, I will supplement this exploration of Foucault with relational concept of habit informed by Dewey (1930) and show how this combination can draw attention to the way socio-technical scripts actually become incorporated as patterned modes of usership on Facebook. Habit, for Dewey, situates agency in the "organizations" (1930, p. 26) of relations that exists between human and nonhuman entities in different environments. Dewey's ideas will set the theoretical grounds upon which this thesis will explore exactly *how* interaction with Facebook's user-interfaces and communication affordances *produce* users tended toward certain activities over others on the platform. The theory discussed throughout this chapter will be illustrated in relation to the substantive empirical research that will be presented in the main body of the thesis, setting out the direction of the following chapters and outlining how their respective empirical focuses will be framed theoretically. Overall, this current chapter sets the theoretical grounds upon which this thesis will question how habitual, everyday social networking activity could function as part of a political technology of power in the present age.

2.1 Socio-technical scripts

Akrich employs a cinematic simile to describe her concept of the script:

like a film script, technical objects define a framework of action together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act. (Akrich, 1992, p. 208)

According to Akrich, technologies are not neutral intermediaries. Rather, technical objects are said to *mediate* the forms of human activity that are permissible at certain situational junctures. Along with Akrich, Bruno Latour suggests that technologies delimit appropriate pathways of engagement by virtue of their design. Reacting to these pathways, or the “script” of technologies, is to mix the technical possibilities of the object with the intentions of the human agent. Latour claims that this process of mediation is happening to such a pervasive extent that the boundaries that separate the agency of users from the objectives of designers and the technologies themselves become blurred. With the concept of technical mediation, Latour seeks to acknowledge that the very possibility of human activity is enmeshed with, and dependent upon, the presence of “nonhuman” (Latour, 2008, p. 157) objects, which work to facilitate, prompt, inhibit, or enable action in the world. Paying attention to these nonhuman entities, is, for Latour, to pay attention to the “missing masses” (Latour, 2008, p. 169) that ensure the perceivably stable flow of everyday life.

Latour gives the famous example of the speed-bump to illustrate the operation of technological mediation (Latour, 1994, pp. 38-41). Latour asks us to imagine a university chancellor’s want for car drivers to maintain low speeds when on campus roads, and to consider the options open to the chancellor to ensure their wants are met. For example, traffic safety signs and pedestrian warnings could remind drivers of the necessity of the legal speed limit; traffic officers could patrol the campus enforcing the speed limit when necessary; or concrete speedbumps could be installed that would increase the likelihood of slow driving by acting as a physical barrier. In these three

options, slow driving for humans (as a program of action) is inscribed in three different ways. In the first, the signalled warnings of harming pedestrians constitutes an appeal to the driver's morality – drive slowly or you may harm others; the threat of punishment by a traffic officer in the second example is a form of discipline – drive slowly or face a fine, ban, or jail; while the concrete speedbump example bypasses both moral or penal threats with an appeal to self-interest – drive slowly or you may damage your car.

For Latour, the speed-bump enables human values to be “delegated” (Latour, 2008, p. 157) to nonhuman entities: the chancellor's desire for slow driving on campus is maintained by the speed-bump without any apparent human actor involved, wielding neither penal nor moral sanctions. “The driver modifies his behaviour through the mediation of the speed bump”, Latour writes,

he falls back from morality to force. But from an observer's point of view it does not matter through which channel a given behaviour is attained. From her window the chancellor sees that cars are slowing down, respecting her injunction, and for her that is enough. The transition from reckless to disciplined drivers has been effected through yet another detour. Instead of signs and warnings, the campus engineers have used concrete and pavement. (Latour, 1999, p. 186).

In this way, there is a simultaneous sense of human presence and absence built into the speed-bump. Latour describes the work of technical delegation as “congealed labour” (Latour, 1994, p. 40) – the inscription of interested programs of action in material forms. Moreover, the delegation of the chancellor's desire for slow driving to the speed-bump does not imply a strict hierarchy of actants – understood in Latour's terminology as “entities that *do* things” (Latour, 2008, p. 163).

The example of the speed-bump, for Latour, demonstrates that humans are not the only agents of action, or actants, in the world. Rather, the

affordances of a technology and the inscriptions of activity mediated through them suggests that all action is reliant upon the coming together of humans and the range of nonhuman entities in operation at any given moment. As such, “action”, for Latour, “is simply not a property of humans but of an association of actants” (Latour, 1994, p. 35). Here, there emerges a sense that technologies prompt certain modes of activity by virtue of the way that their design enrolls human and non-humans together in a network of action. This notion will be explored in more depth in relation to Facebook’s News Feed in Chapter IV of this thesis, ‘Nudging on the News Feed and the material configuration of active usership’. In this chapter, Latour and Akrich’s thought will help explicate the implications of Facebook’s News Feed being specifically designed according to the imagined value of ‘social news’ (Sanghvi, 2006), demonstrating how users are nudged (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) along channels of active interaction that attempt to boost their engagement with the content that appears on their News Feeds.

However, pointing out how ideal users are constructed through the discourse and design of Facebook does not automatically lead to the conclusion that actual Facebook users *must* follow the prescriptions of use built into the platform itself. Thus, the socio-technical script is in no way a deterministic framework. As the identifiable scripts of technologies are said to play out to a lesser or greater extent dependent upon its usage by individuals or groups in diverse spatial-temporal environments, script analysis type studies, thus, retain a parallel focus on the actual human use of technological artefacts in different, ‘everyday’ social settings. Moving beyond deterministic or constructivist accounts of technology, therefore, the concept of the script can be used to empirically examine the “obduracy of objects” (Oudshoorn & Pinch, 2003, p. 9) – there in-built technical limitations that is, while also capturing how patterns of usership are relationally produced within particular historical economic, cultural and political milieus. This conceptual focus toward how users react to and potentially

reject the prescriptions of activity in-built into technologies will be represented in Chapter V of this thesis, where I will present the findings of interviews held with Facebook users on the News Feed.

In beginning to think through these concepts in relation to my focus on Facebook, the social constructivist accounts of the autonomous user discussed in the literature review comes into question. That is, rather than Facebook only mirroring social relations as they are said to exist offline, with the Facebook user simply acting upon his or her 'innate' psychological drives on the platform, the social relations enacted on Facebook can, in fact, only be said to exist as such through their technical mediation. While, indeed, the forms of social life afforded by Facebook can perhaps be linked to existing forms of life in an offline context, Latour's concept of mediation will help me draw attention to the ways Facebook relays certain normative values through its design, often prompting user action along these lines. This approach, as such, does not simply take the full agency of the user for granted when studying social media relations, and does not assume any essential motivations driving user activity prior to its mediation on the platform. As well as facilitating this anti-essentialist position, the concept of the socio-technical script will also help me consider how the user of Facebook reacts to, channels or, indeed, rejects Facebook's inbuilt values through their interactions with the platform. Therefore, as briefly introduced above, Chapter V of this thesis will explore how actual users of the News Feed interact with the user-interface, investigating in what ways users respond to the News Feed's nudges, and questioning the extent to which the activity of users corresponds to the modes of active communication provoked in its design.

The approach advanced in this thesis, therefore, does not then naturally lead to a suggestion that Facebook alone is in some way 'responsible' for the various user practices apparent on the platform. Rather, using Latour's notion of technical mediation would suggest that the user activity enacted on Facebook is the result of users coming together and entwining with the technical possibilities of the platform.

This allows a more open discussion of how user-interfaces shape the behaviour permissible upon them, while resisting the tendency toward deterministic thinking. Akrich likewise suggests that the inscription of technologies with programs of action “define actors, the space in which they move, and ways in which they interact” (1992, p. 208). Akrich further points toward nuanced and culturally limited ways in which technical objects can stabilize programs of action and user roles in the world through their technical scripts. As the designers of technologies inscribe a “vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of the new object” (ibid), Akrich suggests that such inscriptions unavoidably channel worldviews that may prioritize certain user groups, while misrepresenting, or altogether neglecting, others.

In alignment with this theoretical understanding of inscription, Else Rommes (2002) suggests that technical scripts “attribute and delegate specific competencies, actions, and responsibilities to their envisioned users” (p.15), arguing that that assumptions about users and use-context are “materialised” (ibid) in technologies as a result. This process has been explored in the fixing of gender roles in electronic shavers and mobile phones by Ellen Van Oost (2003) and Leslie Shade (2007) respectively. For example, Van Oost argues that the design of the Phillips Ladyshave and the Philshave, as sold in the US from the mid-20th century, serve to reinforce gendered constructs of the technologically adverse, passive female user in contrast to the technically knowledgeable, active masculine user. This is evidenced, for Van Oost, in the “masking” (2003, p. 206) of the technology of the Ladyshave, whereby the device was perfumed to cover the smell of oil, had no visible screws, and was marketed as part of a beauty set coloured in pink. The Philshave, conversely, had emphasised ‘masculine’ technical features, being designed to be modified by users, self-serviced and coming in a gun metal and black colourway (Van Oost, 2003, pp. 202-208).

From an engagement with these sources, it could be expected that the design of Facebook imparts particular conceptualizations of its ideal

users that relay similarly historically specific worldviews. Although I am not exploring the gendered demarcations of Facebook's ideal user, I am seeking to question and problematize the theoretical and discursive terms upon which Facebook presents its services as a necessary component of contemporary social existence – a presentation that Chapter III will explore and critique in more depth. In establishing and expressing *for whom*, *what for* and *why*, the designed configurations of human users and technical objects will be presented as normative determinations. Accordingly, this thesis will attempt to move our understanding of Facebook beyond the notion that it exists as 'neutral' communication tool for human usage. However, I will not be simply applying "script analysis" as a methodological lens to study Facebook's production of users. Rather, the notion of the socio-technical script will help me explore Facebook usership as if the discourse surrounding its ideal usage, and its material designs, mattered. That is, the concept of inscription will allow me to show how Facebook's user-interfaces, such as the News Feed, implicitly configure users of a certain type – both by the way it is spoken about by Facebook and by virtue of its affordances and technical designs.

This represents a re-purposing of concepts related to ANT that requires further qualification. ANT is usually considered a descriptive rather than critical approach to the study of socio-technical relations. Indeed, Bruno Latour himself notably urged scholars to simply "just describe the state of affairs at hand" (Latour, 2005, p. 144) in socio-technical networks, rather than engage in any assessments of the wider political, normative or prejudicing effects of those networks for the human actors involved. In ANT, in fact, there are no "wider effects" beyond the network under analysis. However, organisation scholars Whittle and Spicer (2008) argue that by remaining "indifferent about the specific means through which power is established" (p. 622) within and through actor-networks, such claims of objectivity can actually be shown to reinforce "the state of affairs that it describes" (ibid). According to Amsterdamska (1990), moreover, the purely symmetrical focus of ANT, which treats human

and nonhuman actors on an exactly equal footing, “eliminates all distinctions between the various means that can be used to achieve control over things or people” (1990, p. 51). This aspect of ANT therefore makes it impossible to talk of potentially unequal relations of power that flow through technical infrastructures, and inhibits critical judgements as to why such relations may be politically problematic (Winner, 1993). Therefore, for Mclean and Hassard (2004), “while ANT addresses the local, contingent and processual it fails to attend to broader social structures that influence the local” (p. 507) – all to the detriment of politically engaged critique.

This thesis, therefore, advances a necessarily qualified engagement with the socio-technical script and does not promise an ANT type analysis of Facebook’s construction of ideal users. Ideologically speaking, this is necessary because I wish to draw attention to both the normative values implicit in Facebook’s discursive and material constructs of ideal habitual usership *and* consider how such constructs function as the essential basis of exploitive value-extraction on the platform. Moreover, this limited application of script analysis is also practically necessary due to the limitations of the corpus I have access to and will actually be working with. ANT analysis constitutes exhaustive, descriptive accounts of the strength of relations that exist between actors in carefully circumscribed settings, often looking at their failure or breakdown. For example, Michael Callon (1986) detailed the controversies surrounding scallop fishing in St. Brieuc Bay from a supposedly agnostic standpoint, granting multiple actors, such as the scallops themselves, symmetrical importance, while Latour (1996) studied a failed electrical transport system in Paris, also granting the light vehicle in question a voice in his account. However, while such accounts claim objective neutrality, speaking ‘on behalf’ of objects that are unable to speak themselves presumes interests for them that cannot actually be evidenced. This attribution of what nonhuman actors ‘want’, therefore, although always relationally constituted and shared in a network involving human actors, requires a human voice to be

expressed. It is this presence of a human interlocuter that Collins and Yearly (1992) suggest nullifies any claims to objectivity ANT may submit.

Nevertheless, even if I were to accept ANT's supposed neutrality, I do not have access to the vast amounts of technical and qualitative data necessary to study Facebook as part of a fully circumscribed actor network. I cannot, for example, fully study the nonhuman actors involved in Facebook's production of users, such as the internal algorithmic workings of the News Feed, the lines of code that shape the Messenger application, the data-gathering protocols on the profile, Facebook's tracking information on the site, the data-storage facilitates around the globe, the technical devices used to access Facebook, and so on and so forth – all for various reasons such as the restrictions of intellectual property rights, geographical distance, and, indeed, my own lack of technical training. Moreover, I have not decided to directly approach other interested human parties who can be said to exist within Facebook's vast network of actants, such as Facebook's leaders, designers, and technical support team, the advertisers who use Facebook for commercial purposes, or the content moderators who remove harmful content from the site. Instead, I have chosen to explore the scripting of Facebook as a 'tool' of ideal, healthy communication through an analysis of how it is spoken about by its leaders and designers in public statements accessible to lay users of the platform.

Following in the tradition of British Cultural Studies, which focuses on the 'ordinary', 'everyday' expressions of cultural artefacts in society (Kellner, 1997; Kennedy, 2016; McCarthy, 2006; Silverstone, 1994; Williams, 2002), this emphasis on Facebook's public presentation of its services is a conscious decision based upon my wish to explore how users, perhaps without strong prior technical knowledge, are enjoined to think commonly about their activity on the platform on an fundamental level. In doing so, I hope to draw attention to the ways multi-national technology companies such as Facebook attempt to direct the public discourses surrounding the utility of their services to

public audiences, simultaneously highlighting how such discourses interact with the design of user-interfaces to produce pathways of activity as more likely than others upon them.

This decision, while in part determined by practical necessity, does not invalidate my attempt to study the relational production of users on Facebook. Conversely, it actually allows me to supplement an analysis of this production with a more diagnostically attuned critique, beyond the identification of either stronger or weaker actant associations found in strictly ANT accounts. Alongside this discursive focus on publicly accessible statements made by Facebook and its envoys, I have chosen to limit my analysis to the space within which users most directly encounter the scripting of ideal use: the user-interface.

Specifically, Chapters IV and V this thesis will focus on the News Feed due its position as the primary means through which users access and interact with the activity that occurs on the platform. Following the thought of critical media scholar Branden Hookway (2014), moreover, the user interface “most actively determines the human relation to technology and delimits the boundaries that define human and machine” (p. 1). It is this fundamental relation that justifies Facebook’s News Feed user-interface as key site of concern for this thesis.

As has been hinted at above, the way user-interfaces are scripted according to a determination of ideal use have been treated as political relations insofar as they set out normative boundaries of interaction with them (Galloway, 2012). This has been explored by Mel Stanfill (2015) through her theoretical approach of discursive interface analysis. Stanfill’s approach works up from the premise that the way social media sites

are built reflects assumptions about what site visitors will do, which becomes a normative claim about what users should do when incorporated within the interface. (Stanfill, 2015, p. 1062).

In setting tangible limits and possibilities of user activity, Stanfill suggests that the design of user-interfaces propose to its users an ideal “purpose and appropriate use” (ibid, p. 1060). While this is not to say that such prescriptions necessarily *will* be followed by users, thereby sidestepping the theoretical trap of technological determinism, Stanfill’s approach looks at the way user-interfaces propose “correct” (ibid) pathways of usage that “structure action” (ibid) on platforms. Stanfill develops a Foucauldian notion of power as productive (Foucault, 1995), suggesting that “making something more possible, normative, or ‘common sense’ is a form of constraint encouraging that outcome” (Stanfill, 2015, p. 1060). Therefore, discursive interface analysis seeks to explore how the particularities of a websites design, to bring in a phrase of the critical theorist Maurizio Lazzarato (2015), “*suggest, enable, solicit, incite, encourage, and prevent certain actions, thoughts, affects, and promote others*” (p. 181).

Thus, although script analysis will help this thesis draw attention to the ways that Facebook materially and discursively configures ideal users, alone it cannot explicitly indicate how and through what processes users *become* users in their interactions with the platform, or, indeed, how this process could be considered as a functional expression of power. In this vein, Fuller and Goffey have amended the notion of the script to show how behaviours are “enabled and entrained” (Fuller & Goffey, 2012, p.158) in humans by the coding of computerized technologies. Moreover, the ability for computer scripts to “regularize actions by positioning actors in relations of point and counterpoint to each other” (ibid, p. 159) can be conceived in relation to the “operations and dynamics of power” (ibid, p. 158). While Fuller and Goffey are referring explicitly to computer scripts in this instance, their suggestion that “script actions to create behaviour” (ibid, p. 160) opens up a link between the engineering of human behaviours through a combination of discourse, technological mediation and a notion of productive power (Foucault, 1995). Such a link points toward a set of related questions: What interests do Facebook’s particular configuration ideal usership

serve? And how does this configuration function to produce users of Facebook? Here, at this theoretical nexus, I would like to propose a concept of habit than can address these questions opened up, but still left hanging, by a politically re-purposed concept of the socio-technical script.

2.2 Habits as relations

According to Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983),

To understand power in its materiality, its day to day operation, we must go to the level of the micro practices, the political technologies in which our practices are formed. (Dreyfus & Rabinow. 1983, p. 185)

This section will present a relational concept of habit that can help this thesis elucidate how power relations flow through the day-to-day activity of users on Facebook. In doing so, I will be able to examine the extent to which Facebook's scripting of ideal use becomes incorporated, or not, in the production of users on the platform. The inculcation of user habits, thus, will be treated as the precise mechanism through which users are 'made' on Facebook. Toward this end, and before moving onto a more direct discussion of how this productive relation can be considered as part of a technology of power (Foucault, 1995, 2015), this section will explore the early 20th century American pragmatist John Dewey's (1930) thought on habit.

Instead of relaying a negative idea of habit as "a fixed, mechanical reaction to particular stimuli [...] devoid of meaning from the actor's point of view" (Camic, 1986), as found in Kantian moral philosophy (Kant, 1966, 2007) or contemporary medicalized conceptions of Facebook addiction for instance (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Valverde, 1998), the notion of Facebook habit advanced below is a distinctly relational conceptualization. Here, habit is treated, in alignment with

Valverde (1998), as “precisely those patterns of action that are neither fully willed nor utterly determined” (p. 139) by the human agent. Side-stepping subject/object distinctions that either manifest in reductive configurations of the human as an autonomous agent wielding the resources of the mechanical world for their own ends, or in its opposite formulation of a free agent being crushed by oppressive technological systems respectively (Clark et al., 2014), habit allows room to study the relationship between human users and Facebook’s user-interfaces as a process of complex environmental conditioning. Carolyn Pedwell (2017), for example, suggests that habits are “not simply individual capacities or modes of behaviour but rather the product of evolving transactions between organisms and the milieus they inhabit” (p. 70). Habits are, for Pedwell, “at once socio-cultural and bio-physical” (ibid), constituting the activity through which the human simultaneously learns and becomes appropriate to particular historical environments. Although Bourdieu (1992) has explored these ideas of environmental incorporation through a concept *habitus*, in order to construct a general “theory of practice” (ibid, p. 52) that explores the historical structures of class in Western nation states, the concept of habit explored in this thesis does not imply the type of strict sociological research requisite for investigations using Bourdieu’s particular theoretical rubric.

Instead, by drawing attention to the way environments produce modes of appropriate behaviour immanent to their inhabitation, a notion of habit as relations, similar but not identical to Bourdieu’s thinking, can help illuminate how Facebook generates patterned modes of usership in a way that will not automatically assume its usage simply fulfils natural human needs. Rather than the patterned forms of communication observable on Facebook originating from a wellspring of evolutionary urges, a prevalent discourse employed by Facebook that Chapter III of this thesis will analyse in detail, a concept of habit as relations can help examine how practices of social networking activity results from the coming together of human agents and scripted user-interfaces to produce certain responses over others on the platform.

This builds upon the work of Wendy Chun (2016), which suggest that social networking habits “move between the voluntary and the involuntary”, conceptually troubling the “boundary between self and other” (Chun, 2016, p. 8) that have popularly structured studies of networked technologies and their usership to date.

Habits, for Chun, “link not only humans to other humans, but also humans to non-humans and the environment” (Chun, 20016, p. 7), revealing the “creative in the mechanical, the machinic in the creative” (ibid, p. 8) that comprises the social world. “Through habits”, Chun goes on to say,

users become their machines: they stream, update, capture, upload, share, grind, link, verify, map, save, trash, and troll. Repetition breeds expertise, even as it breeds boredom. (Chun, 2016, p. 1)

While Chun, and others (Bennet, 2013; Carlisle, 2014; Crossley, 2013; Pedwell, 2016) identify numerous philosophical and sociological antecedents of the treatment of habit as a relational process of constancy and change, to be found, for instance in the work of William James, Felix Ravaisson, Gilles Deleuze, Marcel Mauss and Emile Durkheim, John Dewey’s (1930) thinking on human and non-human “organizations” (p. 26) is the most pertinent for this present thesis. Specifically, this is because Dewey suggests that habits are creatively learnt by humans in response to the socio-technical arrangements within particular historical settings.

Writing in the early 20th century, Dewey similarly rejects any essentialist conceptualizations of the human subject, instead claiming that humans are formed through repeated practice of historicized technological, cultural and political social relations. For Dewey, habit should be considered as “an art” (Dewey, 1930, p.66) learnt in response to lived experience in different technologized, institutional environments. As such, Dewey is concerned with the shifting plasticity of the human subject in time, questioning how we can account for both stability and

flux in human societies. Toward this end, habit is presented by Dewey as the chief process through which this dynamism can be explored. Dewey's thought, therefore, is valuable for me by being able to home in on habit as the precise mechanism through which socio-technical inscription works to produce Facebook users of the News Feed.

For Dewey, "we may think of habit as means [...] waiting, like tools in a box, to be used by conscious resolves" (1930, p. 25). Habits suggest *ways of response* not particular acts, and are therefore not definitively determinative of action. However, when habits become routinized in established organizations of objects, humans and institutions, it is in their "essence [...] to insist upon their own continuation" (Dewey, 1930, pp. 75-76). Therefore, habits "have to be employed in coordinated conjunction" (ibid, p. 26) between the individual and their technological environment, revealing the way that every layer of human activity is entwined with nonhuman counterparts that bring that activity to fruition. Dewey explains his thinking as such:

[objects] are actual means only when brought into conjunction with eye, arm and hand in some specific operation. And eye, arm and hand are, correspondingly, means proper only when they are in active operation. And when they are in action they are cooperating with external materials and energies. Without support from beyond themselves the eye stares blankly and the hand moves fumblingly. They are means only when they enter into organizations with things which independently accomplish definite results. These organizations are habits. (Dewey, 1930, pp. 25-26).

Foreshadowing some of the core notions of ANT, Dewey suggests that it is impossible to establish a hierarchy of agency dependent upon singular human actors with innate wills. Rather, humans are, as they have been since they were born, in the thick of it, dependent upon

others and objects to constitute the seemingly stable flow of their existence.

Habits are formed through the “*interaction* between elements of human nature and the environment” (Dewey, 1930, p. 10), thereby theoretically dissolving the hierarchy between subject and object that this thesis has identified as a core issue in contemporary debates surrounding Facebook’s usership. Agency, in Dewey’s thought, is situated somewhere in the middle – between the “natural” and the “cultural” poles erected in the modern philosophical constitution, as explored by Latour (1993) for instance. As much as objects are defined by their “organization” with the human will, the human will can only materialize in actuality through its organization with objects/things/nonhumans. Habits, as the organized relations between humans and nonhumans, then, are always for Dewey “demands for certain kinds of activity” (1930, p. 225).

Elizabeth Grosz (2013) understands this binding together of life and materiality as a transformative process:

Habits are the ways in which living beings accommodate more of their environments than the constitution of instincts generally permits: habits are how environments impact and transform the forms of life they accommodate and are themselves impacted and transformed by these forms of life. (Grosz, 2013, p. 219).

These ideas surrounding habit are useful for this thesis by being able to indicate how the discursive and material scripting of Facebook could actually become incorporated into the lives of its users, or not, through their activity on the platform, while showing how users themselves simultaneously create the quality of the Facebook environment they are habituated within.

In summary, habits will be treated in this thesis as both acquired and productive; as the means through which the Facebook user becomes what they are in relation to the platform’s technical affordances and

user-interfaces. The habits of Facebook users will not be presented as essentially repetitious, but will rather classify a range of patterned responses made possible by the limitations of Facebook's technical environment. Although containing the potential for change, therefore, the social networking habits of Facebook nevertheless denote a "certain ordering or systemization of minor elements of action" (Dewey, 1930, pp. 40-41) that do restrict the possibility of action open to users on the platform at any given time. Moreover, as has been indicated above, the designed configurations of ideal users and their ideal habits are essentially normative, opening up a question of power that I will finally seek to clarify now. The next section will begin by briefly introducing and contextualising Foucault's (2015) early work on individualisation and social norms. From this standpoint, I will suggest that this aspect of Foucault's thought can be combined with the conceptual focus of the socio-technical script and a relational concept of habit to investigate how Facebook users are produced on the platform.

2.3 The micro-physics of power

In his 1972-72 lectures at the Collège de France, collected in the book *The Punitive Society*, Foucault (2015) traced the separation of the Western individual during the 19th century out of rural communities, corporate bodies, guilds and castes into more individualized, institutionalized environments of administrative control (Foucault, 2015, pp. 205-206). In this period of industrialization, Foucault posits that individuals began to "function as multipliers of power" (ibid, p. 206) as they came into contact with expanding sites of bureaucratic administration seeking to stabilize flows of migration from rural districts to metropolitan centres of production (Foucault, 2007). These processes were termed by Foucault as forms of "sequestration" (Foucault, 2015, p. 210). Within modern capitalist societies, Foucault

argues three primary modes of individual sequestration emerge. The first fixes disparate groups of humans to a homogenous temporality, tying the individual to a regime of punctuality that prompts predictable routines of action to take shape in various spheres of being. Some of these methods contemporarily resonate with being ‘on-the-clock’ in the workplace, fulfilling financial repayments on credit or loans, and following the standardized progression of school year examinations. For Foucault, these temporally strict systems account for and order human behaviour in different situations. The second form of sequestration produces the life of the individual as a matter for concern and management. This is expressed through a “discursivity that takes up the quotidian, the individual, the personal, the bodily, and the sexual” (ibid, p. 215) as valid sites of supervision. Here, the personal capacities of individuals are measured, assessed and explained in relation to a particular set of standards upheld by an external authoritarian figure – for example the teacher in the school, the warden in the prison, or the doctor in the psychiatric hospital.

The final form of sequestration establishes the appropriateness of action in each of these distinct institutional environments in comparison to a certain style of normality – as opposed to being compared to philosophical distinctions of the ‘good’ or the virtuous. In this process, the individual is defined “in terms of his possible or real divergence” (ibid, p. 216) from modes of conduct deemed normal under specific sets of circumstances. Thus, to be sequestered and disciplined for Foucault is to be triangulated as an individual through these various processes – it is

to be caught within a discursivity that is at once uninterrupted in time, produced from outside by an authority, and necessarily ordered by reference to the normal and the abnormal. (Foucault, 2015, p. 216).

Crucially for Foucault, and for the purposes of this thesis, modes of modern disciplinary power found in capitalist societies are said to be

expressed, and are therefore identifiable, in the inculcation of habits in individuals.

The ordering of human routine constitutes a primary mode through which the human individual is transformed into a “docile body” (Foucault 1995, p. 138) of certain capacities and aptitudes, readily measured and, ultimately, controlled. This analytical focus on the “subtle arrangements” (ibid, p. 139) of human habits found in various corporations, institutions and other modern administrative apparatuses, while “apparently innocent” (ibid) are, in fact, for Foucault, “profoundly suspicious” (ibid). The micro-impositions of habit, producing actions of a certain kind appropriate to certain environments, are “small acts of cunning endowed with a great power of diffusion” (ibid). With these ideas in mind, then, the invitation to act in a certain way through the design of Facebook’s user-interfaces, as identifiable through an analysis of the scripting of user behaviour in discourse and design, can be explored as a channelling of power working to produce users of a certain disciplined type.

Habit, in Foucault’s words, is “what links one to an order of things, to an order of time and to a political order” (2015, p. 239). The particular historical order Foucault refers to in his early work (comprising the lectures compiled in the *Punitive Society* (2015) and the book *Discipline and Punish* (1995) respectively), are the apparatuses of industrialized capitalist production emergent in Western Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. This historical specificity could pose a problem for the analytical framework I am seeking to establish in this chapter, which is very much attuned to contemporary engagements with Facebook’s user-interfaces. However, I would like to suggest that the processes of individualisation found in Foucault’s work on habit and power in modern capitalist societies in the West can be productively traced onto the variants of “digital capitalism” (Schiller, 1999; Pace, 2018), “platform capitalism” (Srnicek, 2017) and “surveillance capitalism” (Zuboff, 2019) used to describe contemporary capitalist relations in the networked era.

In focusing on the formation of habits of usership as central sites through which the individual embodies the interests of capitalist corporations, medical institutions, or political organisations – consciously or otherwise, Foucault's thought can help me draw attention to the way in which users are produced through their interactions with normatively designed user-interfaces, as suggested in Stanfill's (2015) approach of discursive interface analysis introduced above. Using Foucault's ideas of habit as normalization to supplement Dewey's notion of habit as relations, along with the conceptual focus of the socio-technical script, I will be able to explore how the habitual usership of Facebook cannot simply stem from a somehow 'natural' inclination to act 'socially' online, but, in fact, emerges from the human individual coming into contact with discursive and materially configured user-interfaces that shapes their activity according to Facebook's primary functioning as a capitalist data-platform (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017).

The micro interactions on social media sites have been linked to macroeconomic processes by scholars such as Shoshana Zuboff (2019), who claims that the West has undergone a shift from the mass manufacturing of industrial capitalism to a form of "surveillance capitalism", whereby datafied human-behaviour is now the core commodity being produced in digitized capitalist markets (Cyphers & Gebhart, 2019). As was explored in greater depth in the literature review, this process, whereby Facebook constructs the conditions necessary for the extraction of profitable data from user-behaviour, has been termed datafication (Van Dijck, 2014). Similarly, Zuboff argues that large-scale technology companies seek to channel user-behaviour toward quantifiable interactions that are amenable to datafication. This channelling of human activity, for Zuboff, constitutes a key commodification mechanism through which exchange-value can be established and traded for profit in contemporary capitalist markets. Users of Google, Facebook, and other data-platforms are said to be transformed into prosumers (Fuchs, 2015) – the embodied producers of

the commodity (data) they themselves are consuming. However, while Zuboff instructively draws attention to what she believes are the economic principles underlying contemporary processes of information capitalism, and is right to link these processes to modalities of capitalist capture, her work does not focus specifically upon Facebook, or, indeed, how and through what means these behavioural habits are actually inculcated within, and enacted by, the relations supported by user-interfaces on the platform. This opens a theoretical and empirical lacuna that this thesis will seek to address.

Relatedly to the anti-essentialist positions of Dewey outlined above, Foucault claims that repeated practice of habitual activity is the process that creates human selves of a certain type in different environments. In this way, the habitual routines of social networking activity generated through engagement with Facebook's user-interfaces could contribute to the production of contemporary digital selves on social media sites. Foucault terms this process "subjectification", defined as the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. (Foucault, 1986, p. 208). For Foucault, there exists no kernel of internal subjectivity that simply manifests from within, unaffected by the time and location of an individual's existence. As opposed to an ahistorical essential found in Kantian (2009) metaphysics, for example, the human subject is essentially historical, and Foucault's historicized human subject correspondingly negates any sense of teleological cosmopolitanism. Consequently, the development of dominant political institutions, social formations and cultural relations – Facebook's global reach of over 2.4 billion users included (Newsroom, 2019), cannot simply be positively understood as the result of 'mankind's' linear civilisation, the 'natural' unfurling of rational human freedom in time, or as an inevitable expression of biological evolutionary processes.

Instead, much in the same way that Dewey considers habit as the vehicle through which cultural stability is expressed in society, so as to give the impression of historical continuation, Foucault posits that the historical subject's engagement with contemporaneous social

apparatuses (of work, traditional forms of the family, state institutions of health, education and the law for example), “produces a fabric of habits” (Foucault, 2015, p. 239) that entwines individuals with the norms of the day. Through a “a play of coercion and punishment, apprenticeship and chastisement” (ibid), Foucault writes, the instilling of habits in individuals “produces something like the norm” (ibid) that ensures stable ways of being immanent to different environments. These norms, bred and maintained through the disciplining of the subject through ideal habits, moreover, constitute “ the instrument by which individuals are tied to the apparatuses of production” (ibid). This indicates that wider interests of power are involved in the promotion of certain habits over others in different cultural contexts.

To think about Facebook and habit with Foucault, therefore, is to try and move beyond any essential conceptualizations of Facebook’s user, instead opening up avenues of enquiry that explore how and through what means the user is produced, spoken about, acted upon, and acts *as a user* on the platform. As identified in the literature review, however, it is important to acknowledge the agency of users to interact with the platform in unexpected ways and not to simply posit that Facebook somehow dominates the will of the individual user. Rather, as outlined above, agency is shared in processes of technological mediation. Natasha Dow Schüll, for example, has shown how the process of habit inculcation in casino video slot machines is a process of “*collusion*” (2012, p. 73) as opposed to duress. Schüll shows how the technological design of fixed odds betting terminals combine with the affective and economic interests of gamblers to create systems of repeated activity, as opposed to the machines *forcing* their users to gamble in certain ways. The formation of a gambling habit

is a condition that develops out of sustained interaction between a subject and an object; both sides of the interaction matter, each in their own way. (Dow Schüll, 2012, p. 167).

However, Schüll also shows how the design of video slot machines are explicitly geared toward extending the gambler's "time-on-device" (ibid, p. 58).

These design features include player-centric ergonomic consoles, mathematically determined win and loss ratios, and enticing sound and visual engineering that make the user experience as comfortable and rewarding as economically possible for the casino (ibid, pp. 53-54). Therefore, the type and quality of user interaction with these machines are directly related to the casino's primary aim to extract as much economic value as possible out of the gambler's habitual usage. While the formation of habit does depend on the coming together of users and technologies, Schüll's analysis shows how economic incentives play a vital role in the initial creation and continued character of those habits within relational networks of power. These ideas can help frame the analysis of Facebook's News Feed in Chapter IV of this thesis. Here, the nudges of the News Feed, which prompt users along corridors of active communication, will be linked to Facebook's economic purpose as a data-platform, thereby rendering these relations as asymmetrical in some way.

To briefly take stock of what has been discussed in this chapter so far, I hope to have shown how ideas surrounding socio-technical scripting will help this thesis be attentive to the ways that Facebook projects ideal modes of usage in discourse and design, while Foucault's thinking on normalizing power can help explore precisely *how* the inculcation of habit constitutes the process through which such norms are actually enacted by Facebook's users. The ideals of use that Chapters III and IV will identify in Facebook's discourse of well-being and design of the News Feed respectively, thus, will be shown to function as part of a system of normalization that seeks to stabilize user activity in profitable directions. Chapter V, however, in keeping with the non-deterministic framework submitted above, will investigate the extent to which these norms are operative in actual users' interactions with the News Feed. Therefore, this thesis will explicate the findings of an empirical

discursive and material study of Facebook – one theoretically informed by the concept of the socio-technical script, through a Foucauldian analytic of disciplinary power.

Consequently, I will diverge from other recent work that studies Facebook's user-interfaces using Foucauldian concepts (Bucher, 2016; Grosser, 2016), which tend to employ Foucault's notion of the panopticon as the primary schema of analysis. For example, Taina Bucher (2016) pinpoints the News Feed's "regime of visibility" (p. 573) as the imperative function of disciplinary systems of surveillance on Facebook, while Benjamin Grosser (2016) describes Facebook's social metrics enforcing norms of use through the "graphoticon", understood as a "a form of self-induced audit [...] where the many watch the metrics of the many" (S3, para 3). In these types of analysis that bring together Facebook and Foucault's concept of discipline, the News Feed is presented as a panoptic regime where users watch all others at all times, as opposed to a singular authority watching the many from an omniscient vantage point (Foucault, 2015, p. 227). In this way, users that comprise social networks are said to constantly observe and assess the behaviour of other users – in a process of networked self-administration. These writers focus on the *feeling* of assessment that panoptic regimes engender, relating the adherence to the behavioural norm to systems of visibility and measurement by external others.

However, as the discussion of script analysis and habit have revealed above, norms of use are not always administered by an external observer, but can be shown to be immanent to user-interfaces and technological organisations of humans and non-humans. This understanding will allow this thesis to move beyond classifications of Facebook as simply an oppressive, panoptic regime of visibility, and instead explore the ways that power specifically *generates* certain forms of usership through the inculcation of habit. Moreover, as Foucault suggests, power that has no form of expression is not power at all (Foucault, 1988; Deleuze, 1986). For example, the "exercise of power", as Foucault states in an essay titled the 'Subject and Power',

incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. (Foucault, 1986, p. 220).

Technologies of power, then, are found in the *effects* they produce, and disciplinary regimes do not simply produce subjects by the *feeling* of being watched. Instead, I would like to suggest that subjects are produced through habitual activity attuned to the demands of certain environments. Thinking with this idea in relation to Facebook, the generation of stable patterns of behaviour on the platform help ensure the continued proliferation of economically productive, and governable, social relations. Without habits, thus, both the expression and purpose of disciplinary power on Facebook would remain unidentifiable in the ether.

Foucault himself suggests that the “acquisition of disciplines or habits” (2015, p. 237) are the key instruments through which individual members of the population are brought to order in specific environments. Upon this basis, the attempt toward “instilling habits” (ibid) on Facebook through the discourses surrounding and design of user-interfaces, therefore, can be considered as an attempt to maintain predictable and profitable users on the platform. Taken as such, the habitual activity of liking posts, sharing photos, commenting on statuses, evaluating relationships, and quantifying interactions – taken as immanent habits to the affordances of Facebook itself, can be considered as the *effects* of Facebook’s economic function. In this way, focusing on habits can offer a way to explicate how power is *expressed* on Facebook by producing practicing subjects of a certain type, and, more specifically, how this operates through the routinization of behaviour implied by discursive and technological scripts on Facebook. Although Foucault’s conceptualization of institutional disciplinary power is grounded upon historical analyses of administrative institutions,

hospitals and schools for example, and constitutes a very specific account of how a particular subject can be said to emerge during a particular historical period as result, this thesis will show how Foucault's concept of habit can be used as a vehicle to explore the expression of power in other environments that are not bounded by set administrative goals or physical borders.

2.4 Conclusion

The concept of the socio-technical script will allow this thesis to be attentive to the way that Facebook's design projects normative ideals of use, yet this chapter has argued that script analysis alone cannot account for how prescriptive pathways of behaviour actually *produce* users that "function as multipliers of power" (Foucault, 2015, p.206) on the platform. Moreover, while script analysis can help identify the implicit norms of use in-built into Facebook's design, and, indeed, point toward how ideal users (Woolgar, 1991) are always in a necessary process of construction, such an analysis does not automatically involve a critique of *how* these norms are actually incorporated through user activity, or, indeed, how such activity works to stabilize Facebook's continued position as a global economic actor. To address script-analysis's theoretical and apolitical limitations, therefore, I have engaged with a concept of habit as espoused by diverse thinkers such as Chun, Dewey and Foucault, so as to better illuminate how the macroeconomic processes of digital capitalism flow through the localized practices of Facebook's everyday users. In doing so, I will address the lacuna in current understanding of how Facebook's discursive material configuration of ideal usership 'makes' users and question the extent to which such a configuration can be understood in terms of productive power. To conclude, the concept of the socio-technical script will be used as a largely theoretical notion to help orient the way that I think about the articulation of discourse on Facebook,

while a concept of habit as relations will be used to study *how* this discourse actually becomes incorporated in the day-to-day social networking activity of users through their repetitious engagement with the platform.

Chapter III: Facebook's ideal user, social capital and the politics of well-being

As set out in the previous chapter, consumer technological products are socio-technically scripted to configure users and their imagined contexts of use, both in the material design of the artefact and in the accompanying media discourses disseminated by its producers. For example, Pfaffenberger argues that artefacts are always “projected into a spatially defined, discursively regulated social context” (1992, p. 291) by their creators, who seek to restrict and stabilize the many potential interpretations of its social role, value and usage in the world, while Nissenbaum writes that the producers of socio-technical products are engaged in the task of describing how their “technology links into and satisfies certain cultural or symbolic needs that people have” (2011, p. 1377). The theoretical framework of this thesis argued that designed configurations of ideal human users and technical objects represent political circumscriptions of the world by establishing and expressing both *how* they ought to be used and *by whom*, through both discursive and material means. Prior to the more focused material analysis of the affordances of the News Feed in Chapter IV, it is important for this chapter to identify, examine, and critique how Facebook discursively constructs its ideal users of the platform. Upon the basis of this investigation, I will be in a position to analyse the extent to which these ideal users are configured in the design of Facebook's News Feed in the following chapter.

In this chapter, I will argue that Facebook's presentation of its ideal user can be located at various junctures within Facebook's public discourses of well-being. More specifically, I will show that when Facebook talks about “healthy” usership of the platform, it is possible to discern a program of ideal usership upon which Facebook legitimates its (profitable) inculcation of habit on the platform. In the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal that broke in early 2018 (Cadwalladr &

Graham-Harrison, 2018), whereby the data of millions of Facebook users was sold to a private political consultancy firm without explicit informed consent, Mark Zuckerberg faced questions during two sessions in front the US Senate and Congress concerning its business practices and social values. During his Senate hearing, Zuckerberg was asked to comment on recent reports linking Facebook usage with mental health issues such as addiction and depression. Such issues are common themes of contemporary Western mass media coverage of Facebook (Busby, 2018; Carey, 2019; O'Neil, 2019), and are explored in psychological studies that associate increased Facebook usage with decreased subjective well-being (SWB) (Kross et al., 2013), higher levels of depression (Feinstein et al., 2013) and increased envy in users (Appel, Gerlach & Crusius, 2016). Moreover, Sherry Turkle (2011) argues that individuals who spend extensive periods online can become isolated within their immediate communities, while Jean Twenge (2018) links the rising levels of anxiety in North American teenagers to increased social media usage and reliance on the smartphone. Adding to this, Facebook's former vice-president of user-growth Chamath Palihapitiya had recently criticised the "dopamine-driven feedback loops" of Facebook's liking system in a speech at Stanford Business School (Wong, 2017), and early investor Roger McNamee, in an online article for USA Today (McNamee, 2017), had compared the habit-forming tendencies of Facebook to "gambling, nicotine, alcohol or heroin". These criticisms revolve around the so-called "persuasive" (Fogg, 2003) designs of Facebook that attempt to keep users interacting with the platform, functionally to produce the profitable data-traces necessary to fulfill Facebook's current business model of data-driven targeted advertising (Fuchs, 2015; Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017).

In response to this line of questioning regarding user well-being, Zuckerberg stated in his Senate hearing: "I view our [Facebook's] responsibility as not just building services that people like, but building services that are good for people and good for society as well"

(Guardian Live, 2018); and that “it's not enough to just build tools. We need to make sure that [...] all of the members in our community are using these tools in a way that's going to be good and healthy” (ibid). While it would, indeed, be rare for any leader of a large technology company to publicly deny their product's health benefits and ethical credentials, this chapter will instead take seriously the normative stakes of Zuckerberg's gesture toward “good and healthy” Facebook usership.

Through an empirical analysis of public statements by Facebook's leaders, and through a survey of Facebook's public-facing blogs and user-information videos, the opening section of this chapter will argue that a patterned model of ideal, ‘healthy’ usership can be identified in Facebook's mediatized discourses concerning well-being. Recalling the empirical focus of “ordinary” Cultural Studies approaches outlined in the previous chapter (Kennedy, 2016), these materials open up as a valid corpus of data as they constitute the most accessible means through which users encounter Facebook's descriptions of best practice on the site. I will demonstrate how Facebook discursively enjoins users to adopt healthy habits on the platform, showing how users' well-being is said to be directly correlated with each individuals' respective ability to adopt practices of ‘active’ communication on the platform. For instance, ‘good’ habits are said to include regularly messaging close ties on Facebook, commenting on posts and updating statuses, while ‘bad’ habits involve passively scrolling down the News Feed and non-engagement with friends' posts. I will show how these two models of usership are said to improve or reduce user well-being respectively.

Following on from the Foucauldian analytic of power constructed previously, this chapter will circumscribe and explore a “network of statements” (Foucault, 2002, p. 112) within which truth claims about “healthy” modes of Facebook usership can be made. Drawing links between disparate discursive events within Facebook's public facing materials can bring to light the specific conditions necessary for Facebook's representatives to recommend “good” usership in different forms and contexts. While this chapter does not establish a rigorous

methodological framework of discourse analysis per se, it explores Foucault's proposition that discourse functions as a "practice" (ibid, p. 82) that allows "specific existence[s]" (ibid, p. 31), as opposed to others, to emerge from "what is said" (ibid) across a range of statements in time.

I will argue that Facebook's recommendations of good and bad human behaviour in terms of well-being produces a normative configuration of the ideal Facebook user as a universal subject with supposedly 'natural' wants and needs (Foot, 2001; Haybron, 2008). The middle section of this chapter will show how Facebook's ideal user is based upon a 'social' human subject grounded in evolutionary psychology and theories of social capital. It is in terms of these quasi-psychological discursive constructs (Rose, 1998) that Facebook feels authorised to present, and recommend, a particular version of human sociality within which its services can be understood as valuable, and indeed, necessary for its users' well-being. Specifically, Facebook presents itself as a communication tool through which humans can fulfil their evolutionary conceived 'need' for social connection. To engage in active usage, thus, is presented as the biological fulfilment of an innate (rational) psychological human drive for well-being. Through a close analysis of Facebook's early social psychology and Human Computer Interaction (HCI) research papers, therefore, I will demonstrate how Facebook constructs modalities of *living well* in terms of increasing and intensifying levels of social networking activity, with well-being presented as both the outcome and responsibility of users engaging with the platform in the *right way*.

Through this research, I will demonstrate that the value of interpersonal relationships within Facebook's ideal social network is configured through the reductive prism of competitive self-interest. The final sections of this chapter will highlight how Facebook mobilizes a particular presentation of the user as a self-interested social actor, competitively vying for relational resources in their social networks, as the basis of "healthy" usership on the platform. I will then argue that this

raises pertinent links with discourses of neoliberal responsabilization that deserves further scrutiny. Specifically, placing well-being outcomes on Facebook solely in the hands of users engaging with the platform in a “healthy” manner resonates with how neoliberal subjects are valued and administered through their capacity of self-care in neoliberal modes of governance.

By excavating the assumptions implicit in Facebook’s discursive ideals of “good and healthy” usership, and highlighting the interests involved in their construction, this chapter will argue that Facebook’s recommendations of healthy usage ought to be considered as program of actions (Latour, 1994) that delimit pathways of appropriate behaviour on the platform. Specifically, I will show how Facebook’s discourse of well-being constructs ideal users of the platform that work to align their supposedly ‘natural’ interests with the business interests of Facebook as a capitalist data platform (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017). This, coupled with the specific neoliberal quality of this construction, reveals another layer of the political stakes of everyday Facebook usership beyond the commonplace terms set out in the introduction, thereby providing an original contribution to the study of Facebook today.

3.1 “Good for people and good for society”

I will begin with a quote from Mark Zuckerberg’s hearing in front of the US senate in April 2018, which qualifies his statements concerning “healthy” usership of the platform introduced above:

We study a lot of effects of well-being of our tools [...]
What we find in general is that you're using social media in order to build relationships, right? So, if you're sharing content with friends, you're interacting, then that is associated with all of the long-term measures of well-being that you'd intuitively think of: long-term health, long-

term happiness, long-term feeling connected, feeling less lonely. But if you're using the internet and social media primarily to just passively consume content, and you're not engaging with other people, then it doesn't have those positive effects and it could be negative. (Mark Zuckerberg, quoted from a video recording of the hearing found on the Guardian Live YouTube channel, April 10, 2018).

Here, Zuckerberg references Facebook's "study" of well-being to validate his assumptions about *why* Facebook users spend time on the platform. Specifically, actively involving oneself in communication with friends, while avoiding passive consumption of content, is presented by Zuckerberg as a way for users to "build relationships" with others in their social network.

The referencing of its own well-being research is a key feature of Facebook's public engagement with the mental health issues related to the use of its products. For instance, Chris Cox, then Head of Product at Facebook, in an interview with *Wired* magazine in 2018, suggested that

People want to have conversations [on Facebook]. They don't want to be passively consuming content. This is connected with the research on well-being, which says that if you go somewhere and you just sit there and watch, and you don't talk to anybody, it can be sad. If you go to the same place and you have five or six conversations that are good around what's going on in the world, what you care about, you feel better. (Cox, quoted in Thompson, 2018)

Here, once again, Cox uses "research" to validate claims about what users "want" from Facebook, and then correlates the fulfilment of these desires with a (yet) undefined notion of well-being. Likewise, in a speech at Morgan Stanley in 2018, Sheryl Sandberg, then COO of

Facebook, claimed that “not all interactions in social media are equally good for people in terms of their psychological well-being” (Spangler, 2018), thereby echoing the hierarchy of activity espoused by Zuckerberg and Cox above. Finally, Adam Mosseri, then Head of News Feed, spoke at length about healthy Facebook usage in terms of well-being in his presentation ‘From consumption to connection’ at Facebook’s 2018 f8 developer conference, suggesting that the News Feed is designed to inculcate “good” social habits in users over deleterious ones (Mosseri, 2018a) – something that will be detailed in greater length in Chapter IV of this thesis.

The discursive opposition of active and passive usage found in these statements can therefore be identified as a pattern in the well-being discourses adopted by Facebook’s leaders in early 2018. Moreover, *choosing* to adopt either of these two modes of activity are implicitly presented as ‘better’ or ‘worse’ user decisions respectively in terms of health. However, as the philosopher of well-being Phillipa Foot argues,

to determine what is goodness and defect of character, disposition, and choice, we must consider what human good is and how human beings live: in other words, what kind of living thing a human being is. (Foot, 2001, p. 51)

Thus, the claims of “healthy” modes of usership expressed by Facebook are necessarily normative in the sense that they establish behaviours that can be said to benefit the human subject on Facebook, while determining other forms of activity as harmful. As I will show below, Facebook constructs this model of health in direct relation to findings from their research into social psychology and HCI.

For the philosopher of biological science Georges Canguilhem, writing in the early 20th century, however, the definition of healthy human states in Western discourses of medicine constitute “an attachment to some value”, as opposed to a “disposition which can be revealed and explained as a fact” (Canguilhem, 1991, p. 57). Canguilhem suggests that “the concept of health is not one of an existence, but of a norm

whose function and value is to be brought into contact with existence in order to stimulate modification” (ibid, p. 87). In this way, health is not a stable concept existing in abstraction from the historical milieu of its enunciation, but can actually be viewed as a point around which human individuals can adjust their behaviour in relation to certain categories of ideal “healthy” normality. For Facebook to be able to establish online activity that is “better” and “healthy” for humans, a pre-existing model of normal human nature is necessary and particular types of human existence need to be identified as valuable to the individual upon this basis.

This process of determining valuable human activity is characteristic of eudaimonic accounts of well-being – defined as the attempt to establish what it means to live well as a human in time (Aristotle, 2004; Raibley, 2013). There are two main threads of the psychological and philosophical study of well-being; hedonistic and eudaimonic accounts (Kahneman, Diener & Schwarz, 1999; Haybron, 2008). Whereas hedonistic theories focus on human well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance (Parfit, 1984), the eudaimonic approach links well-being with a notion of human flourishing (Kraut, 2007). Eudaimonic well-being can be understood in terms of procedural self-fulfilment, meaningful existence, and well-functioning, with the psychologists Ryan and Deci (2008) describing eudaimonic psychology as concentrating on “the content of one’s life, and the processes involved in living well” (ibid p. 140). For the philosopher Lorraine Besser-Jones (2016), moreover, living-well is “flourishing *qua* human being” (ibid, p. 187). Eudaimonic well-being is therefore orientated toward the *recognition and fulfilment of innate and distinctly human capacities*.

In setting out clear programs of “healthy” usage in terms of what the user supposedly “wants” from their interactions on the platform, Facebook can be said to project a normatively eudaimonic version of well-being in its discourse of ideal healthy use. To identify with more clarity the distinct traits, needs and qualities of the human

subjects/users that act as the idealized target for this particular construct of well-being, I will now turn to the “research” upon which Facebook erects the division between active (healthy) and passive (unhealthy) usership. Access to this research can be gained via a blog post found upon Facebook’s *Hard Questions* blog series. *Hard Questions*, as its very first post in June 2017 states, was intended to make Facebook “more open and accountable” (Schrage, 2017). *Hard Questions* offers an insight into how Facebook publicly conceptualizes and presents its action on various socio-political issues involving its services, addressing topics such as terrorist activity on Facebook, false news, data privacy, democracy and user well-being. While the transparency of the information found on these blog posts regarding Facebook’s inner workings is contestable, they are still empirically valuable insofar as they can reveal precisely how Facebook discursively presents itself as a positive force for social good in the public realm. Accredited to David Ginsberg, then director of research at Facebook, and Moira Burke, a social psychologist at Facebook, the blog post concerning user well-being is titled ‘Is spending time on social media bad for us?’ (Ginsberg & Burke, 2017). Here, Ginsberg and Burke present Facebook’s well-being research, which suggests it is *how* people *choose to use* social media that determines the extent to which it is a positive or negative force for their health.

3.2 “Natural” needs and “active” habits

On this blog, foreshadowing the quotes from Facebook’s leaders offered above, Ginsberg and Burke write:

According to the research, it really comes down to *how* you use the technology. For example, on social media, you can passively scroll through posts, much like watching TV, or actively interact with friends — messaging and commenting on each other’s posts. Just

like in person, interacting with people you care about can be beneficial, while simply watching others from the sidelines may make you feel worse. (Ginsberg & Burke, 2017).

The blog post contains hyperlinks to particular psychological studies to bolster these claims. These include, for instance, papers by the US psychologists Philippe Verduyn et al. (2017; 2015) that survey the links between different types of Facebook activity and user well-being, and Toma and Hancock's (2013) research into Facebook and self-affirmation. Such research examines the psychological impact of Facebook through the binary of active/passive usage. These studies are referenced by Burke and Kraut as they seem to show that measures of well-being can increase if Facebook users engage in certain active habits – private messaging, liking photos and commenting for instance, as opposed to passive habits such as scrolling down the News Feed without interacting with posts, or failing to message friends and family.

The positive associations between active communication, relationship maintenance and well-being are reiterated in various forms throughout the blog and in partnership with various external research groups and charities. For instance, Ginsberg and Burke highlight their work with the Greater Good Science Centre (GGSC), a research unit at UC Berkeley who, as its website claims, are working

at the fore of a new scientific movement to explore the roots of happy and compassionate individuals, strong social bonds, and altruistic behaviour—the science of a meaningful life. (Greater Good Science Centre, 2018).

Part of the GGSC's research is to investigate the links between well-being and certain forms of human sociality. The GGSC website states that its online courses aim to teach students “practical, research-based strategies for nurturing their own happiness” (ibid), including how to foster healthy interactions with social media technologies.

In another hyperlink found on the 'Hard Questions' blog, and further establishing the ostensible necessity of maintaining close bonds on Facebook, Ginsberg and Burke reference a research review paper by psychologists at Brigham Young University" (Holt-Lunstad, Smith & Layton, 2010). This paper suggests that "the quality and quantity of individuals" (ibid, p. 1) social relationships can be "linked not only to mental health but also to both morbidity and mortality" (ibid). The paper claims that "individuals with adequate social relationships have a 50% greater likelihood of survival compared to those with poor or insufficient social relationships" (ibid, p. 14). Therefore, maintaining "adequate" social relationships on Facebook equates to adopting 'healthy' user habits and avoiding passive inactivity, and is presented as a significant factor in users' well-being and, by implication, actual physiological health as a result.

The first reference to Facebook's own research on well-being on the *Hard Questions* blog is a paper co-authored by Moira Burke herself and Robert E. Kraut (2016). In this paper, Burke and Kraut suggest that Facebook exists as a tool that could benefit users' well-being if used *correctly* to actively interact with others on the platform. Their argument, Burke and Kraut write, works "upon the assumption that people benefit from social interaction with others" (2016, p. 266). In this paper, Burke and Kraut's "assumption" is justified with a reference to Baumeister and Leary's (1995) evolutionary concept of human belonging. Baumeister and Leary posit that humans have evolved to be reciprocally caring and social creatures in order to maintain evolutionary advantages in potentially threatening environments. The positive emotional ties that bind humans with others in familial groups, friendship circles and romantic relationships are said to be distinct human characteristics that grant access to reproductive mates, mutual protection and resources such as shelter and food. Conversely, Baumeister and Leary claim that the "lack of [social] attachments is linked to a variety of ill effects on health, adjustment, and well-being" (1995, p. 497), suggesting that

human empathy and communication developed as evolutionary and physiological necessities of human survival.

In referencing the evolutionary psychology of Baumeister and Leary, Burke and Kraut stake out a particular presentation of the Facebook user as an inherently 'social' animal – a being whose healthy internal psyche and physical vitality are linked to certain forms of sociality with other like creatures. Solidifying this notion, Burke and Kraut write, “humans are a social species, with many survival advantages accruing from our connections to others” (2016, p. 267). As acting upon distinct human qualities to flourish *as a human* constitutes a core component of eudaimonic procedural accounts of well-being, if humans are social beings by nature, striving to act upon this innate sociality by adopting good Facebook habits of active, frequent, communication, can be presented by Facebook as a contribution to living well as an ideal user on the platform. The forms of evolutionary sociality that have supposedly set the possibility of human vitality prior to the development of social media are said by Burke and Kraut to be still operative in the current age of digital connectivity. Upon this basis, Facebook is presented as a tool to be utilized by human agents for their own social evolutionary purposes – a neutral technology that facilitates pre-existing human tendencies to communicate, socialise and connect with those around them. As the fulfilment of social connection is said to lead to the development of beneficial emotional bonds required for the evolutionary development of humanity as a species, and the lack of sociality results in damaging health effects, the “need to belong” (ibid, p. 266) is positioned as a natural human trait. As such, Kraut and Burke predict that “social interaction [on Facebook] should improve well-being by fulfilling these needs” (ibid).

In this way, Facebook’s researchers suggest that social networking activity on Facebook sustains the access to the emotional support necessary for humans to fulfil their “species” social being. This is understood by Burke and Kraut in terms of “relationship maintenance” (ibid) and “relational investment” (ibid). The link to evolutionary theory is

once again reiterated by Burke and Kraut with a reference to the evolutionary psychologists Roberts and Dunbar (2010), whose work claims that regular and repeated interpersonal communications are necessary to maintain both primate and human social networks. Burke and Kraut refer to this relationship maintenance as an “investment” (Burke & Kraut, 2016, p.226) in time and energy. Specifically, relationships on Facebook are said to benefit users in accordance with the costs of time and energy invested into them. This argument is further bolstered through a reference to Ellison et al.’s (2014) research on social capital and social media, which suggests that high effort in relationship maintenance and communication with friends online correlates with high levels of social capital (the access to emotional and material resources that relationships in social networks can provide (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992)) and user well-being. As such, and as I will explore in more detail later on in this chapter, the value of relationships in Burke and Kraut’s, and by extension Facebook’s, construction of social well-being is established through the prism of self-interest.

Referencing research by Gleason and Lida found in the *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology* (2015), Burke and Kraut make the claim that “people with more perceived social support are happier, healthier, and live longer” (2016, p. 269). This aspect of Facebook’s concept of well-being suggests that the perception of a strong social network, which can fulfil the requirements of the so-deemed ‘natural’ social practices above, is of crucial importance. “Translated into an online environment”, write Burke and Kraut, “these commonplace markers of support might include very lightweight actions such as “likes” or “pokes” in addition to more substantive text-based interactions” (2016, p. 269). In Burke and Kraut’s framework of well-being, thus, *relational investment* could be one way for users to ensure they receive enough markers of support that can contribute to a positive perception of the health of their social network, indicating that reciprocal relationship preservation requires public presentation.

Conversely, Burke and Kraut acknowledge that “some types of online communication can harm well-being” (ibid), and use this understanding to warn against the dangers of ‘passive’ Facebook usage (as found in the public statements and blogs quoted above). Referencing research that notes a user-bias of sharing positive stories on Facebook, such as Steers and Wickham’s (2014) psychological research on the ‘highlight reel effect’, whereby consuming highly curated images of other human lives can be linked to depressive symptoms, and Chou and Edge’s (2012) research into the exaggerated perception of success on Facebook, Burke and Kraut make the case that passively consuming content on Facebook can lead to damaging effects on well-being. The theory of social comparison suggests that “reading others’ stories on social media [can be] linked with ego-deflation, upward social comparison, envy, and subsequent feelings of depression” (Burke & Kraut, 2016, p. 270). It follows that users ought to engage positively in the recommended types of ‘active’ human sociality to counter the dangers posed by this contributing factor to well-being.

Burke and Kraut conducted a psychological study of their own to test out the effects different types of Facebook usage had on users’ well-being. Using an opt-in three-wave survey of 1,910 English-speaking Facebook users worldwide, Burke and Kraut measured perceived feelings of well-being in participants against server-logs of the participants’ activity on Facebook. Users were assessed three times during a period of one month. The changes in participants’ well-being over time were tracked alongside the type of Facebook usage the researchers’ observed through the server-logs. Each participant’s well-being was measured using seven “validated scales” (ibid, p. 271) of psychological measurement, related to the requirements of well-being outlined above. These tests, Burke and Kraut claim, were able to measure perceived social support, satisfaction with life, depression, loneliness, positive and negative affect and perceived levels of stress in individuals (ibid). Participants were asked to identify who their close ties were on Facebook, defined by Marin and Hampton as those who “you

[the participant] discuss important matters with, really enjoy socializing with, or anyone else you feel especially close to” (Marin & Hampton, 2007, quoted in Burke & Kraut, 2016, p. 273), and these close ties were noted as significant others within each participant’s social network.

Burke and Kraut then compared the different types of user activity observable through the server-logs (one-click communications, messaging, scrolling down the News Feed, etc.), with the scale of users involved (i.e. broadcasts to entire social networks, or one-to-one communications), and, finally, with the stated closeness of those connected users to the participant. This activity was then compared with the results from the psychological surveys of well-being each participant took three separate times in the month long period. For Burke and Kraut, the results of their study could purportedly show that “respondents’ well-being increased most when they received composed, targeted communication from strong ties” (Burke & Kraut, 2016, p. 274). In contrast, “receiving broadcasts, weak-tie communication, or one-click feedback from strong ties did not have similar beneficial effects” (ibid). In their interpretation of these results, Burke and Kraut concluded that the positive or negative effects of Facebook on users’ well-being “depend on the nature of the communication and the relationship between communicators” (ibid, p. 276). That is, direct communications with close ties can be said to fulfil the terms of sociality necessary for adequate human belonging, while passive usage neglects the ‘innate’ human requirement for communication. These two types of usage are said to improve or reduce users’ well-being respectively.

By referencing the categories of human social “need” presented above in relation to the empirical results obtained through their own psychological investigations, Burke and Kraut feel authorised to recommend a particular mode of Facebook usage that can benefit the well-being of users of the platform. High-levels of personal communication with close ties, for instance, can fulfil the *need to belong*. Spending time grooming relationships with those in your social

network can *maintain* the *relational investments* necessary for a strong, fully functioning and supportive social network. While consciously limiting the comparison of the self with others, and focusing instead on the support one can gain access to within their social network, can positively boost ones' mental outlook. This creates programs of appropriate and beneficial habits that users would 'naturally' want to adopt while on the platform for the sake of their own well-being, and erects damaging behaviours that users, if acting rationally in terms of their so-deemed wellbeing interests, ought to avoid.

This erection of 'healthy' behaviours in contrast to 'unhealthy' behaviours sets up an ethical program of action (Latour, 1994) that places users, if they choose it, on a pathway toward their own well-being. More than this, however, in laying this path through an appeal to evolutionary psychology and the social "species" being of humanity writ large, Facebook's discourse of well-being seems to suggest that Facebook usage exists as a natural, perhaps inevitable, extension of positive human progression. The teleological assumptions evident in Facebook's version of human 'social' development are encapsulated in a video found on the Hard Questions blog 'is spending time on social media bad for us?' (fig. 1.). As Derek Hook (2001) argues, "similar discursive acts can occur in a multitude of different ways, [and] in various different forms which stretch from what has typically been considered 'discursive', that is, the textual" (p. 537). It is possible, therefore, to analyse the video content found on the Hard Questions blog as a discursive "event" (Foucault, 1981, p. 67) through which truths are fabricated, repeated and fixed in relation to other statements and events within the particular discourse under examination. In this way, Facebook's discursive pattern of well-being can be shown to function "across a variety of different forms" (Hook, 2001, p. 534) in a relational manner

In this video, titled 'Social Media and Well-being', a cartoon representation of the globe zooms into a colourful and aesthetically simplified account of 'civilized' human social relations. Reiterating the

statements found in Facebook's study of well-being outlined above, a voice over instructs the viewer, over the top of an ethereal soundscape, that

people have always been social animals. From hunting as a party, to forming tribes and laying the groundwork for civilization, humans have embraced the company of others. ('Social media and well-being', video on Ginsberg & Burke, 2017)

The video then jumps considerably forward in time, taking the viewer from this 'tribal' scene immediately to the present age. The voice over then suggests that "with today's digital tools, we're able to fulfil more of our social needs with the click of a button or tap on our phones" (ibid). In this video, Facebook is said to exist as a tool through which humans can realise their so-deemed natural human need for sociality. As such, the social networks afforded by the platform can be viewed in harmony with other forms of human organisation extant throughout time.

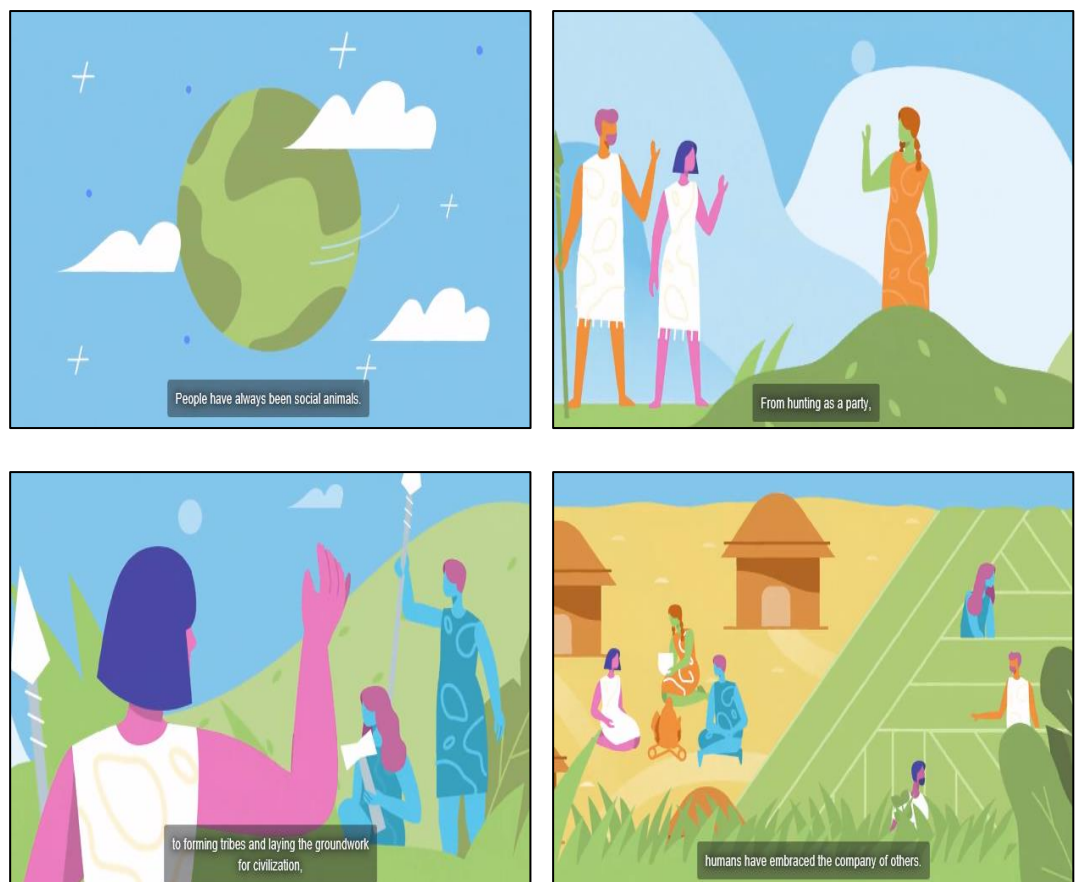


Figure 1: Chronological sequence of stills from 'Social Media and Well-being'

In this way, similarly to the research outlined above, a direct link is made between the evolution of the 'social' human being and contemporary forms on online communication. The sequential progress from the 'tribe' to online social networks attempts to introduce a 'natural' causality to Facebook's current global expansion. Facebook's services are said to be fulfilling innate human needs and can therefore be presented as universally and equally valuable to any potential human user on the earth. However, echoing the issues discussed in the 'Hard Questions' blog post within which it is embedded, the voiceover in the video then warns that this contemporary utilization of communication tools "raises real concerns about what the effects may be on our mental health" (ibid). In response to these concerns, the video goes on to repeat Facebook's normative recommendations of ideal user-habits – such as direct messages to close friends, in favour of negative practices – such as passive scrolling. To justify these recommended safeguards against anxiety and depression, the video references the research by Burke and Kraut explored above, whilst explicitly situating them in the context of the 'development' of human civilization. This gesture toward 'sociality' as a key element of human civilization is repeated elsewhere in Zuckerberg's 2017 'Building global community' manifesto, where Facebook is presented as being a "tool" of global "progress" (Zuckerberg, 2017).

In this video, Facebook's teleological account of eudaimonic well-being has been condensed into a one minute fifty seven second bite of information. Its visual and linguistic framing of Facebook usage in evolutionary terms repeats Burke and Kraut's psychological claims, with its cartoon style simplicity working to produce an accessible, and shareable, viewing experience, transforming the complex psychological knowledge produced by Burke and Kraut into a well-ordered aesthetic package. Furthermore, the video introduces a more explicit rendering of Facebook as a tool of social civilization into Facebook's discourse of well-being, ostensibly indicating that Facebook can be used to strengthen and maintain the social bonds necessary for continued

human development. Here, a tool view of Facebook can be explicitly identified in Facebook's well-being discourse, accompanied by a corresponding model of its ideal, healthy, users.

This initial analysis of Facebook's research into well-being shows the ways in which Facebook constructs an understanding of its users endowed with specific human needs established through selective references to evolutionary theory. When Facebook's representatives and information videos talk about what users 'want' from their Facebook interactions upon the basis of this research, therefore, such statements can be seen to implicitly mobilize a similarly deterministic account of human nature. Here, the ideal Facebook user is presented as being 'naturally' tended toward establishing social networks and frequent online communications, and these tendencies are presented as *necessary* characteristics of fully functioning human well-being. However, rather than taking such declarations at face-value, I have instead highlighted the way that the so-called 'needs' of Facebook users are actually *constructed* through appeals to contingent psychological discourses. This process of theoretical excavation undermines Facebook's appeal to its natural goodness. Rather, the 'social' human user located in Facebook's research above, and as repeated in Facebook's broader PR strategy and public explanations of its services, only exists as a discursive pattern, as opposed to an essential figure.

To return once more to the work of Foucault, the discursive statements explored above, although disparate, can be analysed as part of a "unity of distribution" (Foucault, 2002, p. 73) that together condition the "field of possible options" (ibid) within which users are directed to think about and understand Facebook's social value in the world. Taken together, we can begin to see how Facebook's discourse of well-being aims to produce a grid of intelligibility through which the Facebook user can understand themselves, and their activity, as manifestations of a certain 'social' essence, despite being formed through inherently contingent and artificial means. However, as the following section will argue,

establishing a natural causality to Facebook usership is not value-free, but, in fact, seeks to entwine the well-being interests of users with the economic interests of Facebook in its functioning as a data-platform (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017).

3.3 Self-interested social capital

As well as their research into social psychology, Facebook has published Human Computer Interaction (HCI) research into the effects of their services and well-being. For instance, a study by Burke, Marlow and Lento (2010) called 'Social Network Activity and Social Well-Being' is the very first study referencing well-being produced by Facebook found on its publicly accessible research website (Facebook Research, 2019). As such, a close analysis of its theoretical propositions can help advance my investigation into how Facebook discursively constructs well-being and ideal healthy usership. In doing so, I will develop a claim that is made by Sengers et al. (2005) which suggests that the way HCI research seeks to establish modes of best practice in computer design contributes to assumed users being configured in technical systems. Sengers et al. argue that "the design decisions" (2005, p. 49) that HCI papers propose contain "values and assumptions" (ibid) that purport certain worldviews, modes of interaction, and ideal users at the expense of others. The recommendation of possible actions through computer design, thus, presuppose both the value of those actions and users capable of enacting them.

In order to compare how different types of Facebook activity correlated with respective levels of user well-being, Burke, Marlow and Lento (2010) used server logs to collect Facebook activity data for 1193 users who had agreed to be participants. After gathering this activity data for two months, the researchers then asked participants to fill out a survey that assessed three related measures of well-being: *bridging* social capital, *bonding* social capital and loneliness. Social capital, as defined

by Burke, Marlow and Lentos, refers to the personal “benefits made possible by the existence of a social structure” (2010, p. 1909). It is argued that increased access to social capital leads to improved measures of well-being. Specifically, bridging social capital refers to weak tie relationships an individual maintains with distant contacts, and measures the support of a wider social network that can facilitate the formation of fresh ties in new situations of need. Bonding social capital, on the other hand, refers to the beneficial effects of deeper levels of personal relationships held between close ties in close knit communities, measuring the support offered in the relationships found in the family or between long-standing work colleagues. Mark Granovetter’s (1973) work on the efficacy of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ tie contacts from the 1970s, which suggests that those individuals who could mobilize extended social networks beyond their immediate family were most successful in finding work, forms the basis of this distinction in Facebook’s research.

Levels of bridging social capital were assessed in participants’ responses to statements such as “I come in contact with new people all the time”, given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Participants’ bonding social capital was measured through similarly graded responses to items such as “There are several people I trust to help solve my problems”. Finally, levels of loneliness were assessed using eight items taken from the UCLA loneliness scale (Russell, 1996), with responses to statements such as “I often feel close to people” likewise given on the same 5-point Likert scale. The combined scores of these three measures resulted in a score of overall well-being for each participant. The various types of Facebook activity scraped from the server logs of each participant were then compared with the results of these various assessments. From these surveys, the researchers hoped to identify Facebook user-practices associated with higher scores of well-being and practices associated with lower scores.

From the results of these tests, forms of “directed communication” (Burke, Marlow & Lento 2010, p. 1912), such as private messaging and

commenting on statuses, were associated with improved levels of bonding social capital, overall user well-being and lower reported loneliness. Resonant with the results of Burke and Kraut's (2016) study outlined above, the value of direct forms of communication was said to lay in its ability to increase the channels of emotional support open to users at any given time. This notion was used to explain how lower feelings of loneliness were reported in those participants engaged in such behaviour and greater feelings of social support. Conversely, passive, consumptive activity, such as observing other interactions on Facebook without interacting with the posts themselves, led to a reduction in levels of bridging social capital and increased feelings of loneliness. The study characterises the value of one-to-one conversations with close ties on Facebook as investments in bonding social capital, which is said to naturally lead to higher levels of user well-being. Conversely, passive interactions were presented as damaging to bridging social capital and were linked with lower levels of well-being and feelings of loneliness.

Elsewhere in its HCI research, moreover, Facebook repeatedly characterises relationships as investments in social capital. For instance, in a follow up study by Burke, Kraut & Marlow (2011), investing time and energy into relationships is said to constitute healthy Facebook practice by ensuring that social ties remain intact over time. These social investments thereby increase the likelihood that social resources will be available to users if needed in the future. In this model, the rational motivation for ideal healthy usership on Facebook is the expected return individuals would gain on their emotional investment in others. In these early studies on social capital and well-being, thus, the former is positively correlated with the latter: higher levels of social capital in users predict higher levels of well-being. While the personal choice to invest in relationships and cultivate social capital amounts to living well on Facebook, once viewed in combination with Facebook's evolutionary discourse of the social human subject, this choice is simultaneously presented as the fulfilment of a natural

inclination to connect with others in a shared social environment. Upon this basis, direct communications, sharing statuses, liking photos, commenting on posts – and all the other hallmarks of good, active usage, rather than being viewed as the result of a designed user-experience intended to gather data for the sake of capitalist profit (Beer, 2016; Hearn, 2010; Skeggs & Yuill, 2016; Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), can instead be presented as the result of rational user choices fulfilling somehow innate human social needs.

Facebook's ideal users are outward looking, keen to communicate, active on the News Feed, involved in online groups and able to call upon their Facebook social network for resources and support. While this active usership of Facebook undoubtedly increases the levels of profitable data gathered by Facebook, such activity is also presented as being beneficial for users' well-being. As such, the 'natural' interests of the user, as couched in the terms of well-being outlined above, *align with the interests of Facebook as an economically incentivised data-platform*. This alignment is explicitly acknowledged by Facebook in the PR materials accompanying its recent re-ordering of the News Feed algorithm in early 2018. For instance, Adam Mosseri, then head of News Feed, on a blog post titled 'Bringing people closer together', makes the claim that Facebook's public drive to connect users with more personally relevant content (something I will explore in depth in the following chapter), will benefit both the users' well-being and Facebook's business model of data-driven targeted advertising. As Mosseri states, these changes to Facebook's design "are happening not only because we [Facebook] believe it's the right thing, but also because it's good for our business" (Mosseri, 2018).

Moreover, in a Facebook post by Mark Zuckerberg that explained the rationale behind these changes to the News Feed, connecting users to the close ties of their social network is presented as "the right thing" (Zuckerberg, quoted on Mosseri, 2018) for Facebook to do both ethically and economically. For example, this increased activity, Zuckerberg suggests, "will be good for our community and our business

over the long term” (ibid). In saying so, Zuckerberg indicates that promoting activity conducive to well-being on Facebook will be good for users and good for business in the long run. Here, the interests of the user are presented as synonymous with the business interests of Facebook; a happy user is an active user is a profitable user. However, as the final section of this chapter will show below, this appeal to the “natural” tendencies and interests of the Facebook user to construct models of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ online habits, while primarily acting as a means to mitigate against public criticisms of its services and to increase the levels of profitable active usership, can also be shown to contain a political determination of the ideal healthy user related to the contemporaneous North American neoliberal milieu. Specifically, I will show that in attempting to naturalize human communication as a self-interested endeavour, Facebook is engaged in a political task that constructs the human subject in alignment with the neoliberal tenets of competitive logics and economic marketisation, rendering the discursive patterning of “healthy” usership as a definitively political relation as a result. This next section will demonstrate how the call to make self-interested decisions to ‘live well’ on Facebook (through ‘good’ habitual usage) actually produces responsabilized users whose well-being is an individual choice, and an individual choice alone.

3.4 Neoliberal responsabilization

The link to healthy usership and social capital posits the ideal Facebook user as a rational agent of self-interest, yet its specific political character can be further explicated by tracing the origins of its theoretical construction. In Facebook’s earliest studies of well-being, James S. Coleman (1988) is the first reference used by Facebook’s researchers to conceptualize their version of social capital (Burke, Marlow & Lento 2010). Developing the notion of human capital espoused by Gary Becker (1964) and Theodore Schultz (1961) in the

1960s, which takes the unique capacities of the human actor as differentials of value in the labour market, Coleman's theory of social capital emerges from the late 1980s Chicago School and seeks to extend the remit of economic rationality to the totality of social relations. Coleman suggests that social capital is an economically functional concept, attributing value to the potentially productive relations that exist between persons. In this way, Coleman considers social capital in tandem with the concepts of financial, physical, and human capital, and the situation of value in money, factors of production, and personal skills respectively (Coleman, 1988, p. 118). This results in an economization of social relations.

With his version of social capital, Coleman seeks to

import the economists' principle of rational action for use in the analysis of social systems proper, including but not limited to economic systems, and to do so without discarding social organization in the process. The concept of social capital is a tool to aid in this. (Coleman, 1988, p. 97).

The exploration of social capital is subsequently framed by Coleman as an exercise in "methodological individualism" (ibid, p. 102), whereby one begins with a fixed outline of the rational human actor and then studies social relations as the resulting links of self-interested activity made between atomised individuals. For Coleman, and within Facebook's research explicated so far, social capital is conceptualized as a resource available to each social actor in any given social environment to further their own self-interested goals. Here, competitive self-interest forms the theoretical basis upon which social organisations can be studied. As a result, Facebook's vision of the ideal healthy user can be said to assume a decidedly neoliberal form.

In utilizing Coleman's version of social capital as the basis for their own research, the nodes of Facebook's idealized social network are theoretically linked together by individual self-interest. Users are

conceived as detached atoms connected only by the shared resources that tie them together. The value of the social connections afforded by Facebook therefore become comparable in terms of social capital. Human relationships on Facebook, as has been outlined above, are said to have value according to the perceived benefits they can provide for the individuals involved. This comparability is achieved through a process of commensuration– the “transformation of different qualities into a common metric” (Espeland & Mitchell, 1998, p. 314). In this way, emotional support can exist on the same measurable plane as material support, which can exist on the same plane as economic support, and so on and so forth. Only once the commensuration of social value is in place can the ideal user then be said to *choose* to cultivate their ties accordingly. Espeland and Mitchell suggest that processes of commensuration introduce new sets of relations between what “we value, and how we treat what we value” (1998, p. 315), configuring the world in new measurable arrangements that render certain aspects of life visible, while excluding others. Espeland and Mitchell’s concept of commensuration is useful for this present analysis as it can help grasp what is at stake politically when Facebook transforms the various factors of social well-being into a matter of self-interest and individual choice.

While the personal choice to invest in relationships and cultivate social capital amounts to ‘living well’ on Facebook, once viewed in combination with Facebook’s evolutionary discourse of the ‘social’ human subject, this choice becomes the fulfilment of a ‘natural’ inclination to connect with others in their shared social environment. Upon this basis, direct communications, sharing statuses, liking photos, commenting on posts – and all the other hallmarks of good, active usage, rather than being viewed as the result of a designed user-experience intended to gather data for the sake of capitalist profit, can instead be presented as the result of rational user choices that fulfil innate, natural, human social needs. Facebook’s core utilization of social capital as a metric of well-being, therefore, “encourages us to

believe that we can integrate all our values, unify our compartmentalized worlds, and measure our longings” (Espeland & Mitchell, 1998, p. 323) through the rubric of neoliberal self-interest.

For the sociologists Ferragina and Arrigoni (2017), the incorporation of Coleman’s theories of social capital into Facebook’s HCI research and social psychology represents an:

example of how the analytical categories of neoliberalism and the language of the stock market have decisively permeated social and political discourse over the last few decades. The reduction of social relations to something similar to financial capital implicitly means to assume that community involvement and social participation are forms of economic activity. (Ferragina & Arrigoni, 2017, p. 358)

In this way, Facebook’s specific utilisation of social capital to explicate the value of user relationships can be viewed as a reductionist extension of economic rationality to formerly non-economic social domains and institutions. Foucault’s (2010) analysis of North American neoliberalism presented in his 1978-79 lectures at the Collège de France is a pertinent reference point to understand this notion further. In these lectures, Foucault describes the rationality of neoliberalism as a generalized attempt to “use the market economy and the typical analyses of the market economy to decipher non-market relationships and phenomena which are not strictly and specifically economic” (Foucault, 2010, p. 240). Elsewhere, Foucault describes neoliberalism as the “government of individualization” (Foucault, 1986, p. 212); a form government that tasks itself with the production of subjects capable of being governed by such economic regulatory principles of competition and enterprise.

For Graham Burchell, neoliberal governance can be usefully contrasted with historical forms of Liberal governance. Whereas earlier forms of Liberalism (said to emerge in the West in the early 19th century) sought to minimize state intervention in civil society, adopting a broadly *laissez-*

faire approach to the market that reflected a belief in its naturally self-regulating principles, neoliberalism (as it developed in the West in the mid to late 20th century) conversely tasks the state with ensuring the competitive conditions for a fully-functioning economy. As such, the defining feature of neoliberalism is said to be the necessary political construction of economic relations between persons, businesses, and financial institutions as ‘natural’ processes. Burchell writes, for neoliberalism, in contrast to Liberalism,

the rational principle for regulating and limiting governmental activity must be determined by reference to artificially arranged or contrived forms of the free, entrepreneurial and competitive conduct of economic-rational individuals. Here again the rationality of government must be pegged to a form of the rational self-conduct of the governed themselves [like in classic liberalism], but a form that is not so much a given of human nature as a consciously contrived style of conduct. (Burchell, 1996, pp. 23-24)

As the competitive market economy requires construction, there is a sense that its rationally competitive, *choosing* citizens require similar fabrication. Because of this, Foucault describes neoliberal regimes as tasked with the production of subjects capable of being governed by the regulatory principles of competition and enterprise. As opposed to a governmental regime of *governing less*, therefore, Burchell argues that neoliberalism is best understood as the construction of the “institutional and cultural conditions that will enable an artificial competitive game of entrepreneurial conduct to be played to best effect” (Burchell, 1996, p. 27).

Thus, when Foucault describes neoliberalism as the “the generalization of the economic form of the market [...] throughout the social body” (Foucault, 2010, p. 243), he is referring to those processes that extend the precepts of competitive rationality to investigate and explain myriad

forms of human organisation, conduct and relationships – not only state apparatuses. Foucault references the theories of human capital created by Gary Becker and Schultz in the 1960s, which I have already touched upon as key ideas in Facebook's study of social capital, as an example of the types of knowledge produced through such economically conceived investigations. As William Davies (2014) has further argued, the political project of neoliberalism

depends precisely on *constructing or imputing certain common institutional or psychological traits, as preconditions of the competitive process*. These serve as principles of equivalence, via which legitimate forms of non-equivalence can be quantified, constructed, represented and celebrated. (Davies, 2014, p. 37, original emphasis).

Correspondingly expressed in theories of human capital, and the reciprocal relations that constitute social capital, the individual is enjoined to see his or her self as a bundle of self-cultivated, valuable skills that can be traded in an equal labour market; their relationships as resources to be weighed up to further their self-interested goals in an open field; and their lives as ventures of ever-expanding personal development restricted by nothing other than their own application and psychological motivation.

In appropriating scales of neoliberal social capital as measures of well-being, therefore, Facebook is relaying a historicized conceptualization of the human subject entwined with economic discourses of psychologized self-interest and equal competition. However, once this subject is viewed as a necessary project of construction, Facebook's appeal to evolutionary theory to ground the construct of the self-interested ideal user can be viewed as a strategic attempt to naturalize what is an inherently artificial process. Thus, while the blending of evolutionary and neoliberal discourses in Facebook's model of ideal usership seeks to naturalize the engineered sociality observable on the

platform – thereby endorsing a tool-view of technology and its correlative vision of autonomous users, Facebook’s idealized digital social network simultaneously emerges as a form of human organisation consistent with artificial neoliberal rationalities and forms of governance.

Wendy Brown (2005) has argued that the neoliberal enterprise form extends to contemporary moral configurations of wellness in human beings. Brown suggests that individuals are constructed, and treated, as

rational, calculating creatures whose moral authority is measured by their capacity for “self-care”- the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions. (Brown, 2005, p. 42).

The emphasis on self-sufficiency and the sovereignty of personal decision-making means, for Brown, that the individual in neoliberal societies “bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action [are]” (ibid). Therefore, regardless of the various social contingencies that structure the possibilities of personal well-being in various spheres of life – in the workplace, at home, or in education for instance, including, but not exclusive to, configurations of class, ethnicity, gender, or physical capacity (Brown & Baker, 2013), the ideal users of Facebook, instead, exist in a vacuum whereby their choice of activity on the platform, and their choice of activity *alone*, determines their social capital and well-being online.

However, the ‘free’ agents inherent within neoliberal social capital theories such as Facebook’s greatly contrast with other conceptualisations of social capital as espoused, for instance, by Bourdieu (1986). Bourdieu suggests that the access to resources enjoyed by individuals within social networks are directly correlated to their hereditary class and socio-economic standing, indicating that there are variegated structural forces in play that delimit any benefits

individuals can glean from their social networks (Bourdieu, 1986). In Facebook's discourse of social well-being, however, autonomous users utilizing Facebook's tools *in the right way* are solely responsible for their health on the platform. Consequently, such responsibilized processes of personal choice avoid any discussions regarding the structural inequalities that may impact an individual's well-being as they navigate the pressures of contemporary neoliberal forms of life.

In support of this argument, the work of social policy scholar John Clarke (2005) would indicate that the responsibilization of users on Facebook in terms of well-being is resonant with neoliberal public health policies of individualisation. Clark writes that

responsible citizens [it is claimed] make reasonable choices—and therefore 'bad choices' result from the wilfulness of irresponsible people, rather than the structural distribution of resources, capacities and opportunities. (Clarke, 2005, p. 451)

This focus on personal choice has also been identified as key element of the discourse surrounding technology and well-being by scholars who have explored the Quantified Self movement (Ajana, 2018) and self-tracking practices in general (Neff & Nafus, 2016). For example, in her exploration of the biopolitics of wearable tracking technologies, such as Fitbit and Jawbone, by Natasha Dow Schüll (2016) argues that the selves produced by networked technologies are idealized as "choosing subjects" (Schüll, 2016, p. 8) capable of utilizing the array of complex technologies available on the market to improve their physical and mental health. "More precisely", writes Schüll, these idealized subjects are "are construed as consumers whose well-being depends on and derives from the market choices they make" (ibid).

Furthermore, in presenting well-being online as an outcome of user choice, Facebook's account of well-being side-steps the discussion surrounding its potentially addictive, anxiety-inducing, "persuasive" (Fogg, 2003) design. Instead, Facebook's PR strategy surrounding

these issues operates on the level of individual habit, suggesting that well-being arises from correct personal social networking choices alone. While the responsabilized subject of well-being has been studied in relation to funding cuts to public services in the UK (Brown & Baker, 2013; Goode et. al., 2004), as a mode of neoliberal biopolitics (Wright, 2013), or as a modality of consumerist and marketized discourses of healthcare (Anderson et al., 2016), Facebook's own individualized concept of well-being limits the discussion of what it means to live well in the present age to the narrow parameters of a particular form of online self-interested connection and the choice of personal habit. The well-being of users in Facebook's discourse of active and passive usage, therefore, is firmly presented as the responsibility of users themselves.

Yet, in order to safeguard against any psychological dangers potentially posed by 'mis-use' of the platform (i.e. digital passivity), Facebook users can choose, without being impelled, to adopt modes of best 'active' practice. Any negative effects on well-being associated with Facebook, thus, can only be the result of *poor decision-making* on behalf of individual users. This means that any inequalities in terms of social capital, loneliness and depression observable in users are not linked to either the design of the platform or wider social inequalities experienced in contemporary capitalist societies. Accordingly, adopting Facebook's version of wellbeing - one pegged to atomistic theories of social capital, negates any consideration of the way neoliberal forms of life (Cole & Ferrarese, 2018) could play a contributing role in mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. This renders Facebook's social networks as apolitical human orderings, seemingly separate from the sphere of cultural politics, despite their links to normative neoliberal discourses, while also dampening any controversies regarding well-being and its services in the process. Instead, Facebook's concept of well-being is strictly individualistic, positioning increased and better social networking as a panacea for any sense of social disconnection that users may feel within their lives.

3.5 Conclusion

As Madeline Akrich (1992) suggests, technologies can “stabilize, naturalize, depoliticize, and translate” (p. 222) social relations to such an extent that it can often appear as if there was “never any possibility it could have been otherwise” (ibid) in the world. For Akrich, moreover, the attempted stabilization of technical objects and their ideal users “is a process of reciprocal definition”, whereby technologies “build our history [...] and “impose” certain frameworks” (ibid) of appropriate habitual human activity in their contexts of use. This chapter has empirically analysed the discursive material scripting of Facebook’s ideal user, demonstrating how Facebook’s PR model of “healthy” usership essentially rests upon contingent quasi-psychological terms to recommend a eudaimonic construct of well-being. As demarcating bounds of appropriateness constitute a principle means through which disciplinary power functions in socio-technical environments, as argued in the previous chapter, highlighting the historicized contingencies upon which Facebook establishes “good” and “healthy” modes of usership opens up such practices to productive critique.

I have shown how the recommendations of “healthy” usership are made through the peculiar blending of evolutionary and neoliberal discourses, arguing that Facebook’s model of ideal usership seeks to present the engineered sociality observable on the platform as the outcome of the rational user choosing to act in alignment with their ‘natural’ eudaimonic needs. I have argued that Facebook’s ideal user relays conceptualizations of the neoliberal social subject, and, as such always exists in a necessary process of construction. Thus, I have presented Facebook’s concurrent appeal to evolutionary human need as a strategic attempt to naturalize what is an inherently artificial vision of human sociality. Therefore, rather than aligning with the fabricated ‘innate’ needs of users, which I have shown to be necessarily

constructed through the historicized concepts of social capital and primate group dynamics, Facebook's discursive material configuration of healthy social networking habits can, in fact, be viewed as expressions of power (Foucault, 1995) that link users to contemporary orders of digital capitalism and historical discourses of neoliberalism.

By setting up certain "programs of action" (Latour, 1994) as "healthy" for users, Facebook erects a hierarchy of activity through which the ideal user can recognize and adapt their activity as appropriate for the platform. Therefore, Facebook's discursive and material scripting of self-interested ideal usership can be said to form part of the "fabric of habits" (Foucault, 2015, p. 239) through which users are classified as humans of a certain type, and treated as such, in relation to others within digital social networks. Following Foucault, as the instilling of habits in individuals is "is the instrument by which individuals are tied to the apparatuses of production" (ibid) in different social orders, the recommendation and prompting of active (good) habits in contrast to passive (bad) habits ought to be understood as constituent elements of an economic process.

Ensuring users are interacting with posts, messaging friends and generally maintaining 'active' usership on the platform – as opposed to habits of passive scrolling and user inaction, therefore, is necessary for Facebook's continued profitability as a data-platform. User habits, thus, become both the target and means for Facebook to exist as a force within contemporary relations of digital capitalism (Chun, 2016). While ostensibly facilitating the accretion of social capital and evolutionary belonging, purportedly serving the natural interests of users as a result, the habits of active usership concurrently serve Facebook's corporate interests. To repeat a statement made by Adam Mosseri included above, designing Facebook to increase user interactions is deemed justifiable by Facebook "not only because we believe it's the right thing [for users], but also because it's good for our business" (ibid).

However, while Facebook's description of ideal usage constructs ideal users with ideal habits, as I have argued in this chapter, it remains to be seen how these ideas materialize in the design of the platform itself, or, indeed, whether or not users are actually engaging with these practices in the way Facebook's discourse of well-being would hope. Therefore, further substantive empirical analysis is necessary for this thesis to make any persuasive claims about Facebook existing as a political technology of power that targets habit as a form of governance. Toward this effort, the following chapter will explore the extent to which the technical design of Facebook, and how this design is spoken about, prompts users to behave according to the precepts of active usership I have identified so far. Specifically, I will explore how the wellbeing needs of the Facebook user is said to be served on the News Feed. In doing so, I will engage with some of the core research questions of this thesis, and consider how the design of Facebook configures, enables, and constrains its human usership in such a way that produces its users as users in the process.

Chapter IV: Nudging on the News Feed and the configuration of active usership

The preceding chapter has empirically established the ways through which the ideal healthy Facebook user is constructed in Facebook's PR resources and academic research. This current chapter will examine how healthy user habits are configured in both the discourses surrounding and material design of one of Facebook's primary user-interfaces: the News Feed. This analytic restriction to the News Feed is a necessary step due to Facebook's existence as a complex technological apparatus affording multitudinous modes of user interaction. For example, alongside interacting with posts on the News Feed, users can privately message other users through the Messenger application, scroll through the Timeline, follow Pages, buy and sell products on the Marketplace, access videos through the Watch application, create charity fundraisers, or browse local events on Community groups. A valid empirical analysis of Facebook's discursive and material configuration of its ideal user, therefore, must begin by acknowledging the heterogeneity of Facebook's component parts, and, upon this acknowledgment, treat each specific user-interface as a localized study that exists in relation to the platform as a whole.

As was discussed in Chapter II, the News Feed was chosen as the empirical focus of this thesis as it represents the primary user-interface through which Facebook users come into contact with Facebook's designs of ideal usership. The News Feed exists as the default home page on Facebook, and must be frequently negotiated with by users in their interactions with the platform. The News Feed's prominent position on Facebook and its key role in allowing users to access the everyday happenings of their social network, therefore, renders it as the most pertinent location for my investigation into how Facebook discursively and material targets healthy user habits on the platform. Toward this end, this chapter will firstly track the development of Facebook's various

user-interfaces over time, broadly outlining the wide-ranging possibilities for user interaction on the platform they offer. Once situated within this history, I will turn my focus to the News Feed and empirically examine how Facebook initially presented, and currently attempts to maintain, modes of ideal News Feed usership through discourse and design.

The examination advanced in this chapter is informed by Mel Stanfill's (2015) approach of discursive interface analysis, as also set out in Chapter II. This approach works up from the premise that the way social media sites

are built reflects assumptions about what site visitors will do, which becomes a normative claim about what users should do when incorporated within the interface. (Stanfill, 2015, p. 1062).

The opening sections of this chapter will demonstrate the ways that the discourse surrounding the News Feed's user-interface configures the lives of users (as presented on Facebook) as a series of 'news events' to be consumed by others on the platform. I will show how this development was met with resistance by some users after the initial release of the News Feed in 2006, who objected to the transformation of their activity on Facebook into public interest stories on the platform. This objection will be considered in relation to boyd's (2008) notion of "social convergence" – the collapsing of different social contexts into a shared environment, and I will go on draw out some of the theoretical issues concerning Facebook's simultaneous treatment of users as social news generators, gatekeepers and audiences on the News Feed.

Following this, I will show how News Feed is said to be designed to invite increased "healthy" interactions with posts, and will empirically compare this with design elements of the user-interface itself. I will argue that this process of design justification relays the discourses of active usership identified in the previous chapter, going on to explore the connections between these discourses and the News Feed's actual

interface design. However, rather than taking Facebook's ethical justifications for its design at face-value, I will argue that Facebook's attempted inculcation of active habits primarily serve its interests as a data-platform (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017). That is, Facebook's appeal to well-being situates the discussions surrounding its "persuasive design" (Fogg, 2003) on a terrain where the exploitative extraction of profitable user-data on the site is not under scrutiny. For Facebook to be able to do so, I will show how its leaders and designers materially activate discourses of the psychological nudge (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) – which suggests that the direction of human activity through environmental arrangement is legitimate if it can be shown to improve the lives of those involved in some way. In this way, I will reveal how News Feed's methods of technical nudging, both in discourse and design, can be situated within a lineage of neoliberal governance at a distance, ultimately situating the political character of the News Feed through its (attempted) manipulation of user activity along the lines of active usership.

Therefore, I will argue that the designed production of active user habits on the News Feed, regardless of the intentions behind such design, functions to ensure Facebook's continued economic profitability as an economic actor within structures of platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017).

The arguments advanced in this chapter will point toward new ways of considering the politics of the News Feed beyond the conceptual ground of the echo chamber and filter bubble effects explored in the literature review of this thesis, demonstrating how a concept of habit is able to draw out the political implications of contemporary engagement with Facebook without recourse to rely on theoretically problematic notions of the liberal public sphere. The findings of this chapter will oppose the technical 'neutrality' view of Facebook, also identified in the literature review of this thesis, and will argue that the discernible nudging of users' activity on the News Feed undermines the vision of user autonomy congruently found in such accounts. While the previous chapter of this thesis investigated how Facebook's ideal user is

discursively constructed, this present chapter investigates how this discursive scripting relates to the material design of the News Feed user-interface. The findings established through the empirical research below will inform the qualitative investigation of the News Feed in the following chapter, where I will examine how the discursive and material nudging of users on the News Feed relates to actual user engagement with the interface itself.

4.1 Tracking the development of Facebook's user-interface

Niels Brügger (2015) provides a historical analysis of Facebook's user-interfaces between the years 2004-2013, detailing the changes made to Facebook's "textual and interactive media environment that users can see and interact with on the Web site and on mobile media" (S1 para 3)². Brügger suggests that the expansion of Facebook during this period can be divided into three sub-periods, based on what its user-interfaces were asking of its users. These three questions were taken by Brügger from Facebook's own periodization found on its own design blogs (Brügger, 2015, S5 para 3), and thus encapsulates how Facebook publicly presented its services during this time. The first period begins in February 2004 with Facebook's original manifestation at Harvard as 'Thefacebook', takes in its name change and extension to high schools and universities across the world by October 2005, and finishes with its opening up to any individual over the age of 13 with a valid email address in September 2006 (Facebook Newsroom, 2019). During this time, Brügger shows that the Facebook user-interface primarily asked the question "Who are you?" to its users (2015, S2 para 2). During this initial phase, the "profile" and "Wall" were the two chief interactive features of Facebook. On their profile, the Facebook user could state their personal details by filling out a range of data fields.

²As this article has no page numbers, I have used the numbered sections of the piece (S) and the paragraph (para) to reference the quotes taken from it.

This included, amongst others, their contact information, age, gender, education, relationship status, political views, favourite artists, books and films. Alongside this information, each user's profile had a "Wall", where users could post written textual messages, "tag" other users, and share hyperlinks and photos for others to access. Users' also had the ability to write messages and post photos on other users' walls, thereby offering the key means, along with the "Poke" feature, to communicate with others on Facebook during this time. Brügger describes Facebook's user-interface in this period as an "empty structure" (2015, S2.4 para 3) within which users supplied personal information about themselves and the social networks within which they existed online.

During the period of 2006-2008, Facebook released many new interactive features and possibilities for communication, while its user-base expanded from 12 million to 100 million users (Brügger, 2015). Along with the question of "Who are you?", the development of Facebook's user-interface during this period primarily supported the question "What are you doing, and when?" (Brügger, 2015, S3.6 para 5). In April 2006, for instance, status updates were introduced, allowing users to share their thoughts without posting on their own or others' walls; the News Feed and Mini-Feed were unveiled in September 2006, which presented all the activity within each users' social network automatically on the users' homepage; the "Marketplace" was launched in 2007, allowing users to buy and sell products or advertise things they needed (such as employment or accommodation); and the Publisher feature was added to the profile in 2008, granting users the opportunity to post different types of content directly to their Walls (Facebook Newsroom, 2019). Facebook also opened up to software developers through "Facebook Platform" in May 2007, released Facebook video in June the same year and introduced Facebook Chat in March 2008, allowing users to instant-message on the platform (Ibid).

Between the years 2008-2013, Facebook's usership grew from 100 million to 1.2 billion monthly active members (Statista, 2019). Brügger shows that the features added during this time posed the question

“Where are you?” to the user (2015, S4). These included the introduction of Facebook Places in 2010, which allowed users to post their position using geo-location technology; Community Pages also in 2010, where users could create online community groups; and the Timeline in 2011, which merged together users’ existing Facebook profiles and Walls to chronologically order all of their Facebook activity in real time (Facebook Newsroom, 2019). Alongside these features that tied user activity to a particular time and place, Facebook also introduced interactive metrified features such as the Like button in 2009, which was advertised as granting users an efficient way to show support to others on the platform (as will be discussed at greater length below), and the share counter in 2009, which detailed how many times particular posts and content had been shared on Facebook (ibid).

Brügger’s historical analysis of Facebook between 2004-2013, while obviously not being able to take us up to contemporary versions of Facebook, demonstrates that

“two types of continuity were evident during the entire period. First of all, Facebook as a company provided a digital space that structures the possible interaction of its users — but was in other respects an empty space whose content was provided by others in the form of text, pictures, sound, software and social relations in the form of networks. Secondly, Facebook was always accumulating and expanding, with more of everything constantly being added within the areas of Facebook’s universe, and new areas appearing while hardly anything ever disappeared”. (Brügger, 2015, S5 para 2)

Between 2013-2019 Facebook’s monthly active user-base rose from 1.2 billion to 2.41 billion (Newsroom, 2019). In this period, there have been several major developments to Facebook’s user-interface that continue and consolidate, rather than revolutionize, the types of structured user interaction identified in Brügger’s analysis. In December

2014, for instance, Facebook expanded its searching capabilities on the platform, allowing users to keyword search for posts by themselves, other users and groups (Stocky, 2014); Facebook Live was expanded in January 2016 to allow all users to share and watch live videos on the platform (Lavrusik, 2016); Facebook Reactions were introduced in February 2016, allowing users respond to posts on their News Feeds and Timelines with a range of emoticons (Krug, 2016); and Facebook presented Watch in August 2017, a video hosting feature on the platform that collated videos posted by users and professional media outlets (Danker, 2017).

While this brief historical timeline does not, indeed, account for the full gamut of Facebook's interactive features released since its inception in 2004, tracking the introduction of new possibilities for user interaction as they developed over time forms a suitable backdrop to the more detailed analysis of the News Feed user-interface that follows below. That is, the situation of the News Feed within Facebook's short history shows that its introduction and development coalesced with other major changes elsewhere on Facebook's user-interface. The News Feed, while purporting a particular configuration of the user as an information seeking and news generating subject, granting users different technical possibilities, modes of communication and forms of self-expression toward this end, does not exist as an isolated object within Facebook's platform ecology, and it is important to recognise that this configuration emerged in relation to technical developments made elsewhere on the platform.

4.2 The “headlines” of Facebook

The News Feed and Mini-Feed were introduced as related products on the 5th of September 2006. An official Facebook blog post from the time introduced the new features to users as such:

News Feed appears on each user's homepage as a constantly updating list of news stories about their friends. It is a news aggregator that reports on activity in a user's social network and highlights relevant information about people, activities they have been involved in and other information they have chosen to share. News Feed is personalized to each user and is only viewable by that person. Mini-Feed is similar to News Feed except that it tracks the activity of one person. On each person's profile page, Mini-Feed will display a list of that user's activities on Facebook and can be seen by the people who, based on privacy settings, are allowed to view that profile. (Facebook Newsroom, 2006)

As the Mini-Feed was merged with the Facebook Wall in 2008, being fully replaced by the Timeline in 2011, it will not be analysed in this chapter. However, as the Mini-Feed's core transformation of user-activity into "news" mirrors that of the News Feed's, the analysis offered of the latter below is granted some degree of transferability to the former as a result. The introduction of the News Feed gave users a more comprehensive and granular information flow of the activity that occurred within their social networks. Whereas before users would have to visit specific profiles to view the activity of friends on Facebook, the News Feed automatically presented all the activity that occurred in their social network in a personalized, chronological stream of content on the homepage. Whenever a user "friended" another user, for instance, joined a group, or changed their profile picture on Facebook, such activity would now be displayed on the News Feeds of others in their social network, accompanied by time stamp of it happening.

The activity that appeared on the News Feed was described in the very first blog post that announced its release as the "headlines" (Sanghvi, 2006) of each users' social network. Therefore, from its first inception, the News Feed discursively and materially characterised the social networking activity of Facebook users as *newsworthy* events. Ruchi

Sanghvi, software engineer at Facebook and the author of the blog post that introduced the News Feed to users at the time, makes this notion explicit:

News Feed highlights what's happening in your social circles on Facebook. It updates a personalized list of news stories throughout the day, so you'll know when Mark adds Britney Spears to his Favorites or when your crush is single again. Now, whenever you log in, you'll get the latest headlines generated by the activity of your friends and social groups. (Sanghvi, 2006).

The News Feed is thus scripted as a space where the lives of users as represented on Facebook constitute news to be shared and accessed by others within their social network.

Working with the thought of gatekeeping theorist Pamela Shoemaker (1996, 2006), Facebook's (re)definition of user-activity as the "headlines" of the News Feed mobilizes a particular "judgment" (Shoemaker, 2006, p. 110) about "which kinds of events people want to know about" (ibid, p. 109) on the platform. Specifically, Facebook's scripting of the News Feed transforms users' activity into "events" (ibid) that can then "become news" (ibid) for others to consume. Understood through Stanfill's lens of discursive interface analysis, this section will argue that the treatment of user-activity as news on the News Feed is implicitly normative, structuring how users are meant to think about and interact with user generated content on the platform. This re-definition of user-activity as "news" re-organised usership of the platform, as can be evidenced by the controversy surrounding the News Feed's introduction in 2006.

For instance, *Time* reported a "backlash" (Schmidt, 2006) against the News Feed the day after its release. "By its nature", *Time* states,

News Feed is intrusive, and that's what upsets [users]. It's one thing to casually check out a friend's updated profile between classes. It's another to be unwillingly inundated

with each friend's latest Facebook antics. (Schmidt, 2006).

The article details the creation of Facebook groups such as 'Students Against Facebook News Feed (Official Petition to Facebook)', which gained 284,000 members in a single day, and presents interviews with discontented Facebook users. The users interviewed by *Time* feared that the scale of observation now possible on Facebook could lead to practices of stalking (which, incidentally, subsequent sociological studies have shown to be a prescient concern (Lewis & West, 2009; Lyndon, Bonds-Raacke & Cratty, 2011)). A study by boyd (2008) shortly after the News Feed's release analysed the imagined "intrusive" nature of the News Feed as a form of "social convergence" (boyd, 2008, p. 18) – the unwanted coming together of formerly separate relationships in a common social environment. "None of the information displayed" on the News Feed, boyd writes,

"was previously private per se, but by aggregating this information and displaying it in reverse chronological order, News Feeds made the material far more accessible and visible" (boyd, 2008, p. 13).

boyd argues that for users encountering the News Feed for the first time, all of the activity that occurred on Facebook – Wall messages, photos and relationship statuses for instance, suddenly became "state change" (ibid) events that were fit to be "propagated" (ibid) as news around their respective social networks.

Developing Erving Goffman's (1959) social theory that individuals perform different presentations of self dependent upon the perceived norms of different environments (an idea that will later help elucidate the findings of the interviews detailed in Chapter V), boyd argues that the introduction of the News Feed dissolved the boundaries of appropriateness that once structured the various user relationships supported by the platform. For instance, the types of interaction between a Facebook user and their parent, classmate or sister on the

site would, upon Goffman's theoretical basis, be different according to the socially ordained requirements of the roles of daughter/son, peer and sibling respectively. To some extent, the separation of these different presentations of self could previously be maintained by the relatively restricted accessibility of individual Facebook Walls. This allowed for a degree of "impression management" (Goffman, 1959), whereby users could adapt the tone and lexicon of their communications dependent upon who they were speaking to and the different requirements of each social context.

For boyd, however, the News Feed's collation all of the users' respective relationships within one rolling stream of content forecloses this possibility. On the News Feed all user interactions can be seen in the same place at the same time, in a process that merges "disparate social contexts [...] into one" (boyd, 2008, p. 18). Expanding Goffman's dramaturgical social theory further, boyd and others have studied this phenomenon elsewhere as "context collapse" (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Gil-Lopez et al., 2018). Therefore, for boyd, while the News Feed "allows information to be spread more efficiently" (boyd, 2008, p. 18) on Facebook, it also "requires people to handle disparate audiences simultaneously without a social script" (ibid), which, as the backlash against the News Feed indicates, may not always be "what people desire" (ibid).

In a blog post released a few days after the News Feed was presented in 2006, Mark Zuckerberg indicated that Facebook was aware of these criticisms. Titled (perhaps somewhat condescendingly) 'Calm down. Breathe. We hear you'. (Zuckerberg, 2006), Zuckerberg sought to reassure discontented Facebook users that their feedback was respected, yet also reiterated the social value of the News Feed as a space to access information about their friends on the platform:

"We've been getting a lot of feedback about Mini-Feed and News Feed. We think they are great products, but we know that many of you are not immediate fans, and have

found them overwhelming [...] We're not oblivious of the Facebook groups popping up about this [...] and we agree, stalking isn't cool; but being able to know what's going on in your friends' lives is. This is information people used to dig for on a daily basis, nicely reorganized and summarized so people can learn about the people they care about. (Zuckerberg, 2006).

Read alongside the Sanghvi's (2006) description of user-activity as the "headlines" of the News Feed, Zuckerberg's statement that it was "cool" to access information about other users in this way prompts users to consider the types of surveillance afforded by the News Feed as a positive development. Not only this, such behaviour is presented as something that users already "do" on Facebook; the News Feed simply makes it easier.

Still, in response to the criticisms that have been outlined above, Facebook went on to add new privacy settings that allowed users more "granular control" (Facebook Newsroom, 2006) over which of their activity shows up on the News Feed. For example, a new "privacy page" (ibid) was introduced, granting users the opportunity to block others information appearing on their News Feed, as well as restricting whether or not their own activity will appear on others Feeds on the platform. This "granular control" of who gets to see what on the News Feed has persisted as a stable feature of the News Feed to the present day, recently being highlighted in Facebook's U.K. advertising campaign "Privacy is personal" in late 2019 (Oakes, 2019). For instance, as of August 2019, when a user decides to post something on the News Feed using the Publisher feature (a status, photo, or video for instance), they are asked the question "Who should see this?" and are offered a range of options for that posts' visibility within their social network. The post can be selected to be 'Public', whereby anyone on Facebook can view the post, viewable only for their Facebook 'Friends', or viewable only to specific friends and blocked to others. As well as this control over who sees their posts on the News Feed, Facebook

offers users a feature called 'News Feed Preferences' where users can "prioritise" whose posts they see first on the News Feed, "unfollow" people and groups who they don't want to see on the News Feed and "snooze" certain people or groups, whereby their posts will be hidden for a certain period of time.

That all user-activity on Facebook has the potential to be news forces users into a decision as to whether or not they deem their lives as newsworthy enough to be viewed by their Facebook friends as a potential audience. Moreover, the selecting and deselecting of the users they want to view on the News Feed concurrently shapes the user as an audience of one. The user of the News Feed is therefore configured as both as news generator and audience member at the same time. This imposition to control the scale of their visibility on the News Feed, in the words of Bucher (2017), gives users a "reason to react" (p. 41) to the interface. This contrast with traditional forms of print media, where professional journalists, editors or corporate owners act as the gatekeepers of public interest (Caple, 2018; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, 2017). The way users can decide what to share, when, and with whom, through the adjustment of granular privacy settings on the News Feed, or, indeed, to not share at all, demonstrates how users are asked to think about and then determine the visibility of their activity on Facebook through the affordances of the interface. However, that this activity already counts as "news" has been materially constrained through the programmatic configuration of the News Feed. This binds the user to a particular material discursive configuration of "headline" activity as a result.

A Californian class action lawsuit filed against Facebook in 2011 offers further evidence for the way Facebook configures users as both public news generators and audiences on the News Feed. In this case, a group of plaintiffs (users) objected to Facebook displaying their names alongside "Sponsored Stories" on the News Feed, which indicated that they had "liked" the consumer page in question (Fraley v. Facebook, 2011). The plaintiffs argued that they had not consented to the

commercial use of their image and that such an association could damage their online public image. In its motion to dismiss, Facebook argued that the plaintiffs were “public figures” (ibid) to their friends on Facebook and their “likes”, therefore, were “expressions of consumer opinion” (ibid) that counted as “newsworthy” (ibid) events to be viewed on the News Feed. Facebook lost the case and were asked to pay reparations to the plaintiffs. By determining that the plaintiffs’ endorsements through their “likes” held economic value, the court’s decision actually legally upheld that Facebook users were “public figures” of their friends News Feeds. For Frankel, Brookover & Satterfield (2012), writing in the *Stanford Law Review*, this outcome suggests that the activity of the plaintiffs was “newsworthy merely by virtue of the fact that they had been disseminated in communities where the plaintiffs were known—their online social networks” (para 11). The findings of the interviews presented in the following chapter will be shown to resonate with this case, revealing that the users interviewed expected their Facebook activity displayed on the News Feed to contribute to a self-cultivated public image and that this image would be attended to as news by others on the platform.

While the News Feed has evolved considerably since its inception in 2006, with the regular addition of new interactive features for users and changes to its aesthetic over time (Murphy, 2013), its core treatment of user-activity as news has remained intact. In March 2009, for example, the recent introduction of the Publisher feature to the Profile page was incorporated onto the News Feed, allowing users to post content directly to the News Feed in answer to the question “What’s on your mind?” (Albanesius, 2012). This question is positioned at the top of the News Feed, suggesting users post a photo or video, “tag” a friend, “check-in” at a specific location, share a “feeling” or “activity”, post a GIF or “ask for a recommendation” in response. Again, all of these possible types of publication on the News Feed are treated as news events worthy of being observed by other users on Facebook. In the same year, the News Feed started streaming posts in real-time

(Schonfeld, 2009), also incorporating the introduction of the Like button into the main News Feed interface (ibid). These changes now meant that users could now “like” content as and when it appeared on the News Feed, thereby compressing the time frames within which users could view and react to content on the platform.

However, rather than simply existing as a chronological stream of activity, precisely what content appears on the News Feed in its default setting is ordered by a machine learning algorithm on the basis of its predicted relevance to each individual user. This setting is called “Top Stories”. What is deemed to be a “top story” on the News Feed is that content that Facebook predicts the user will interact with most, and these items are placed higher up the News Feed as a result. To return to Stanfill’s (2015) notion of ‘discursive interface analysis’ that helped shape the analytical focus of this chapter, examining the default options of the News Feed’s user-interface can illuminate “the norms of use” (Stanfill 2015, p. 1061) implicit in its design. Although the News Feed does have one other ordering setting for the user to choose from, being “Most Recent”, which shows posts from friends, pages and groups in purely chronological order, the setting of “Top Stories” as its default setting indicates that the News Feed has a preferred mode of engagement in-built in its design.

Facebook’s Help Centre website further reveals that even if the user chooses the “Most Recent” setting for their News Feed, their News Feed will “eventually return to its default setting” (Facebook Help Centre, 2019a) of “Top Stories” over time. This indicates that the News Feed is designed in such a way that prompts users to interact with content that has been deemed to be “relevant” in terms of predicted interactions. While the conclusions of this chapter will link this design feature to the economic incentives of Facebook as a data-platform, for now it is important to recognize that the News Feed is scripted in such a way that determines the likelihood of user interactions, above all else, as the key predictors of the newsworthiness of all activity on the platform. The way that popularity is said to be programmed into the

algorithmic architecture of the News Feed pertinently resonates with Van Dijck and Poell's (2013) suggestion that certain social media logics motivate the design of social media platforms, as was discussed in greater detail in the Literature Review of this thesis. That the News Feed will always return to its default setting over time, moreover, indicates that Facebook wishes for its users to engage with the feature in a certain way, and that this engagement can be seen to be encouraged through aspects of the News Feed's algorithmic design.

An examination of the way the News Feed's algorithm, currently known as "Ranking" (Mosseri, 2018), is publicly presented by Facebook can elucidate this idea further. Facebook has a website titled 'Welcome to the News Feed' which lays out the "three main types of signal" that the Ranking algorithm looks at to determine the relevance of posts emanating from each users' social network (Welcome to the News Feed, 2019). The three main types of signal are: 1) *Who posted*. Posts and activity from the users, groups or pages each user "interacts with most" (ibid) on Facebook are said to be a positive predictor of relevance. Subsequently, posts from close Facebook contacts who the user regularly interacts with are prioritized on the News Feed and are placed higher up on the Feed as a result. 2) *The type of content*. If the post is of a type that the user "interacts with frequently" (ibid) on Facebook, this is said to indicate that the user finds such content interesting and is used to predict relevance. For example, if the user spends a lot of time watching, posting and commenting on videos, video content will be placed higher up the News Feed by the users personalized Ranking algorithm. 3) *Interactions with the post*. Posts that already have large levels of interactions (likes, comments, shares etc.) are said to positively predict the likelihood of user engagement. The existing quantitative popularity of posts, therefore, is rendered as an important factor of relevance.

What the user sees on their default News Feed is thus the result of an algorithmic sorting process that assumes interactions to be the chief indicators of newsworthiness and personal 'relevance'. These default

predictions, while based upon unique data-sets of tracked online personal activity, universally configure each and every Facebook user as if their interactions exist as personal revelations of their news preferences. In this way, the ideal user of the News Feed is configured as an individual who rates the relevance of the content emanating from their social network through their decisions of interaction, with the newsworthiness of content on the News Feed effectively determined through each users' decision to interact with it or not. Simply through their activity on Facebook, therefore, consciously or otherwise, each user contributes to their creation as the personal news gatekeeper of the content that appears on their News Feed.

Here, as I will show in more detail below, the way the design of the News Feed is spoken about by Facebook and its representatives assumes certain desires of users. Subsequently, the way the News feed cleaves out, and prompts, certain roles and interactions for users through its design is presented by Facebook as if it were in users' so-called best interests. While the News Feed can, indeed, be understood as an "empty" (Brügger, 2015, S2.4 para 3) space, only furnished with content each user has chosen to see through their interactions on the platform, the following section will further examine how these choices of activity are pre-structured through the discourses surrounding and design of the News Feed's user-interface. Following this, I will go on to examine the power relations and economic effects that come into focus once the News Feed is approached as if its users are relationally constructed, instead of being taken for granted as pre-existing, 'naturally' inclined, producer/consumers of the social "headlines" of Facebook.

4.3 "News Feed Values"

Alongside Facebook's website dedicated to the News Feed, Facebook's blog series 'News Feed FYI' can reveal with more clarity

how the ideal active Facebook user is said to be configured in the material design of the News Feed. The aim of 'News Feed FYI', as the very first blog post of August 2013 states, is to "highlight major updates to News Feed and explain the thinking behind them" (Backstrom, 2013). At the time of writing, Facebook has posted over 50 blog posts since News Feed FYI was first introduced, constituting a significant archive of information that details, for instance, changes in the design of the News Feed interface, modifications to the Ranking algorithm, and the development of interactive features for businesses, news publishers and users themselves. To repeat the stance established in the previous chapter, it should be clearly stated that I do not take these engineering principles at face-value. Instead, an examination of Facebook's stated design ethics will be able to demonstrate how Facebook positions itself as a benevolent provider of services that can ameliorate the social needs of its ideal user. As such, Facebook's various design blogs constitute valid empirical resources by being able to reveal how Facebook presents its services to ordinary, 'lay-audiences', whose perspective this thesis has chosen to adopt. Thus, while the information found upon the News Feed FYI blog series does not constitute a fully transparent or, indeed, detailed account of the News Feeds' inner technical workings, the content found here can still help establish 1) how Facebook wishes the News Feed to be understood by users as a space to fulfil their innate social needs and 2) how the News Feed is presented as being designed upon this basis.

The posts found on News Feed FYI are authored by various Facebook employees with various roles, expertise and responsibilities. By way of example, Chris Marra, 'Emerging Markets Product Manager' and Alex Sourov, 'Emerging Markets Engineering Manager', discuss how users in countries with weaker internet connections will receive a News Feed with less videos and more status updates (Marra & Sourov, 2015); Erich Owens, 'Software Engineer', and David Vickery, 'Engineering Manager', reveal how Ranking factors trending topics (Owens & Vickery, 2014); and Akos Lada and James Li, 'Research Scientists',

and Shilin Ding, 'Engineering Manager', outline how Ranking identifies and removes spam messages on the News Feed (Lada, Li & Ding, 2017). Since June 2016, each News Feed FYI blog post contains an overt reference to a series of principles termed the 'News Feed Values'. In a blog post titled 'Building a Better News Feed for You' (Mosseri, 2016), Adam Mosseri, then Vice President of the News Feed, states that "these values [...] guide our [Facebook's] thinking, and help us keep the central experience of News Feed intact as it evolves" (ibid). While Mosseri suggests that Facebook has "been using [these values] for years" (ibid) to direct the development of the News Feed, this post is the first that publicly outlines the (supposed) guiding principles of its algorithmic design.

The post begins with Mosseri setting out the purpose of the News Feed to its users:

Our [Facebook's] success is built on getting people the stories that matter to them most. If you could look through thousands of stories every day and choose the 10 that were most important to you, which would they be? The answer should be your News Feed. It is subjective, personal, and unique — and defines the spirit of what we hope to achieve. (Mosseri, 2016)

The primary and "driving principle" of the News Feed, Mosseri states, is the idea of "connecting people with their friends and family" (ibid). The News Feed's "top priority", Mosseri continues, "is keeping you [the user] connected to the people, places and things you want to be connected to — starting with the people you are friends with on Facebook" (ibid). As was outlined in the previous chapter, Facebook validates its claims about "what people want to be connected to" through its HCI studies on well-being. That is, users are said to be motivated to engage in social networking activity in order to fulfil a 'natural' desire for social belonging and 'rational' desire to accrue social capital. In this framework, increased connection on the News Feed is said to be able to maintain

the access to resources necessary for social well-being. By aiming to do this on the basis of a theorisation of 'close ties', thus, the Ranking algorithm's prioritization of posts from the users' closest Facebook friends and family can be presented as a human 'good'. The ordering of posts from close ties higher up the News Feed is said to benefit the well-being of users, while also, as I will expand upon below, increase the levels of profitable data harvestable from user-interactions on Facebook. At this juncture, it is possible to show that the discursive formation of the ideal user, as outlined in the previous chapter, is reciprocated in the stated design values of the News Feed; the good user of self-interested active connection thus constitutes the target of the algorithmic curation of the News Feed.

Other 'News Feed Values' state that "your [the users'] feed should inform" and "entertain" (Mosseri, 2016). Facebook, Mosseri writes, are "always working to better understand what is interesting and informative to you [the user] personally, so those stories appear higher up in your feed" (ibid). As I have demonstrated above, what is predicted to be "interesting" and "entertaining" to the user is determined upon the basis of user interactions and their likely repetition. Another key 'News Feed Value' is "authentic communication" (ibid). Mosseri claims that the "the strength of our [Facebook's] community depends on authentic communication" (ibid), and that Ranking strives to show "genuine" (ibid) stories that "resonate most" (ibid) with users, as opposed to stories from dubious origins that may misinform or mislead. With these 'News Feed Values', Mosseri relays the notion that Facebook exists as a space where users can instrumentally gather so-deemed 'useful' information and engage in forms of social grooming, both being presented as activities that can benefit users' social existence in some way. Within Facebook's discourse of well-being, the notion that News Feeds should entertain can be related to the fostering of social bonds, whereby shared positive experiences purportedly provide a sense of evolutionary belonging that strengthens social networks. That News Feeds should authentically inform, on the other hand, can be related to

the notion that social networks provide knowledge resources that can improve the flows of functional social capital for users to enjoy.

Although the ‘News Feed Values’ are undoubtedly part of the PR effort to dampen the recent controversies surrounding the platform, as outlined in the introduction of this thesis, analysing Facebook’s self-presentation of its services can still offer a clear insight into how Facebook wishes the News Feed to be understood, and used, by its members. These insights can bring us to a closer understanding of how Facebook “scripts” (Akrich, 1992) the News Feed in an attempt to configure ideal users and ideal use of it. In a blog post from January 2018 titled ‘Building a better News Feed for You’ for example, Mark Zuckerberg re-iterated his vision of what constitutes “healthy” Facebook usership. Namely, Zuckerberg claims that active engagement and high levels of user interaction with content on the News Feed constitutes “time well spent” (Mosseri, 2018) on the interface. Recalling the findings of the previous chapter, by determining what *living well* looks like on Facebook, we can see how Facebook and its representatives are projecting a vision of what the News Feed’s ideal user is and ought to be, thereby relaying a similar eudaimonic conception of well-being I have identified in Facebook’s construction of healthy, ideal, usership so far.

In the same blog post from January 2018 where Zuckerberg re-states his aims for the News Feed, Adam Mosseri specifically claims that the News Feed is designed to foster forms of active user engagement. Ranking, Mosseri suggests, is built to

prioritize posts that spark conversations and meaningful interactions between people. To do this, we will predict which posts you might want to interact with your friends about, and show these posts higher in feed. These are posts that inspire back-and-forth discussion in the comments and posts that you might want to share and react to. (Mosseri, 2018).

As Facebook repeatedly claims that its own research into well-being informs the design changes made to its various user-interfaces, the fact that the blog above is dated after the HCI studies conducted by Facebook explored in the previous chapter is significant. This dating indicates that the decision to connect users to content they are most likely to interact with on the News Feed can be linked to its research of healthy usership. For example, a post by Mark Zuckerberg embedded in the blog explicitly states that these design changes are “based on” (Mosseri, 2018) Facebook’s “own research with leading experts” such as Burke and Kraut (2016), whose work was discussed in the previous chapter. Here, we can explicitly see how Facebook publicly justifies its design of the News Feed’s user interface through an appeal to the types of social-psychological knowledge produced in its “research” on social capital and group dynamics. However, the extent to which the well-being interests of users are actually at the forefront of such designs should be treated with a high-level of scepticism. I would contend, instead, that the design decisions to connect users with content they are most likely to interact with is primarily motivated by the economic incentive to collect user-data, which can then be sold to advertisers and other interested third-parties. Nevertheless, Facebook’s constructs of well-being function in a way that allows Facebook to explain and justify its design decisions on a discursive ground far removed from its economic purpose as a data-platform. That is, the prompting of user-interactions on the News Feed can be presented as a ‘good’ by Facebook by providing the opportunities for users to cultivate social bonds on the platform, as opposed to being viewed as part of a designed user-experience intended to gather data for the sake of economic profit (Beer, 2016; Hearn, 2010; Skeggs & Yuill, 2016; Van Dijck & Poell, 2013)

Regardless of the authenticity of their claims, in setting the ideal parameters of user choice in terms of health, without necessarily determining that these choices *must* be followed, the following section will argue that the design of the News Feed can usefully be considered

alongside Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) psychological theory of the nudge. Specifically, the News Feed will be discussed below as a "choice architecture" – the designed arrangement of social environments so as to affect certain behavioural outcomes within them (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Mark Zuckerberg's stated intention to build services that are "good for people and good for society" (Zuckerberg, Guardian Live, 2018), therefore, will be shown to manifest in the designing of material choice architectures that are presented to nudge users as if increased interactions were, indeed, "good" for them in some way.

4.4 News Feed nudges

Similarly to computer designer B. J. Fogg's (2003) belief that "persuasive" technological design can "create interactive experiences that motivate and persuade people" (2003, p. 5) toward certain ends, Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) concept of the psychological nudge suggests that subtle environmental design decisions can adjust human behaviour in particular directions. For instance, social psychological research has purportedly shown the ways that setting a default option in an administration form increases the likelihood of an individual choosing that option as their final decision (Pichert & Katsikopoulos, 2008); others have demonstrated that drawing attention to specific products on supermarket shelves can influence consumer purchasing patterns (Kroese, Marchiori & de Ridder, 2016); while Thaler and Sunstein themselves suggest that minute visual cues can unconsciously direct behaviour in different settings – as demonstrated by the famous example of the engraving of a house-fly on urinals in Schiphol airport that successfully reduced user "spillage" by 80% (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 4). Beyond constructing consumer choices and toilet hygiene, the UK government has a dedicated "Nudge unit", officially called the Behavioural Insights Team, that is tasked with

researching and proposing governmental policies that promote healthy behaviours (Halpern, 2015), while Sunstein himself was an advisor to the Obama administration and design consultant to the Affordable Care Act in the USA in 2010 (Dow Schüll, 2016).

Thaler and Sunstein describe the process of nudging as “libertarian paternalism” – the attempt to design social environments that “move people in directions that will make their lives better” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 6) while still maintaining an impression of free choice. By drawing explicitly upon the work of Milton Friedman, who can be viewed as one of the intellectual pillars of neoliberal economic doctrine (Harvey, 2007; Stedman Jones, 2012), Thaler and Sunstein argue that the libertarian aspect of nudge theory is found in the core notion that people “should be free to do what they like” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 6). In their work, Thaler and Sunstein directly quote Friedman’s refrain that individual freedom is constituted in being “free to choose” (Friedman & Friedman, 1980) the direction, character and quality of one’s life. The paternalistic aspect of nudge theory, on the other hand, establishes the idea that it is “legitimate” to

try and influence people’s behaviour in order to make their lives longer, healthier, and better. In other words, we argue for self-conscious efforts, by institutions in the private sector and also by government, to steer people’s choices in directions that will improve their lives. (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 5).

As such, nudging is ethically grounded upon the notion that the direction of human choice is valid if such an effort is intended for the ‘good’ of the individuals involved. As discussed in the previous chapter and above, the technical features of the News Feed’s user-interface are presented as prompting users to make “healthy” decisions of active interaction, as opposed to unhealthy choices of passive engagement. Consequently, a strongly libertarian paternalistic can be identified in the

discourse surrounding the News Feed's design in a way that the concept of the "choice architecture" can help elucidate.

For instance, the idea that increased user interaction on Facebook is in some way "good" for users is used to justify Ranking's prioritization of "top stories" on the News Feed. As increasing the proximity and ease of a viable course of action is a key tactic of nudging (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, pp. 11-13), the positioning of content that the user is most likely to interact with higher up the News Feed makes it more likely that the user will actually do so. To give another example, the Publisher feature asks a leading question to users every-time they navigate to their News Feed ("What's on your mind, [user name]?"), providing users with decision as to whether or not they answer it in a way that simply would not have occurred without its asking. This question is pinned to the top of the News Feed in a place of visual prominence, and, as discussed above, asks users to respond through posting photos or videos, writing statuses, tagging friends, and through many other choices of action. This question, to bring in Bucher's (2017) terminology once again, prompts users to "react" to the user-interface in ways that will generate further interaction with the News Feed. Moreover, directly addressing users with their first name (as given on their Facebook profile) personalizes Facebook's request to share and connect with others, which Theresa Sauter (2014) has shown to be a core process through which Facebook users form intimate habits of self-expression on the platform.

To demonstrate how Facebook frequently justifies its design of the News Feed in terms of creating the conditions for healthy interactions, I will now turn to a blog post on News Feed FYI authored by Shali Nguyen and Ryan Freitas (2017), designers at Facebook. This blog states that changes made to the comments feature on posts have been made to foster more active communications on the News Feed. For example, Nguyen and Freitas detail the ways they have made improvements to the "readability" (ibid) of posts in order to prompt user interactions and encourage "better conversations" on the News Feed

(Nguyen & Freitas 2017). These changes include increased colour contrasts on posts, making typography easier to distinguish; updated larger, Like, Comment and Share icons on posts; and more visible profile picture icons to show more clearly who's involved in the discussions taking place in the comments section (ibid). Furthermore, each users' ability to directly reply to comments in a post has been said to be enhanced and made more accessible through clearer fonts and color contrasts.

These types of modifications, it is said by Nguyen and Freitas, make the News Feed easier to "navigate" (ibid) and aim to "help people have more lively and expressive conversations on Facebook" (ibid). This attempt to encourage "lively" conversations, read alongside Mosseri's intentions to "spark" engagement on the News Feed, form part of the discursive pattern that posits the access to one-to-one conversation as a core component of ideal News Feed usership. Thus, the way posts are both spoken about and designed can be seen to shape user choice along certain activity corridors as opposed to others. While this current chapter is concerned with initially establishing what these nudges of the News Feed look like, and in linking them to Facebook's discourse of ideal usership, the following chapter will explore the outcomes of such designs in more depth, presenting the findings of interviews with users as they scroll down the News Feed's user-interface.

Another example that demonstrates how certain values of ideal, healthy usership are said to be manifest in the design of the News Feed can be found in a blog post from April 2018 titled 'Designing New Ways to Give Context to News Stories' (Smith, Leavitt & Jackson, 2018). This post, attributed to Jeff Smith, Alex Leavitt, and Grace Jackson, designers and UX specialists at Facebook, documents the development of a feature that gives background information about the publisher and author of the various news articles that appear on the News Feed. This feature was envisaged to, as the post states, give "people the tools to make informed decisions about which stories to read, trust, and share" (Smith, Leavitt & Jackson, 2018). News articles on Facebook are now

accompanied by an information button that animates when the user scrolls past it on the News Feed. If the user clicks on this button, information appears that details the publisher of the news article, related articles and from what locations in the world the article has been shared.

Explaining why the information button was animated, the designers state how this feature was intended to:

draw a person's attention and dynamically inform people that both 1) the feature existed, and 2) that there was relevant information that they should care about within the pop-up. (Smith, Leavitt & Jackson, 2018).

Here, the decision to animate the information button is presented as an attempt to prompt users to engage with the credibility of news sources as part of their habitual Facebook activity. That this type of activity is something that users “should care about”, moreover, further mobilizes a eudaimonic discourse which maps out what *living well* as a Facebook user looks like. Specifically, caring about the provenance of news sources relays particular assumptions about the participatory subject utilizing the News Feed in its imagined capacity as a digital public sphere (Bode, 2016; Carlisle & Patton, 2013). Recalling the notion that technologies materially impart particular assumptions about the world in their design, establishing the ways that Facebook and its designers discursively imbue the News Feed with certain values, while perhaps not necessarily controversial in quality, or, indeed, even authentic, still indicates that its design has been built to affect certain behavioural outcomes over others. This further undermines the presentation of Facebook as a neutral, intermediary technology, as found in some of the scholarship discussed in the Literature Review of this thesis (Light & McGrath, 2010).

Finally, the variable design of the like button in different linguistic regions of the globe indicates that Facebook intends users to engage with posts in a certain fashion on the News Feed. On English language

versions of Facebook, for instance, the like button is positioned on the left of posts. This positioning mirrors the way English speaking users would have learnt to approach texts from a young age.

Correspondingly, Arabic versions of Facebook have the like button positioned on the right, likewise responding to the way Arabic is read from right to left. Such variations in the design of the like button serves to evidence the way that likes are designed to be the first thing that users see when they view a post – a finding that the interviews with users can reveal in more depth in the following chapter. This design feature can be characterised as a visual cue nudge – understood as the visual positioning of certain features in different environments in order influence individuals' likelihood of interaction with them (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 5).

This designed prominence of the like button is justified by Facebook in the same terms of low-cost healthy relationship maintenance discussed in the previous chapter. Leah Pearlman, for example, one of Facebook's former employees credited with the development of the Like button in 2009, claims the feature was first intended to grant users the ability to quickly show support of a post without having to go to the effort of writing a comment (Morgans, 2017). This thinking remains intact a decade later in 2019, where the help section of Facebook suggests that "clicking like below a post on Facebook is a way to let people know that you enjoy it without leaving a comment" (Facebook Help Centre, 2019). This view resonates with Facebook's public conceptualization of the like button as an efficient way for users to engage in forms of social grooming, and liking can subsequently be presented by Facebook as a means for users to cultivate the bonds of social capital necessary for their online well-being. As the visual prominence of the like button is supported by Facebook's discourse of ideal healthy use, it can therefore be considered as a nudge that prompts users toward supposedly beneficial modes of interaction the News Feed.

The development of the technical features discussed above, as Mark Zuckerberg states in a blog post from 2017, are presented as attempts to foster the emergence of a “healthy society” (Zuckerberg, 2017) of Facebook users worldwide. I have shown how user-activity is transformed into news on the News Feed and that sharing life events, and interacting with the life-events of others on Facebook through the Publisher feature, is configured as the appropriate means to engage with the interface. Moreover, interacting with content, liking posts, and taking care to check the provenance of sources on the News Feed can be linked to Facebook’s configuration of its ideal user. Thus, the nudging of Facebook users to choose active interactions on the News Feed is always legitimated upon the basis that it will improve their health and well-being in some way, namely by allowing them to fulfil their ‘natural’ social essence and accrue social capital through their online relationships. However, when considered in relation to Facebook’s economic functioning as a data-platform, the biasing of active behaviour in the examples above should also be seen as an attempt to ensure the continued production of profitable user data-sets. Therefore, although I have argued that we should be sceptical about Facebook’s stated focus on user-health and well-being as a motivating factor of its design, the actual operation of the News Feed’s choice architecture renders its stated design motivations as paradoxically insignificant: all that matters are its behavioural outcomes. In this case, the material availability and discursive promotion of active interactions on the News Feed produces such behaviour as the path of least resistance, and thus more likely than others, whether or not their justifications in terms of well-being actually stand up to scrutiny.

4.5 The politics of nudge

Facebook’s discourse of healthy usership discursively aligns the intensification of user data-traces, requisite for its continued economic

expansion, with the supposed well-being interests of Facebook users themselves. Consequently, due to Facebook's attempted inculcation of active habits of user interaction, this final section will treat the nudges of the News Feed as a political expression of power (Foucault, 1995, 2015; Hoy, 1986). In choice architectures, as Whitehead et al. (2011) rightly suggest, the "discussion[s] of what the values associated with 'good behaviour' should be" (2011, p. 2834) are foreclosed in design. Environments built around supposedly beneficial nudges work upon its individual inhabitants without their prior knowledge, involvement or consent. As such, what is said to be 'good' for Facebook users has already been decided by Facebook before the users' engagement with the platform. Despite appearing to prioritize the 'freedom' of individuals, thus, the way choice architectures intervene in the decision-making process of their users equates agency with the process of choosing between a set of behavioural options – as previously deemed appropriate, or desirable, by their designers for whatever reason or goal. Moreover, the outcomes of these choices are all that matter in nudged environments, strangely de-valuing any prior appeals to the social 'good' said to motivate their instantiation.

Social policy scholars Brown and Baker (2013) argue that the prevalence of choice architectures in contemporary governmental policy schemes in the West, such as default opt-in organ donation schemes (Johnson & Goldstein, 2003), socially normative messaging to encourage tax compliance (Behavioural Insights Team, 2012), or the enforcement of "implementation incentives" that commit job seekers to future training programmes (Behavioural Insights Team, 2016), constitute further facets of neoliberal responsibilization (as discussed at length in the previous chapter), whereby the well-being and prosperity of citizens solely depends on individualized behavioural choices in a marketized world. However, for Brown and Baker, "the responsibilized citizen is not one who can genuinely claim autonomy, [...] but rather one who conducts himself or herself as directed or nudged by a variety of experts and government agencies" (Brown & Baker, 2013, p. 5). The

nudged subject of neoliberal well-being exists in a state of personalized yet pre-structured decision, navigating a variety of publicly and privately administered social environments, such as Facebook's News Feed, toward their own sense of healthy being.

On this basis, the supposed full agency of Facebook users – as identified at numerous points of the academic literature of Facebook's affordances, is thrown into question. The identification of nudges on the News Feed, that is, while not a deterministic framework, at least points toward a reclassification of agency on Facebook as choosing among options of interaction on a tightly designed user-interface. Furthermore, as Carolyn Pedwell (2017) has argued, the nudging of human individuals by private corporations and governmental bodies not only undermines spurious claims of autonomy in such administered environments, but is also political in at least two senses. The first of these senses, for Pedwell, is found in the link between nudge theory and behavioural economics, as made explicit by Thaler and Sunstein's engagement with Friedman's neoliberal embellishment of 'free choice'. Through its focus on responsibilized individual habit as the target of governmental regimes, Pedwell argues that nudge theory should be situated

within much longer histories of governing through habit – histories which reveal the capacity for habit to be employed as an exclusionary technology of social and geo-political regulation. (Pedwell, 2017, p. 62).

Likewise, for thinkers such as William Davies (2015) and Sam Binkley (2011), the separation of the 'individual' from 'society' in nudge theory is, again, part of broader processes of neoliberalization (Beer, 2016) – the attempt to shield scrutiny of marketized state apparatuses as culpable for any social inequalities extant in the world (as explored in the previous chapter).

Pedwell further draws out the political character of nudge theory through its particular conceptualization of human choice, contrasting

notions of nudging with a pragmatist vision of habit as espoused, for instance, by John Dewey. Whereas proponents of nudge try to singularize and separate human habits as discrete entities of controllable human activity in certain situations, Dewey, as discussed in Chapter II, treats habit as an assimilation of human thought, body, objects and external environment – as the means through which humans can both learn and amend traditional forms of activity and association in the world. Therefore, while a pragmatist conception of habit draws together the lived experience of the individual with exigent pressures of their milieu, retaining the possibility to critique broader socio-political or economic inequalities upon this basis, nudge theories attempt to divorce discussions of human habit from any such political considerations.

Rather, for the exponents of nudge, such as Facebook's News Feed design team, any human activity can be targeted for change upon a discursive configuration of supposedly 'existing' human health 'needs', without recourse to examine how or where these 'needs' are historically and politically constituted. The conceptual emptying of habit's inherent socio-political quality by nudge theorists and their designers can, therefore, be considered as the second level of its political nature. Although the Facebook user is said to be free to choose to engage with the News Feed in a "healthy" manner, the News Feed's choice architecture discursively and materially determines what "healthy" practice constitutes prior to any actual user involvement. When users engage with the choice architectures of the News Feed, therefore, the decision to interact with posts, comment, share, or scroll, is never singularly the users own. Rather, the choice of activity occurs through a highly entangled coming together of user and machine. Autonomy, in this situation, is mediated in the sense described by Latour (1994) and Akrich (1992) outlined earlier in this thesis; where the human (user) begins and the non-human (News Feed) ends is indeterminable.

The discursive configuration of what is 'good' for users serves the economic interests of Facebook as a data-platform, providing a

rhetorical justification for its continued mediation of everyday life, while simultaneously inhibiting the discussion surrounding what relations of power this mediation maintains and produces in the world. Following on from the theoretical framework established in Chapter II of this thesis, the News Feed's nudges can be considered as micro-impositions of habit that channel user-behaviour in ways amenable to Facebook's continued capitalist accumulation. The minute design features of the News Feed can usefully be understood as "small acts of cunning endowed with a great power of diffusion" (Foucault, 1995, p. 139). Foucault identified with his analytic of productive power. As such, it is my position that these small-scale user actions on the News Feed – a single like or share, for instance, constitute the micro-physics of social networking activity that maintain Facebook's status as a significant actor in the "socio-technical economy" (Baym, 2015, p. 1) of platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017).

For Foucault, "the exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome" (Foucault, 1983, p. 221). The conduct of conduct engineered through the choice architecture of the News Feed and the grading logics of the Ranking algorithm, as such, can usefully be considered as a form of governance, understood in Foucault's terms as structuring "the possible field of action of others" (ibid). As I have been arguing throughout this chapter, the governance of the News Feed is affected through the discourse and design of its user-interface, individually manifest in social networking habits that are formed, in turn, through repetitious choices of activity within a nudged technical environment. Developing the notion that nudge theory ought to be considered as part of a historical lineage of neoliberal governance through habit, consequently, I would like to suggest that socio-technical scripting of user behaviour on the News Feed, and the attempted inculcation of user habit, entwines users, ideally manifest or not, within contemporary structures of disciplinary power on Facebook.

Understood in relation to Jodi Dean's conceptualization of "communicative capitalism" (2005), moreover, the mediation of user activity through the nudges of the News Feed can be viewed as a form of capture. That is, the incorporation of user relationships within the logics of self-interested interaction on the News feed entraps users within networks of neoliberal action and affect (Dean, 2015, p. 90). Here, the feeling of social connection become the ties that bind individuals within exploitative prosumer capitalist relations. As touched upon earlier, the user choices engineered by the News Feed, for Alaimo and Kallinikos (2017), once incorporated within and fed back to the user through the Ranking algorithm, act as a "recursive feedback loop" (p. 186) that make it appear as if those choices did, indeed, solely stem from the internal desires of the user themselves. Despite the inherent technical artificiality of the 'social' aspect of social media, according to Alaimo and Kallinikos, Ranking's feedback loops of predicted relevance in terms of interaction "eventually come to acquire social relevance" (ibid) through its integration in habitual regimes of online user sociality. As it is "through habits", as Wendy Chun (2016) argues, that "users become their machines" (p. 1), repeated News Feed practice thus constitutes the quotidian mechanism through which individuals are produced as users of Facebook.

4.6 Conclusion

The analysis provided in this chapter is able to demonstrate the ways that the figure of the ideal healthy user is targeted in the discourse surrounding the design of Facebook's News Feed user-interface and algorithms. I have shown how the News Feed initially transformed and currently attempts to maintain the lives of users as news to be shared and accessed by others on Facebook, highlighting a number of its technical features that can be usefully characterised as behavioural nudges toward this end. Facebook's discourse of healthy usership has

been shown to justify and legitimise the News Feed's technical nudging of users along pathways of increased interaction, with the well-being interests of Facebook's users discursively interwoven with practices of active interaction. However, I have argued that we should treat Facebook's appeal to well-being with suspicion. As adopting active social networking habits on the News Feed – commenting on photos, liking videos, or sharing messages with friends for instance – news creation in other words, exists as the mechanisms through which users create the data-traces necessary for Facebook's economic functioning as a data-platform, being nudged on the News Feed is better understood as the process through which users incorporate and perpetuate the capitalist interests of Facebook within their quotidian routines of 'social' being. Following Foucault's suggestion that the inculcation of habit is the process through which individuals are produced as disciplined subjects within apparatuses of capitalism, this process can be identified as the exact means through which Facebook users are *produced* as disciplined users on the platform.

However, while Chapters III and IV have demonstrated how ideal users are discursively and materially scripted in the design of Facebook's News Feed, it remains to be seen in what ways actual users react to the technical nudging of their activity on the News Feed. Are users produced as disciplined subjects in the way that an engagement with Foucault's analytics would suggest? If so, how are the norms of the News Feed actually felt and enacted by users? And if not, does this mean that there is a chance for resisting, amending or shifting the power relations held together on the News Feed? The following chapter will present the findings of a qualitative interview study conducted with users as they scrolled down the News Feed. This qualitative investigation will engage with these questions concerning the habitual engagement with normative user-interfaces, exploring the character, and political implications, of users inhabiting an algorithmic environment whereby their relationships and social networking activities are

transformed into news and ranked according to the likelihood of interaction by others on the platform.

Chapter V: A qualitative investigation of scrolling down the News Feed

Thus far, this thesis has only partially outlined elements of the discursive and material scripting of the News Feed, without investigating how users are actually incorporating the technical affordances of the interface into their social networking habits. Recalling the theoretical framework of this thesis, the concomitant study of users' actual interactions with the News Feed's various affordances is a necessary component of the type of socio-technical analysis of Facebook I have been advancing so far. Following Nagy and Neff (2015), user interaction with the affordances of the News Feed constitutes a "negotiation" (p. 2) between "user, interface, and designer" (ibid). Investigating the News Feed's affordances as sites of negotiated interaction recognizes the ability of user-interfaces to shape activity according to their designers' publicly stated intentions, while also acknowledging the potential gap between these intentions and its subsequent usership by individual users in different contexts. This chapter investigates how the designed environment of the News Feed is involved in the production of agentic user habits. How do users understand their own and others' activity on the News Feed as a form of sociality – are the connections observable viewed as manifestations of an essential social essence, as described within Facebook's discourse of ideal usership? And how are users responding to the News Feed's nudges – do users consider their activity on the interface as news to be consumed by others on the platform, and does this activity correspond to the modes of active communication prompted in the News Feed's design?

This chapter will present the findings of twelve in-depth interviews with Facebook users while interacting with their News Feeds. Participants were asked to narrate their experiences while they scrolled down the News Feed's user-interface, answering questions about the type of content displayed on the News Feed and their own posting activity as they did so. By focusing on how the users interviewed spoke about

activity apparent on their News Feed, it is possible to gain a sense of how the users understand, judge and interact with its technically mediated social news environment. The sample was purposive in the sense that all participants had to have an in-use Facebook account. All twelve participants lived in a northern city in the UK, and responded to a call for participation document disseminated to former colleagues and associates outside of my immediate social network. Comprising six males and six females, the sample ranged between the ages of twenty-one and thirty. Six were in full-time employment, with diverse jobs such as primary school teaching and cyber-security work, two were unemployed, two were in full-time higher education and two participants were in part-time employment. All had been to, or were attending, university.

As it would be very difficult to gather a large enough and diverse enough sample to account for Facebook's global user-base of 2.41 billion monthly active users (Facebook Newsroom, 2019), I decided that it was better to aim for theoretical saturation on a tightly defined sample, rather than seek to gain complete representative validity. Working with Guest, Bruce and Johnson's (2006) suggestion that sample size reaches legitimacy once thematic discovery had reached saturation, and participants show a consensus in their responses to the questions asked, the decision to stop at twelve participants was made after participants responses to questions showed thematic consistency. The clearly focused interview technique, combined with a small but theoretically saturated sample, was able to reveal how a group of users understood their own and others' patterns of activity observable on the News Feed in a coherent and consistent manner. That is, in alignment with the thought of Rosenblum (1987), which suggests that in-depth interviews can help elucidate the personal experiences of shared socio-cultural practices, the interview data offered below, while gleaned from a limited sample, provides a valuable insight into how a group of users understood theirs and others activity on the News Feed. Specifically, I will show how the habitual activity of Facebook users coalesced around

certain accepted norms of use to do with idealized presentations of self, the metrification of interaction and habitual self-evaluation. As the conclusions of this thesis will suggest, the interviews presented below provides an empirical grounding for the argument that repeated interactions with the News Feed functions as a technology of power operating on the level of habit.

During the interview, each participant was asked to log into their Facebook profile and begin on the home page (the News Feed). The user was then asked to 'scroll down' the News Feed and describe the posts that they saw as they appeared on screen, detailing: 1) the type of post; 2) the thematic content of the post; 3) who posted it; 4) when it was posted. Following this description, the user was then asked a basic opening question for each post, such as *Why do you think that individual posted that [status/photo/video/link]?* Based upon the response of the interviewee, I would ask follow-up questions pertaining to what had been said. For instance, if the participant mentioned something about 'sharing', I would ask questions pertaining to this particular theme, such as: *Why do you think that individual would want to 'share' that particular [status/photo/video/link]?* and so on and so forth. Following this, I would then ask specific questions relevant to whatever post was being discussed. The interview procedure was standardised by following a schedule of questions (which can be found in the appendix) and was only brought to a close when all of the questions had been asked and if a point of saturation had been reached.

At this stage, it is important to recognise the representational limitations of a convenience sample of this kind. Firstly, the age range of the participants is very narrow, and does not account for the various generations of Facebook users extant in the world today. Secondly, the fact that all participants had experience in Higher Education is a distinguishing factor that cannot account for the experiences of the wider Facebook user base as a whole. Thirdly, as this qualitative study is principally focused on how the interactions between users and the

News Feed produce habits of activity within an environment of nudges, as identifiable only at the particular moment of time of the interview itself, the study below is not attuned to the way other exigent factors, such as the racial, ethnic, nationality, and class identifications of the participants for instance, come into play in the production of habits on the News Feed. The call for participant document did not ask participants to identify themselves in terms of race, ethnicity, or class, and, as a result, it is not possible to make any correlative gestures toward these factors and the habits identified in the analysis below. The findings below, thus, are limited insofar as they only offer a snapshot of News Feed habits in a very small section of people that cannot be taken to be representative of the population of Facebook users as a whole.

Originally, the interview procedure was designed to explore notions of success and failure on the News Feed, seeking to gain an insight into how users were responding to the competitive algorithmic ranking of content within their social networks (Bucher, 2016). Many of the follow-up questions asked to users were orientated toward these original research questions as a result. These included questions such: *Do you think any element of ranking is observable on the News Feed?* and *What does the position of each post on the News Feed mean to you?* However, as the interviews progressed it became clear that the way users were thinking about and interacting with the News Feed only tangentially related to the preconceived notions of competitiveness I had originally sought to explore. Instead, the questions asked, although framed in such a way as to glean responses according to these original aims, produced responses from the users that opened up avenues of investigation that I had not expected. The way that participants spoke about the norms of the News Feed, for instance, indicated that a theoretical concept of normalization could help interpret how users felt impelled to behave in a certain way on the News Feed, while the affective response to likes suggested that this process operated on an emotional level. The interviews, therefore, required new research

questions and theoretical concepts to fully analyse and interpret their potential significance as they progressed. In this way, the interviews helped shape the overall analytical and conceptual focus of habit and power this thesis explores in a recursive manner, demonstrating how a dialogue between theoretical and empirical research can produce coherent insights into social media usership in the present day.

In order for my interpretations to retain empirical validity, I decided to employ a method that would allow meaning to be generated from the responses of the interviewees themselves: inductive analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Following Lyn Richards' (2015) claim that valid "qualitative research works up from the data" (p. 85), inductive analysis is an approach that closely focuses on the data to identify and group recurrent discursive themes found in the interviews. These patterned responses can then be grouped into themes. The psychologists Braun and Clark suggest that a "theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question[s], and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (2006, p. 82). Noticing patterns in data is also recognized as a primary tactic towards understanding what that data could signify by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013). For instance, if a certain way of thinking about the News Feed was expressed regularly by the participants then this could be grouped under a certain theme.

For example, the interviews revealed that presenting the 'best version' of the self on the News Feed was a prevalent patterned norm of user behaviour, and thus emerged as a key theme to understand the data. Therefore, pattern finding allows the researcher to inductively group the data into themes that were able to shed light on how users were engaging with the News Feed environment, as well providing insights into the behavioural and affective responses developed through this engagement. Thematically ordering data, for Saldana (2013), is the result of coding processes. Saldana states that

a theme is an *outcome* of coding, categorization, or analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded. (Saldana, 2013, p. 14)

As such, coding, and the thematic pattern finding that follows, is “primarily an interpretive act” (ibid, p. 4). Coding data involves capturing the “essence” (ibid) of the datum within a self-defined category. Following several iterations of this process, patterns are identified in the data that then can be grouped into themes.

The interviews were recorded using QuickTime player on a laptop, anonymously saved onto an external hard drive and then transferred to my desktop PC. The recordings were manually transcribed into a word document and then imported to NVivo 11 for coding. On NVivo, I closely read each interview transcript and coded each user response with an appropriate designation. I did so with all the interview transcripts sequentially. After the first round of coding I sought initial links between the disparate data sets and identified where the coded material could overlap. From this first investigation, I returned to the data and began the process again, incorporating these initial links into my coding process. Overall, I repeated four rounds of coding in this iterative manner to construct the four thematic categories expounded below. These categories are 1) Connection and relationship maintenance; 2) Best selves; 3) Seeking likes; and 4) Measurement and affect. Ethical approval from the University of Nottingham Faculty of Arts Ethics Board was received prior to the study, all participants signed a document giving informed consent before their involvement, and the names of all participants have been changed below to preserve anonymity.

5.1 Connection and relationship maintenance

Within Facebook’s discourse of ideal usership, the News Feed is presented as a space where users can be “connected” to the important

“people, places and things” in their lives (Backstrom, 2016). Facebook posits the social value of the News Feed, moreover, as demonstrated in Chapter III, upon its capacity to offer a low-cost means of communication that can help maintain the relationships that comprise users’ social networks (Burke & Kraut, 2016). Throughout the interviews, participants would often use the same specific language of *connection* to describe the utility of the News Feed in their own and others’ day-to-day life. For instance, Sarah, 28, a nurse, stated that the News Feed is “very good for connecting with people”, while Helen, 30, a librarian, and Richard, 28, a cyber security analyst, both claimed that they themselves, and other users, spent time on the News Feed because they wanted to “connect” with others online. Barney, 30, a junior lawyer, similarly suggested the News Feed is a way of “bringing people together”, echoing the particular language of another of Facebook’s stated tasks of the News Feed to “bring people closer together and build relationships” (Mosseri, 2018).

This articulation of the News Feed as an environment where users could connect to their friends and build relationships was a prevalent feature of the interviews. When asked why she thought a post that detailed a friend’s university graduation results had received over 200 likes, for example, Amy, 22, a student, replied:

Because I do think people use it [liking on the News Feed] as a way to support each other, yeah, and that’s a big thing, a big milestone in someone’s life isn’t it? So, I guess people want to show their support and that they’re happy for her.

Here, the affordance of liking is used to express “support” to another individual through the News Feed. Elsewhere in her interview, Amy suggested that tagging other users in posts that appear on the News Feed can “reinforce your relationship” with the other user in question, and by demonstrating to others in that social network that they had a

“connection” – once again using Facebook’s preferred language of social bonding.

The News Feed was also presented as a space to maintain relationships by Tim, 28, a primary school teacher. Tim claimed that “one of the best reasons for [using] Facebook” is

staying in touch with long distance friends, or people you went to university with who you don’t see quite as much anymore. So, it’s quite a nice way of seeing what they are doing in their life, even if you don’t speak to them on a daily basis, you kind of feel like you are staying in touch.

This understanding of the News Feed was similarly expressed by Helen, who further suggested that sharing content with friends was an important practice of keeping “in touch” when asked why she thought people posted on Facebook:

It’s just nice to share with friends, perhaps that you don’t see regularly, so they can keep in touch with your life and they know what you are doing.

These quotes provide evidence to suggest that the users interviewed felt as if sharing the happenings of their life was 1) an important facet of friendship and 2) that the News Feed could help facilitate this type of activity.

The way that users spoke about the News Feed as a service that could “reinforce” relationships and allow them to “share” with friends resonates with Facebook’s vision of ideal usership outlined in the previous two chapters. In incorporating the same language of *connection* with their description of the positive value of their activity on the News Feed, the users interviewed would appear to be understanding the News Feed in similar terms to how it is publicly presented by Facebook itself. This is not to claim a causal relation, but rather indicates the way that these users were adopting Facebook’s particular lexicon of social connection to describe the News Feed’s

social utility in their day-to-day life, thus adopting elements of Facebook's discourse of ideal use. As further evidence, Jane, 22, unemployed, when asked what she thought users who posted on the News Feed were primarily "doing", suggested that engagement with the News Feed – posting content, liking friends' posts, and commenting on statuses for example, was "about sharing things to do with your life". Understood in relation to the findings of the previous chapter, which outlined how the News Feed initially transformed the activity of users into the "headlines" of Facebook, the responses of the interviewees above could indicate that they were similarly viewing the News Feed as a space to access information about the lives of others as the social "news" of the platform.

The News Feed was discussed by the interviewees as an interactive environment that could help strengthen bonds of friendship by offering insights into the personal lives of others on Facebook, as suggested by Helen and Jane above. Other interviewees also located the utility of the News Feed in its ability to host news articles and videos that helped them keep abreast of current affairs. Paul, 22, in part time employment, for instance, chose to flag up a video detailing police brutality in the USA as an example of the News Feed introducing him to ideas that he thought were politically significant. Paul claimed that the sharing of potentially informative videos was "a good way of raising awareness about problems" within his social network. Relatedly, the interviewees often spoke positively about the News Feed's ability to provide political information during the 2017 UK general election (which had concluded recently before the interviews took place). For example Briony, a radiographer, viewed the discussions taking place beneath news articles and videos about the election as "quite a positive thing", while Aiden, 22, unemployed, also spoke about how his News Feed often contained politically motivated posts from his friends.

While Facebook has been intensely criticised in its failure to counteract the spread of political disinformation on the site, as outlined in the introduction of this thesis, the News Feed's ability to facilitate the

spread of useful political information is still positioned as a key locus of its social value within Facebook's discursive construction of healthy usership, and it appears that some of the users interviewed were, indeed, thinking about the News Feed in these terms. Moreover, the idea that the News Feed should "inform" is an important component of the 'News Feeds Values' discussed in the previous chapter (Mosseri, 2018). The feeling that the News Feed could help inform the users interviewed about current affairs and the social lives of others on the News Feed thus, once again aligns with Facebook's public aims for the News Feed. Here, the personal lives of others on the News Feed and public political affairs and were similarly treated as the "headlines" of Facebook. This brief opening section has shown that the way users interviewed were positioning the News Feed as a useful service for the maintenance of their relationships and as a space for gathering information resources as social news. These responses could therefore reveal that this group of users were engaging with Facebook 'correctly' according to the discursive terms of ideal usership this thesis has been tracing so far.

However, it is important to note at this stage that the users interviewed only employed the lexicon of connection to describe the perceived-to-be beneficial aspects of their News Feed usership. While the News Feed was understood as a space for sharing life events in order to keep in touch with friends, there was a common understanding that the events that users actually chose to share were overwhelmingly positive and demonstrative of some moment of personal success. Moreover, as the following sections will show, all user activity that was observable on the News Feed was understood by participants to contribute toward an idealized version of the self that users were necessarily projecting to the imagined-to-be attentive eyes of their social network. That is, the combined social networking activity of users over time was viewed as a consciously constructed presentation of the self for other users to witness and rate through the social metrics of the platform. The way that users perceived activity apparent on the News Feed, and the way that

users spoke about their own engagement with the News Feed, reveals a patterned mode of response to the News Feed's technical environment that stretches beyond its designers' publicly stated intentions. Therefore, the users' narrated experience of scrolling down the News Feed, perhaps not unexpectedly, revealed that the discourse ideal use does not provide a comprehensive framework to conceptualize the chief patterns of activity actual users identified during the interviews.

As the previous chapter has shown, the affordances of the News Feed attempt to nudge users along pathways of 'active' (healthy) usership – comprising of, for instance, active communications, one-to-one conversations and increased interactions with posts. The comments feature on posts, for instance, are said to be designed to help foster “meaningful interactions” (Mosseri, 2018) in an attempt to cultivate social capital and well-being in users, while the ability to share news articles on the News Feed is said to keep users informed of current affairs (Smith, Jackson, Leavitt, 2018), thereby improving their ability to participate in democratic debate. Ultimately, the design of the News Feed, as Facebook repeatedly states at various points in its PR materials, seeks “to ensure that people's time on Facebook is well spent” (Shen, 2019). However, rather than fostering the practices of healthy usership that Facebook designs for its users, the users interviewed appeared to be responding to the communication affordances of the News Feed in a different, although likewise distinctly patterned, manner.

For instance, the way that participants spoke about the use of the 'check-in' feature diverged from the way Facebook presents the ideal use of the feature to its public audience. When it was introduced in 2010, the ability to post one's location on the News Feed through GPS-enabled mapping technology, (to 'check-in'), was marketed by Facebook as a way for users to meet up with friends who may be in the same area without either person's prior knowledge. A report by *Wired* magazine described this as a service that hoped to “connect people in

real space” (Singel, 2010). However, for the users interviewed, the ‘check-in’ feature was not understood as a means to meet up with people face-to-face who may be in their vicinity. Rather, when asked to comment on why other users may have posted ‘check-ins’ on the News Feed, the users interviewed all suggested that the check-in feature was intended to project a particular aspect of the poster’s life for other users to witness.

For instance, when asked why she thought one of her friends had posted a ‘check-in’ that appeared on her News Feed, Helen spoke of the way that sharing the location of one’s whereabouts contributes to the

picture of how you want to be perceived. And if you want to be the sort of person that people see is always at the pub, or always, I don’t know, *wherever*, it’s just you’re curating a version of yourself that you want people to see you as.

Helen’s use of ‘curation’ is an interesting term to employ when talking about the posting behaviour observable on the News Feed. To curate is to present a specific collection of objects intended to tell a particular story, encompass an idea, or lead imaginations (McCosker, 2017). That Helen suggests her Facebook friends are ‘curating’ a version of their selfhood to a potentially attentive social network indicates that she views the activity apparent on her News Feed as the result of a certain selective process. However, the interview data did not show in any great detail the way users engaged in specific processes of collecting, organising, and looking after their content that Helen’s term ‘curation’ implies, and such a phrase cannot be used as a valid theme to group the participants responses around as a result. What arose more obviously through the interview data, rather, was the related idea that users were posting content that was intended to project the best versions of their existence for others to view on the News Feed, and considered other users to be doing the same as well.

As made evident in the data I will explore below, presenting overtly positive presentations of self constituted a shared and 'normal' mode of Facebook activity for the users interviewed. In this way, the discourse of ideal usership employed by Facebook and built into the design of the News Feed was not necessarily channelled through the participants' habitual interaction with the News Feed interface. Rather, the nudges of the News Feed that prompted users to comment, like, check-in and share appeared, instead, to create a different norm of News Feed posting – the specific character of which I will turn to now.

5.2 Best selves

The interview data is able to reveal that participants were attempting to present positive versions of their existence through their activity that appeared on others' News Feed. This notion emerged from the interviews and was repeatedly expressed by all the participants – both as an explanation for other users' behaviour and as motivation for their own. Briony, for example, when asked why she thought people posted content onto the News Feed, offered this in response:

I think people put photos up and statuses up because they want people to see all the best things that are happening in their life, the best version of themselves.

This presentation of each user's activity is "not a fake life" for Briony, because the things people put on Facebook, she continues, "are not necessarily untrue". It is, however, so Briony claims, "a filtered life". David, 22, a student, described the situation as such when asked a similar question:

it's like trying to put a front of yourself as good as you can possibly be to as many people as you can.

In response to the same question as to why he thought people posted on the News Feed, Barney likewise suggests that the filtering of existence possible on Facebook allows users to “project a very idealized version” of their lives. Finally, when asked to explain why she had described a selfie from her friend on the News Feed as an example of “vanity”, Amy suggested that:

people post photos of them[selves] doing things just because they want other people to see, and they think it gives off a certain image of them as a particular kind of person.

From the quotes above, the users interviewed present a very different picture to Facebook’s oft-quoted vision of the ideal user engaging in practices of “authentic communication” (Mosseri, 2016) on the News Feed. Instead, a situation whereby users were only presenting the “best version” of their selfhood on the News Feed was commonly perceived in the interviews.

Adding tone to this theme, the interviewees responses revealed that content that was overtly negative or revelatory of personal problems was viewed as a contravention to the usual positive presentations of user existence on the News Feed. During her interview, for example, Jane suggests that,

Obviously, being too negative on Facebook is not a good thing.

Here, it is interesting to note that Jane suggested her comment was “obvious”, perhaps indicating that such a notion operated as an accepted aspect of Facebook usership, normal for her and perhaps others. Similarly, when asked to describe how he viewed the relationship between online and offline presentations of self, Barney recognized that his News Feed was heavily biased toward positive representations of his Facebook friends’ lives:

I think a lot of what you see on Facebook is people projecting a particular version of themselves, people do

occasionally write “*What a shit day at work*” or whatever, but it’s on the inverse compared to how many people write “*I just did this, [it] was great.*”

This notion of users only posting positive moments of their lives was something Tim picked out during his interview when asked about the practice of sharing on the News Feed. “You’ll get wedding photos, holiday photos”, Tim claimed, and although such images do not

give you an accurate portrayal of what someone’s life is on a daily basis, it *looks* like it is amazing.

Likewise, Richard suggested that the majority of user content he sees on his News Feed were intended to demonstrate that that user was “living life to the max.” Richard rationalized this situation as such:

If something is really boring or mundane why would you go out your way to upload that? You wouldn’t. So, you just want to highlight that I am having this great time

Comments of these kind were expressed by all of the users interviewed. For example, when asked if he thought people posted content to garner certain responses on the News Feed, David claimed that the type of personal content users choose to share were “calculated towards positives to paint your life in a better view”. For David as a result, sharing on the News Feed can be understood as “people putting up a front to the wider social network” that is “obviously distorted towards the positive”. Once again, David’s use of “obvious” is significant here, as I will explore in more depth below.

When asked to explain why he thought his friend had posted an image of their degree results on Facebook, for example, David was able to illustrate the “norm” – to directly quote his words, of only sharing positive events on the News Feed:

Well, obviously she is proud of it, and she should be proud of it – it’s good that she’s got that, and she is happy to tell everyone. But it’s, she’s just sort of trying to give the

news to everyone and as many people as possible, which is the norm I think in my age group now. As soon as someone finishes Uni' it seems the first thing they do is post their results online, so everyone knows. There's obviously a few people who are a bit quieter because they've probably got a 2:2 or whatever.

David's admission that his friends who graduated with lower degree classifications would be "quieter" than those who passed with higher classifications aptly demonstrates the types of content appropriate to the type of presentation practices I have been examining above. While this not to suggest that feeling "proud" of a university degree is a novel historical development – one generated solely by Facebook at that, David's comment indicates that he sees users of Facebook as concerned with giving the "news" to as "many people as possible" in a way that would not have been possible without the News Feed's amplifying reach.

Encapsulating the ideas expressed by the interviewees above, Amy claims that the News Feed is

not the place for you to talk about hard times, it's just a place for sharing the good times.

Clarifying this point, Amy claims that most people "wouldn't post a photo of themselves doing something that they don't enjoy or when they are feeling down" because that wouldn't

go with the image you are meant to portray of yourself. I mean, a few people do, but I think they are almost seen as oversharing.

It is significant to note that Amy feels that users are "meant" to portray a certain image of themselves as a certain type of successful, happy person. This could suggest a felt pressure for the users interviewed to only post positive content onto their News Feed. When a user contravenes this norm, this boundary of appropriateness, Amy sees it

as “oversharing”. Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical social theory of impression management, as introduced in the previous chapter, is a helpful theoretical lens to understand these responses. Here, the interviewees appeared to be viewing the News Feed as a space where certain performances of self were necessary in order to fulfil the expectations of a specific social context. With this in mind, Jane’s and David’s suggestions that the norm of positivity was an “obvious” feature of News Feed usership appears to show that certain behaviours were recognized as acceptable or not on the News Feed.

The responses above appear to indicate that the social setting of the News Feed required users to display a certain “manner” (Goffman 1959, p. 24) of behaviour based around the practice of only showing the best version of their self for an “audience” (ibid, p. 51) of expecting users. Jane, Helen, David and Tim, for instance, all used the term “audience” to describe the other users who were expected to view their posts on the News Feed. While obviously not a shared social environment governed by the immediately corporeal conventions of body language, vocal tones and physical appearance that Goffman’s theory of stagecraft was based upon, the News Feed nevertheless seemed to be viewed by the users interviewed as a social space, albeit digital in form, governed by certain rules, conventions and expectations. As more evidence for these claims, and developing this idea further, other interviewees also suggested that posting negative content onto the News Feed was abnormal, and some, such as Briony, even labelled such activity as “attention seeking”. This raises a complex issue. While all posts on News Feed were thought by users to be seeking attention in some way, and were, indeed, *expected to be attended to* by other users, only those posts that adhered to the norm of idealized positivity were accepted as desirable forms of Facebook activity. Attracting attention toward the “hard times”, to use a phrase Amy’s, was viewed to be in contravention to the norm of only showing the best version of the self on the News Feed, and were often derided in the interviews as a result. The implications of this environmental conditioning will be

examined more closely in the conclusion of this chapter in terms of power and socio-technical agency. The next section, however, will continue to detail how the norm of the best self entangled with the social metrics afforded on the News Feed.

5.3 Seeking Likes

During the interviews, the News Feed was described as an environment where users could present selective aspects of their lives for other users to view. All the users interviewed suggested that attracting attention toward this presentation, primarily through the content they posted themselves, was a key goal whenever they posted on the News Feed. What is more, this aim was perceived as a motivating factor behind other users' News Feed activity as well. For example, Amy claimed that "to gain more attention is the ultimate goal" of all activity observable on the News Feed. This attention was evaluated through the number of likes, reactions, comments, and shares received on posts. However, the number of likes on posts was considered to be the primary marker of positive attention by the users interviewed.

Aiden explicitly referred to the design of Facebook posts as a potential reason for this shared focus on likes. Pointing to the position of the like button on a post on his News Feed after being asked to describe the like button, Aiden commented that "it's on the left, it's the first thing you see". Richard similarly claimed that his immediate attention was "drawn" to the number of likes on a post after being asked a similar question:

Your eyes instantly get drawn to the fact of how many people have liked that post, you comment underneath. I think the first thing is to say how many people have liked that post.

According to these users, the first thing they noticed about any given post on the News Feed was the number of likes it had received. The

comments above indicate that the like button was considered to have a prominent position on Facebook posts and that users responded to its prominence with their attention accordingly.

Regardless of how frequent a Facebook user the interviewees imagined themselves to be, or how concerned they reported they were with their Facebook presence, when prompted to speak about the significance of likes on their posts all users claimed that they kept track of the likes on their posts, and also imagined how many likes any given post would receive before they posted it on the News Feed. Barney, for instance, who himself was quite critical of the filtered posting practices he observed during his interview, and claimed rarely to post as a result, referred to a status we were discussing on his News Feed and pointed out the like counter beneath it: “you see that has just gone up there from 24 to 25.” The incremental numerical increase of the like counter was something Barney focused on when observing other posts, and Barney went on to claim he would track the number of likes he received on his own posts. “I don’t post very regularly”, Barney stated,

but when I have very occasionally posted something, I do then [track likes], I would then check Facebook more regularly than I would do otherwise, just to see whether a few people had liked it or not.

Even though Barney did not post regularly, and was, indeed, quite critical of social networking in general, his practice of counting likes appeared to be prompted by the simple fact that likes were visually represented in a number that accompanied each post. Barney’s attentive responses to the like counter suggests that likes were attracting users’ attention by virtue of its design – regardless of the personal user judgements of its imagined behavioural influence.

As examined in the previous chapter, to native English-speakers who read from left to right, the like button being positioned to the left of posts mirrors the way the users interviewed would have learnt to approach texts from a young age. The like button being positioned in this way

suggests it can be understood as a visual cue nudge (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 4), whereby the visual positioning of certain features in different environments influence individuals' likelihood of interaction with them. In this case, the prominent position of the like button – taken as a visual cue, increases users' probability of tracking the likes on posts on the News Feed. While I have provided a discussion of the economic function of nudges in the previous chapter, the findings below will explore the ways in which users themselves were reacting to the visual cue nudge of the like button. As users spoke of the prominence and significance of the like button above any other technical feature of the News Feed interface, the analytic concentration on the like button, as opposed to other communication affordances on the News Feed, emerged in accordance with the data gathered from the interviews. This approach relates to the interpretive framework I established in the introduction of this chapter, where I outlined the inductive approach of my analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Richards, 2015). Examining how users interacted with this particular affordance, therefore, will allow me to closely engage with the second research question of this qualitative study: How are users responding to the nudges of the News Feed's design?

To provide an introductory example, Martha, 22, in part-time employment, when asked to discuss her motivations for posting a change of profile picture to her News Feed, and if she expected any attention toward her post, replied:

Obviously the more likes the better, the more popular you are, the more accepted you are. Yeah, I think that is the goal, to get as many likes as possible on your profile picture.

While for Martha the number of likes on a profile picture demonstrates how popular an individual is within their social network, and Martha's apparent desire to be "accepted" could be evaluated by the number of likes it received after it was posted on the News Feed, my aim in this

section is not to simply describe the individual motivations of seeking likes for the users interviewed. Martha's personal incentives are, of course, unique to herself, and, as demonstrated above, any given post at any given moment is imbued with various symbolic significances dependent upon what best version of existence the user is intending to project. The practice of seeking likes will instead be presented as a patterned response to the visual cues of posts on the News Feed. To reiterate, the personal reasons *why* users seek likes will not be held in focus. Rather, it is the activity of *seeking* likes as a common reaction to the design of the News Feed interface that will be brought into sharp relief.

Tim judged the desire for likes as a unifying motivation behind the posting activity observable on his News Feed. When asked about the type of posts that came up during his interview, Tim simply states: "that is why people post, because they want likes". Similarly, many of the other interviewees regularly spoke of this practice of seeking likes as an implicit and accepted part of Facebook activity, constituting a crucial motivating factor of their own and others' posting behaviour. Aiden, for instance, when asked if he thought posts sought positive attention on the News Feed, talked of his friends wanting to "get the likes" on their posts on Facebook as a matter-of-fact, and Briony, when explaining why she thinks people post photos on the News Feed said: "I think it is all for likes." Many interviewees explicitly expressed a desire to accumulate likes on the content that they posted. For instance, some referred to a practice of posting things at certain times of the day in order to reach as large an audience as possible, with their overt intention being to accumulate as many likes as possible on that post.

This practice was revealed in the very first interview held with Paul. When asked if he thought people posted things at certain times of the day to get a certain response, Paul replied

yeah, definitely [...] I know 100% that people post at certain times to gain more likes, I've even heard people say it, I think my sister does it quite a bit.

Originally, the question was intended to see how the users interviewed perceived timing as a concern behind the posting behaviour of others on the News Feed – *‘Do you think people post things at certain times of the day to get a certain response?’* The question I asked made no mention of posting things at certain times of the day *for likes*. What is interesting in the responses of the interviewees who were asked this question in the following interviews is the link they made between posting and liking. While the significance of Paul’s response is limited by the fact there are a limited number of interactive responses possible on posts – liking, commenting, reacting, blocking, etc., Paul’s response can still provide evidence to suggest that the primary reason why the temporality of a post would matter, for these users, would be if it could increase or decrease the potential yield for likes.

After asking Martha the question above in a later interview, she replied in a similar manner, likewise suggesting that her friends posted at certain times of the day to increase the probability of likes. Furthermore, Martha claimed that she had actually engaged in the practice herself. I then asked Martha why she and other people would do so. She replied: “to maximise exposure and maximise the likes”. For Martha, this meant posting at times when “people are going to be on their phones [...] at like eight pm on a Thursday when people aren’t doing much else”. Aiden likewise claimed that posting at times when “most people” would be on Facebook is a good way to ensure that post would “get more likes”. David referred to this optimum time to post as “peak time”, while Paul called it “prime time”. The users interviewed suggested various times of the day that could be considered as “peak time” for posting, and times that were not so suitable.

Furthermore, generating likes was seen as a way to increase visibility on the News Feed. Paul, for example, when asked the same question – if he thought that *‘people post things at certain times of the day to get a certain response’*, suggested that,

if you post something in the morning, people go to work, go to Uni, go to school, and often it won't generate enough likes, and the more likes you generate the longer it stays [on the News Feed]. So, if you don't generate likes quickly it will fizzle out a little bit [...] like if you post something at midnight no one is going to see it.

In a similar vein, when asked the same question, Jane recognized that

you are probably not going to get many likes if you update your profile picture at four o'clock in the morning compared if you do it four o'clock in the afternoon.

Even though "peak time" for each particular user varied, its actual time and duration does not matter in this analysis. What is important to note is that reaching as large an audience as possible at any given moment when posting was a key concern for the users interviewed. Much in the same way that the timing of sponsored posts on the News Feed is a crucial factor for marketers and advertisers hoping to reach as much as their intended audience as possible, users posting at certain times of the day sought to, in the words of Martha, "maximise exposure and maximise the likes".

On reflection, the specific question that gleaned these responses from the interviews is leading in the sense that it directs the attention of the interviewee to particular aspects of News Feed usership, which may not have come up if the interviewee had not been asked the question at the time. Thus, it could be the case that the responses to this line of questioning, which suggest that generating likes on the content they had posted was an aim for some of the users interviewed, could have been prompted from the participants in an artificial manner, as opposed to emerging from within. However, other insights gleaned from the interviews, which emerged in more conversational contexts, can also reveal another practice demonstrable of this aim, which strengthens its inclusion in this analysis. This practice was termed, in the words of Paul, the "culture" of "like for likes". This was the idea of reciprocal

liking, and referred to the process whereby users liked their friends' content with the expectation that the favour would be returned in the future. When asked about how the profile picture could be considered in terms of success (relating to the original research questions of the interviews), Jane focused on likes and suggested that the practice of reciprocal liking created a dual sense of expectation and obligation for Jane:

if I uploaded a new profile picture I know I'd have Sally and Joe and Chris and Hannah and Sophie³ all like it straight away because it's like: *Look she's uploaded a profile picture I have to like it!*

Jane said that liking your friend's profile picture change is the "done thing" and is something she expects from certain friends herself. For Jane to describe this practice of like-for-likes as the "done thing", without any real explanation as to *why* such a process exists, indicates that this practice is taken for granted as an accepted habit of her and her friends' usership, which could also suggest that liking content on the News Feed has also become an integrated element of their friendship in general.

When asked about what type of posts receive likes on the News Feed, Amy also described a sense of obligation in operation, with liking understood as something users would "always" have to do on their friends' posts:

I think some people like photos of their friends, or their posts, and they'll always like them [...] because they sort of feel like they have an obligation to do that.

In these instances, liking the content of Facebook friends was seen as a core element of the users' interviewed Facebook friendships. That this process was felt to be reciprocal by the users interviewed can also reveal that liking other users' content could be considered as a way to

³ These names have been pseudonymized

ensure your own posts will be liked by those friends in the future. Paul describes this rationale as such: “if you like theirs [other users’ content] they’ll probably like more of your stuff back”. Moreover, for the users interviewed above, liking other users’ content, and expecting likes in return, was spoken about as a routine activity.

When asked to explain the link between likes and positive attention on the News Feed, Paul also recalled instances where his friends had explicitly asked him to like their content on Facebook:

they’ve said: “*I’ve just updated my profile picture can you give it a like?*” So obviously to them, they are wanting as many likes as possible.

Richard told of a similar experience when asked to expand his description of his mother’s engagement with the News Feed. “My mum will say: Did you see what I posted?” Richard claimed, and that after his usual response that he had not seen her post, Richard recalled that his mum would say, “*make sure you go on it and look at it and [...] like it*”. The like button, in these instances, does not simply provide affirmation of personal appreciation or support. If it did, then it would have been enough for Paul and Richard to do so verbally: Paul could’ve told his friend that he did, indeed, ‘like’ their profile picture face-to-face, and Richard could equally have done so for his mother. Instead, the clamour for likes revealed during the interviews contrasts with how Facebook publicly wishes for the like button to be used and understood as a low-cost marker of support, as outlined in the previous chapter. While some users did report some instances where likes were intended to foster social bonds, as Amy’s comments toward the start of the findings suggest, there was little suggestion that likes stood in for comments, or, indeed, that a like from a friend contributed to feelings of well-being for the users interviewed.

As opposed to liking being understood as a form of social grooming that helped ameliorate personal and others’ well-being, the practices of temporal posting, reciprocal liking and asking for likes indicate that

users were liking and seeking likes simply in order to increase the numbers that accompany their Facebook posts. Here, the affordance of liking can be seen to have prompted users to respond to its quantification of positive attention in a manner far removed from how Facebook initially (albeit publicly) intended for the feature to be used. Likes, it would seem, primarily exist for the users interviewed to be numerically increased and publicly presented, as opposed to representing low-cost signals of support from particular members of each users' social network. A like was a like for the users interviewed, no matter its provenance – all that counted was its public visibility. Understood as part of the norm of only showing the best version of the self on the News Feed, that this chapter has characterized as a patterned response to the affordances of its user-interface, the number of likes on posts can be said to function as the marker through which the norms of appropriate user posting are maintained. That is, each users' filtered presentation of self appears to be ranked by other users in the form of likes. Furthermore, as the next section will show, the number of likes received on posts produced different affective responses for the users interviewed according to personalized figures of what constituted 'enough' likes. I will argue that this affective response to the amount of likes on posts can reveal the way that personal measurement functions as the internalized means through which users establish the efficacy of their managed presentation of self. As such, the affective responses to likes will be presented as tangible effects, and binding ties, of the News Feed's social conventions identified by the users during the interviews.

5.4 Measurement and affect

The small exchange below is illustrative of the types of responses users gave when asked about the number of likes on any given post. Here, I

asked Martha about a new profile picture that her friend had posted on the News Feed:

Interviewer: How many likes has that got?

Martha: It's only got 10 likes, so not that many.

Interviewer: Is that "not that many"?

Martha: No, not in my book

When I then asked Martha what she considered to be an appropriate number of likes to receive "in her book" she replied:

I see 50 is alright, 100 is a lot, over that is quite a lot. But under 50 it's kind of like, *hmmm*.

I asked Martha to explain the feelings she had expressed toward these particular numbers. Martha gave the example below:

So, I posted a profile picture from my graduation, and it got like, I don't know, 170 likes. And to be honest, I was like, *yeah, that's good!* [...] It is a weird sort of validation, which I don't think is particularly healthy at all, but that it is kind of how it feels. So, I guess, if I were to post a profile picture and get under 50 likes, rightly or wrongly I would feel quite sad about it.

Martha's responses indicate that likes can, indeed, be recognized as something that she "feels". As this section will demonstrate, the measurement of likes on a post appeared to generate affective responses within all the users interviewed, despite users, like Martha, often appearing to be critical of the negative emotional impact counting likes had on their moods.

Martha describing her emotional response to the number of likes on her posts as "weird" suggests she also felt a strangeness toward her own feelings. However, Martha's sense of "validation" through likes was similarly an idea expressed by Amy when she was asked why she thought people post photos on the News Feed:

I think the goal is to get likes and for other people to comment on it, and it validates them posting that photo.

When later asked if the “goal” of likes could be understood as a success when they are gained on posts (in a question that was directly related to the original research aims of the interviews), Amy replied:

people think if they don’t get as many likes according to what they think is enough, then, yeah, that’s probably not seen not a successful post. Whereas if a post gets a lot of attention, likes and comments, or shares, then, yeah, that will be seen as a successful post.

Amy’s admission that success was “probably” to do with likes indicates that she perhaps has not spent much thought on classifying posts in terms of success, or perhaps that she does not want to speak for others on this matter. As such, these types of responses demonstrate the way that the original framing of the questions in terms of competition, success and failure produced responses from the interviewees that led to different avenues of interpretation to become more relevant for discussion. Namely, as I will explore in more detail in this chapter’s conclusion, the idea of scrolling and interacting with the News Feed as *habit* became the primary theme that could group together the various findings of the interviews.

For example, Martha was similarly unsure at first in the use of the term “success” to frame posts. When asked if she ever viewed her posts as “successes”, Martha replied

Sort of, I guess you kind of do, but I am trying think about it now, what even is a success? A “successful post” is a bit of a weird concept, intuitively it does make sense, but it’s hard to explain how and why it makes sense.

Martha’s intuitive response that feelings of success makes sense to her in relation to her posts, yet her uncertainty as to “how” and “why” it does so indicate that perhaps the modes of valuation she attributed to her

liking scores were not often consciously thought through. Likewise, although Amy's response did not demonstrate a definitive understanding of the News Feed in terms of success and failure, the easy manner with which she associates likes and a *feeling* of accomplishment suggests that the process of quantitative accumulation of interactions on posts somehow instinctively demarcates achievement.

This association between success and its numerical representation is consonant with the work of media theorist David Beer (2016), who argues that the metrification of usership on social media sites, while primarily linked to processes of datafication, operates as a form of stabilizing "metric power" (Beer, 2016) – the collective governance of appropriate and, crucially, *repetitious* user behaviours on social media sites through the affordances of quantifiable social analytics. The notion that the number of likes on posts could install an ethic of habitual behaviour in users was evidenced during the interviews. Barney, for instance, when also asked if you could consider Facebook posts as a measure of success, replied:

Yeah, I think you can. I'd say you can do it on an individual basis. You can post something, and you can then measure how many likes [...] or whatever you get, versus what you might have posted last week.

In this instance, the question did not ask if *likes* could be considered a measure of success and did not frame success as relative to each user. Barney's response highlighted the "individual" success of posts in relation to previous posts by the same user, making no mention of an external comparison of success with the posts of other Facebook users.

Likewise, Sarah, when asked if the notion of a successful post was relevant to her perception of the News Feed, again focused on the personal aspect of success as a relative concept unique to each particular user:

Yeah, I think it is [relevant], I definitely think it is. Well I know if I've posted a photo and only two people have liked it, I'm like *oh god maybe it's an awful photo [...]* I know that I have posted videos in the past that I maybe thought were funny, and then like one person will like it, and I'm like *oh no nobody thinks it funny!* You are just like, *oh no!* I guess you do self-measure, I mean I definitely self-measure, god it's really bad isn't it.

Barney's comparison of his previous post performances, coupled with Sarah's thought that a post with only two likes is a cause for consternation, suggests that the users interviewed were aware of their liking scores over time. Furthermore, this awareness produced a numerical threshold that each post needed to reach in order not to be considered a cause for disappointment and other associated negative emotions. As has been explored above, these thresholds varied from user to user, existing as personal scores determined through experience.

The extract from Amy's interview below suggests that the quantification of interactions on posts produced conflicting emotional responses in users:

Interviewer: Can you talk about how it feels if your post receives a lot of attention on Facebook and on the News Feed?

Amy: Yeah it does give you a confidence boost, it makes you feel validated and like people want to interact with you, like you do have people who are interested in what you are doing.

Interviewer: Conversely, what does it feel like for a post to not get a lot of attention?

Amy: Yeah, probably the direct opposite. Maybe you feel like it's not giving out the image you intended, or people

aren't interested in what you are doing, that kind of stuff.

Yeah, it doesn't make you feel good.

In concurrence with this sentiment, Sarah suggested that the emotional trigger of receiving likes "works both ways". While the posts that received her distinct notion of "enough" likes produced positive feelings in Sarah, not gaining enough likes on posts made her "feel really bad" herself.

Moreover, Richard suggests that the failure to generate likes on posts could lead someone to question their behaviour on Facebook:

If somebody didn't get that many likes for that post they could potentially feel a bit negative, "*Why have I gone out my way to upload that? Are people offended by what I have uploaded?*" It can actually create some people thinking "*What have I done?*"

These internal deliberations and personal scales are generated and validated by the activity of other Facebook users. The likes necessary to produce positive emotional states in the users interviewed requires other users to approve of their Facebook behaviour, as evidenced by the quantification of interaction on posts. While the revelation that users like to be liked may appear a banal observation, these type of interview responses to do with the affective feeling of likes can show with more clarity how habitual practices of News Feed usership operate on an emotional level. In relation to the question of how user practices on Facebook are formed through the coming together of user and particular user-interfaces (which constitutes a key research question of this thesis), the interview data can show how this group of users were responding to the like button's prominent position and metrification in the design of posts on the News Feed to form habitual patterns of use.

Moreover, this accounting of interaction was recognized by Briony as an influential process, who claimed that keeping track of the amount of likes on posts "does get into your head" when asked to expand on a notion of personal measurement she raised in her interview. While

Briony's admission could be interpreted as an individual "psychological" response, perhaps indicating a level of sensitivity to the social metrics of the News Feed that other users may not have felt, this type of explanatory framework will not help answer the research questions of this thesis. Firstly, the interview data did not employ any psychological profiling as a precursor to explain and classify the individual responses of the interviewees. This relates to a key aim of this thesis which investigates how users are produced on Facebook without recourse to rely on a pre-existing model of 'the user' that had been formed through a particular classificatory system. Such an approach would install a figure of the Facebook user as motivated by essential, pre-existing psychological drives, thereby linking the "cause" of each user's News Feed habits to the individual workings of each user's internal psyche.

As explored in more depth in Chapter III of this thesis, such thinking would relay a problematic psychological discourse that individuates the relationship between technological user-interfaces and the resulting modalities of usership that are formed through them. This serves to personalize the motivations of habitual usership, instead of exploring how these habits are formed through the coming together of user and an interface in terms of generative power – which also constitutes a key theoretical aim of this thesis. Secondly, Briony's response to the metrification of interaction on the News Feed can be said to exist as part of a pattern of usership that the interview data can concretely reveal. All users thought about and felt their likes in such a way that kept them engaged with the News Feed on a habitual basis.

Understanding the individual reasons why is not important here. Instead, the interview data can show how individual motivations, whatever their quality, ultimately resulted in the formation of shared patterns of repetitious News Feed usership for all of the users interviewed. As a result, and as will be developed in more depth in the following final chapter, the habits of use formed through interaction with the News Feed can be understood as the tangible mechanisms through which users can be said to be entwined within a technology of power

that produces certain behavioural outcomes as more possible than others on Facebook.

Comments made by Aiden can develop this notion. When asked to describe how he measured the success of his posts on the News Feed, Aiden referred to the liking scores of his posts. For Aiden, the success of his post was measured by the likes on posts “just going up”. He went on to explain that

maybe if you’ve got five likes on a video or status or whatever, and the next one gets ten likes, with a few comments or whatever, and is generally going up, then it’s like *ah yeah, it’s kind of successful!* But you kind of don’t want to be going from like a hundred likes to twenty likes to ten likes because it feels like you’re losing friends.

Aiden’s comment introduces another key finding that emerged from the interviews: the desire for “more” likes, while relative, was fixed on an ever-growing trajectory. The users interviewed could only hope to match or exceed their imagined numerical threshold, and never fall below it. However, although users were self-comparing their liking scores over time, they did not consider the previous successes that grounded this comparison as continual sources of validation. The ever-present potential for “more” likes on their posts kept the users interviewed in a state of expectation, focused on their continual accrual of likes on present posts, and turned toward the potential performance of future posts. This phenomenon has been explored elsewhere in the work of Nancy Baym (2018), who suggests the term “relational labour” to describe the affective work of counting interactions on social media platforms by their users. Recalling the notion that technologies of power are constituted in environments that effect predictable behaviours over others within them, the interviewees’ propensity to seek likes through their posting activity can be viewed as a response to the designed prominence of the like button on posts that appear on the News Feed.

As will be evidenced in the data presented below, this worked to keep users fixed on certain repetitious pathways of usership as a result.

Jane, talking about what it feels like for her to receive a like on her posts, touches upon the affective dimension of likes, as well as pointing toward the ephemeral and forward-facing nature of like accumulation as a continual process:

Each individual like I feel like it's like: *Oh, ok*. But then when you've got quite a few it's like: *Oh yeah! I'm great! Well done me*. It's quite reassuring, and especially if it's a picture it gives you a boost in confidence. But it doesn't last very long. I'm not still like: *Oh well done me for getting those likes on that picture that time two weeks ago*. But just in that moment it's a bit exciting.

Similarly, David, when asked about the idea of likes as a measurement of appreciation, suggested that posts receiving likes can be a source of comfort, yet that this comfort is transitory in its nature. David says that if he posts something and

you get a lot of comments and a lot of likes, then it's an easy quick-fix if you are feeling down.

Likes, for David, can demonstrate that someone "appreciates you". However, this feeling of appreciation is not long-lasting. David claims that he "may well forget who's liked that [post] in a few weeks".

Sarah, in response to a question about posts angled toward receiving attention on the News Feed, suggested that likes on her posts gave her a positive boost in mood. However, Sarah claimed this boost was fleeting, as opposed to constituting a "sustainable" source of self-worth over time. Although acknowledging this, Sarah revealed that she often posted content that she knew would gain likes simply to "feel good":

[It's] a way of getting quick, self-gratification isn't it? Like, it's really a quick way of feeling good about yourself. But

it's not sustainable is it? Because when you don't get that again it's like: *Oh, I'll post another photo to get it...*

The quotes above indicate that receiving likes on posts can lead to users “feeling good” with themselves and that likes were often viewed as a sign of endorsement from their Facebook friends. However, this feeling of ‘goodness’ is not carried through from post to post. It would appear that previous liking scores instead act as a standard by which users can compare their most recent post performance against. What is more, seeking the positive feelings that receiving likes garnered for Sarah could be said to function as a system of reward that promotes certain types of behaviour as opposed to others. The supposed affective reward of gaining likes expressed during the interviews, coupled with the assumed rejection of not receiving interactions on posts, appear to set certain habits of Facebook usership in motion for the users interviewed. This finding is consonant with the thought of Foucault and Dewey, who both suggest that habit formation is founded upon culturally embedded systems of reward and punishment, and is able to shed light on how certain pathways of activity on Facebook become ‘normal’ for users through repeated engagement with user-interfaces. Developing this idea, the interviews can further reveal how the technical apparatus of the like button is deeply enmeshed in the formation of these norms, further revealing how social media habits are formed and maintained through “organizations” (Dewey, 1930, p. 26) of human and nonhuman actants in a co-dependent arrangement.

The design of the Ranking algorithm, as outlined in the previous chapter, prioritizes post recency as one of its key predictors of “relevance”. As such, posts do not linger long on the News Feed. The stream of posts, updates and user-activity gives the News Feed an impression of a flowing immediacy. This swift temporal flow means that ‘successful’ posts, with high levels of interactions, are quickly replaced by fresh content and activity. Here, the specific design of the News Feed can be seen to contribute to users feeling as if the successes of previous posts will soon be forgotten by the imagined-to-be watching

eyes of their social network. Although Facebook claims its prioritization of “recency” intends to provide users with a more “meaningful” (Mosseri, 2018) News Feed experience, the users interviewed made no gestures toward the discourse of ideal usership upon which this claim is based. Here, once again, Facebook’s attempt to define the boundaries of ideal usership in its PR materials does not match up to the actual understanding and usage of the News Feed in the day-to-day lives of the users interviewed. Rather, as has been revealed by the users interviewed so far, the flow of liking on the News Feed is better considered in terms of measured affect, as opposed to the vague concept of “meaningful interactions” (Mosseri, 2018) as expressed by Facebook itself.

The individuals interviewed often questioned the reasons for their affective response to their posts. For example, Briony recognizes that the like button was, indeed, “just a button”. However, this did not stop the emotional feelings that the like counter triggered in users, and, moreover, did not stop them engaging with the practice of liking and measuring their social analytics themselves. For instance, although Briony expressed concern for friends who became too focused on likes, Briony accepted she engaged with such habits herself. Briony said:

You know, I am saying all this like I am better than it, like I am above it, but I like things [...] I do it.

David similarly suggested that the perceived focus on likes “obviously, is silly”, yet this view did not stop him participating in the practice of counting likes on the News Feed:

I don’t like to think I am hooked on it, but I definitely am.

Finally, Sarah questioned her own emotional responses to the number of likes on her posts, repeatedly saying:

I don’t know why that matters, I don’t know why that matters.

However, as I summarise the findings of these interviews in the conclusion this chapter, *why* liking matters to the users interviewed is irrelevant – the crucial thing to note is that it simply *does*. Accordingly, I will argue that this feeling is a key factor in the development and conservation of repetitious user-interaction on the News Feed, and, as such, constitutes a tangible mechanism through which certain habitual norms of behaviour are made more likely on Facebook, as opposed to others.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings above demonstrate that the users interviewed had developed responses to the affordances of the News Feed which operated on the level of habit. While some of these habitual responses aligned with Facebook's material discursive construct of ideal use, other practices emerged that ran in contravention to such ideals. For example, although many of the users interviewed employed a lexicon of *connection* to describe the News Feed's utility for the maintenance of their relationships on the platform, which would indicate that users were engaging with the interface correctly according to Facebook's leaders and designers, the interviews also revealed shared practices that were deemed appropriate to the *environment of the News Feed* if not to the tenets of ideal active use explicated in this thesis so far. For instance, the interviewees suggested that a norm of only showing positive versions of the self was in operation on the News Feed and that this norm was evaluated by the quantification of likes that accompany each post. Rather than standing in for a comment, as was originally said to be its intention by its designers, the like button is better viewed as part of an "organization" (Dewey, 1930, p. 26) of human and nonhuman elements that conditions the possibility of normal activity on the News Feed in an active manner. Developing Goffman's (1959) thought explored earlier on in this chapter, the norm of only showing positive

aspects of one's existence on the News Feed was an expectation of the News Feed, and was shown to limit what each user did and did not post on the interface as a result. While pointing out that behavioural norms exist on the News Feed is perhaps stating the obvious once situated within Goffman's historical lineage of sociological study, the interviews do offer fresh insights into *how* these norms actually operate within social media environments through the coming together of human users and specific technical affordances such as the like button.

The original aims of the interviews sought to explore the ways in which users responded to the algorithmic ranking of content on the News Feed, yet as the interviews progressed it became clear that users were not thinking about the News Feed in these terms. The respective positions that posts appeared on the News Feed did not appear to represent success or failure for the users interviewed. As will be explored in more depth in the following conclusion of this thesis, these findings supplement and develop the valuable work of Taina Bucher (2016), who argues that "getting on top" on the News Feed operates as an aspirational norm inculcated in users through the competitive ranking of content on the interface. What was more prevalent in the interview data explored above, however, was the way that likes, comments and shares indicated to users how their posts were being received by others in their social network. The visual quantification of likes, for example, was a far more obvious marker of success for users than that posts' position on the News Feed. This could be because of the visual enumeration of the like counter, its prominent place on the design of posts, and, as explained above, its channelling of historic modalities of "metric power" (Beer, 2016) that install numbers as an objective measure of achievement. Taking the News Feed as an environment of nudges, the designed prominence of the like button drew the attention of users toward it, thereby prompting increased interaction with this particular technical feature. Once understood as an "actant" (Latour, 1994, p. 35), as an entity that does things (Latour, 2008), the like button can be taken seriously as part of a network of

elements that produce certain behaviours as more likely than others upon the News Feed.

The findings of these interviews indicate that the inculcation of habitual modes of interaction on the News Feed could mark the tangible channels of normalizing power as they flow through, and produce, Facebook's users as *users* of the platform. Whereas the work of thinkers like Bucher (2016) and Grosser (2015) show the ways that the metrification of interaction on the News Feed produces networks of mutually reciprocated user-governance – where the norms of usership are enforced by the watching eyes of each member of the social network, the findings of the interviews above can contribute to this field by demonstrating how these norms are understood, felt and actually acted upon by users at their moment of articulation. Here, we can see how repetitious interactions with the News Feed produces users predisposed to actively interact with the interface, thereby keeping open the essential flows of value extraction necessary for Facebook's functioning as a data-platform. The interview data above, thus, contributes to our understanding of how processes of datafication flow through the micro-actions of users localised to particular user interfaces on Facebook.

Rather than suggest reasons for the norms of News Feed usership identified during the interviews, this chapter has instead demonstrated *how* the habitual behaviours that can be identified on the News Feed exist as negotiated (Nagy & Neff, 2015) relations between users, the stated intentions of the designers and the technical affordances of the interface itself. From this standpoint, as opposed to being studied as an isolated object wielded by users for their own particular ends, which would serve to endorse a reductive tool-view of technology this thesis has challenged throughout, the like button is better viewed as an "actant" that helps forms and uphold the norm of only showing the best version of the self on the News Feed, thus highlighting the various actors, human and nonhuman, necessary for their continuation.

However, it is important to note that the interview technique advanced in this chapter is limited insofar as it only offers a snapshot of user habit at a particular moment in time, and also only studies a narrow section of people that can't be taken to be representative of the population of Facebook users as a whole. More longitudinal modes of qualitative analysis, taking the form of user-diaries, questionnaires and repeated interviews for example, could track how user norms develop and shift over time, and expanding the sample to a much larger range, for instance, could address the issues surrounding the generalizability of the findings. This would allow for a deeper understanding of how repetitious engagement social media user-interfaces – designed for a distinct economic purpose, stabilize, or not, profitable socio-technical relations between users and different social media platforms. Not only this, the analytical restriction to the News Feed further limits the scope of the findings of this thesis. Facebook is comprised of many different services, including its profiling tool, messenger application and video hosting site to name but a few. It remains to be seen how modes of ideal usage are built into these technical features and, moreover, what potentials and limitations such constructions would reveal.

Conclusion

This thesis has revealed the means through which Facebook suggests a framework of healthy usership for its users to adopt on the platform. I have examined the specific discursive contingencies through which Facebook constructs its models of ideal healthy usership, explored the ways in which this discourse is linked to the News Feed and have assessed the extent to which actual users inculcate these discourses through their habitual interaction with the News Feed's user-interface. In doing so, this thesis has been able to subject Facebook's self-declaration of the platform's apparent 'natural' necessity to productive critique. I have argued throughout that Facebook usership is a political relation insofar as users become entwined with networks of nudges, discourses of neoliberalization and modalities of platform capitalism through their everyday habitual engagement with the platform. This conclusion will summarize the main findings of this thesis, consolidate its arguments, contributions and limitations within the contemporary academic terrain, and consider the ways that Facebook users may resist the personal political effects their usership of the site generates.

The literature review established the research questions of this thesis by sketching out the limitations of current scholarship of Facebook's affordances. I argued that much of the existing literature often presented Facebook usership as an instrumental activity, with users simply adhering to a set of pre-established motivations in their use of the platform. I demonstrated how this activity was either characterised as a mirroring or transmutation of imagined-to-be existing human social relations, and argued that such framings of Facebook usership, despite their ostensible differences, similarly relayed a reductive tool-view of technology. I presented other studies that sought to address these limitations by investigating Facebook usership as part of a socio-technical apparatus that co-produced both user and platform in a generative process, revealing how such a task was often related to the

discussion of contemporary structures of platform capitalism. However, moving beyond the recognition that Facebook exists as part of exploitative capitalist relations (Fuchs, 2015), I showed how a Foucauldian rubric of power (Foucault, 1995, 2015) has been put to use to explore the “force-relations” (Bucher, 2017, p. 41) generated by the channelling of user activity on the platform for Facebook’s economic gain. While this direction of human behaviour according to capitalist interests has been linked to a Foucauldian understanding of discipline, specifically related to discourses of neoliberal enterprise and competition (Hearn 2010, 2008), the literature review ultimately established the need to more exactly study in what ways disciplinary relations of force actually *produce* Facebook’s users on the platform, further opening up questions surrounding how the norms necessary for the expression of disciplinary power on Facebook are constructed, relayed and actually effected.

In Chapter II, I outlined how Akrich’s (1992) notion of the socio-technical script could be re-purposed to grant this thesis a conceptual focus able to draw attention toward these issues. This re-purposing was necessary in order to move beyond the largely descriptive and apolitical accounts of technology that purer ANT type script analysis could ordinarily entail (Whittle & Spicer, 2008; Winner, 1993). Through the work of critical media theorists such as Stanfill (2015) and Fuller and Goffey (2012), I argued that processes of inscription (Latour, 1994), whereby technologies are implicitly imbued with ideal users, purposes and contexts of use through their design, could be understood as normative relations insofar as such processes represent a delimitation, both discursively and materially, of appropriate human activity in certain situations. I argued that the inculcation of habit should be considered as the actual means through which such norms of usership are targeted, incorporated and enacted by users of scripted technologies. I explored the thought of John Dewey (1930) and Foucault (1995, 2015) to construct a relational concept of habit that was able situate agency in the socio-technical “organizations” (Dewey, 1930, p.26) that exist

between human and nonhuman actors in the world, thereby side-stepping conceptually limited subject/object distinctions found in many contemporary accounts of Facebook usership today.

More than this, however, Chapter II argued that the inculcation of habit on Facebook offered a means to pinpoint how disciplinary power is expressed on Facebook, thus allowing a direct engagement with the research questions established in the literature review. Habit was positioned as the actual mechanism through which Facebook users *become* users of the platform – and therefore economically valuable, indicating a generative process related to the ‘making’ of productive, disciplined human subjects in modern institutional environments (Foucault, 1995). In shaping the pathways of appropriate activity on the platform through the targeting of ideal user habits, and in linking this targeting to Facebook’s function as a data-platform, I proposed that this thesis could usefully treat Facebook as a technology of power (Hoy, 1986) – understood as the discursive and material arrangement of environments that make particular forms of human activity more likely than others within them, according to particular strategic goals.

To explore how Facebook constructs the ground for so-called ‘normal’ use of its services, Chapter III empirically analysed the discursive scripting of Facebook’s ideal user, demonstrating how Facebook’s model of “healthy” usership essentially rests upon contingent quasi-psychological research to recommend a eudaimonic construct of well-being. Specifically, certain types of ‘active’ communication on the platform – direct messaging of close ties, updating statuses and liking photos for instance, are characterised by Facebook as *relationship maintenance* practices that fulfil the biological ‘need’ for human social belonging and an economically conceived process of accruing social capital. The combination of evolutionary and economic discourses employed by Facebook attempts to naturalize the types of activity that its technological systems can afford. Facebook presents itself as tool through which human users can flourish as humans in their (supposedly) biologically determined and (ideally) rationally motivated

social networking activity. I found that the socio-technical scripting of Facebook configures the user as a being who would ‘naturally’ seek to utilize the communication tools of Facebook for their own ends. Consequently, the social networking habits of users can be explained by Facebook as inevitable manifestations of an imagined human need to form social bonds, as opposed to being characterised as the result of economically motivated processes of social media datafication.

However, while the type of user sociality on Facebook was characterised by Facebook as an expression of essential human being, and this serves to potentially obscure and inhibit the grounds of critique of its services, this chapter demonstrated how Facebook’s responsibilization of users in terms of their well-being can be closely related to contemporary operations of neoliberalization. This consequently led to the consideration of Facebook’s construction of ideal users as a politicised process. Despite Facebook’s repeated claim that its services lead to beneficial user impacts once used in the *right way*, which, in turn, presents the platform as a neutral object, this chapter established how the scripting of Facebook as a tool of “active” communication, in fact, simultaneously configures users as neoliberal subjects via the commensuration of their online activity in terms of competitive self-interest. In this way, I argued that Facebook’s recommendation of good habits in contrast to bad habits, based upon an implicit projection of what the human user *is*, and normatively *ought to be*, grants another perspective on our understanding of Facebook as a disciplinary apparatus. Recalling the thought of Foucault, the inculcation of habit is “what links one to an order of things, to an order of time and to a political order” (ibid), and, through this process, constitutes the activity that “‘makes’ individuals” (Foucault 1995, p. 112) of a certain type in different environments. Facebook’s recommended modes of ideal usership, therefore, can be presented as an attempt to produce norms of user behaviour that stabilize user practices along certain pathways amenable to Facebook’s continued profit as a data-platform (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017). In this way, Chapter III argued that

user habits function as both the target and means for Facebook to exist as a disciplinary force within contemporary relations of platform capitalism.

Chapter IV developed this line of inquiry to show how Facebook presents the News Feed as designed according to the tenets of ideal “active” usership. This chapter outlined the ways that the News Feed is portrayed as being tasked with “bringing people closer together” (Mosseri, 2018), connecting “friends and family” (ibid), being “informative” (Mosseri, 2016), and providing a space of “lively and expressive conversations” (Nguyen & Freitas, 2017). While Chapter III revealed how Facebook discursively constructs particular modes of active communications as ‘good’ for users’ health and well-being, Chapter IV went on to demonstrate the way that this discourse is employed to explicate and justify the material design and communication affordances of the News Feed’s user-interface. I revealed how the lives of users (as depicted on Facebook) were constructed as the “headlines” (Sanghvi, 2006) of the News Feed and investigated the ways that users are expected to actively engage with these stories on a regular basis for the sake of their own social well-being. While the public positioning of the News Feed as a space for healthy human sociality undoubtedly forms part of Facebook’s broader PR response to recent socio-political scandals – chiefly pertaining to the perceived threats to user mental health and democratic procedures allegedly posed by Facebook usage, Chapter IV primarily characterised the News Feed as an environment of nudges (Thaler & Sunstein, 2018) that prompts modes of active communication through its design.

In setting the ideal parameters of user choice in terms of health, without necessarily determining that these choices *must* be followed on the platform, the News Feed was characterised as a “choice architecture” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) – an arrangement of human choice in such a way that makes more likely certain decisions over others through design. Chapter III demonstrated how users of Facebook were enjoined to autonomously engage with Facebook *in the right way* for the sake of

their own well-being, and were said to be rationally, and naturally, inclined to do so. However, a major finding of Chapter IV pointed to the ways that Facebook users were discursively and technically nudged toward these 'healthy' behaviours while on the platform. The algorithmic make-up of Ranking, for example, that orders posts upon the basis of likely interaction, the accessible design of communication features such as the like, comment and share buttons, and the design decisions to make the news information feature on posts as dynamic, and thus engaging, as possible, are all presented by Facebook as features that prompt user engagement with the News Feed in alignment with its discourses of ideal healthy use. These insights were achieved through an analysis of Facebook's design blogs, information videos and public relations materials concerning the News Feed.

I argued that these design features actually undermined the vision of the 'free' Facebook user found in Facebook's discourse of ideal use, thereby revealing the internal inconsistencies within Facebook's discursive construct of 'healthy' autonomous usage. More than this, however, I related Facebook's attempt to shape user behaviour on the platform to Western modalities of neoliberal governance through conduct and habit. I argued that Facebook's nudge choice architecture is based upon the recognition that users may not always act to ameliorate their well-being on the platform, and, therefore, may actually negate their supposedly 'natural' self-interest through their social networking activity. When we recall that a core process of neoliberalization is the construction of competitive subjects capable of acting in terms of self-interest in a world conceived as a market, Facebook's prompting of users to *choose what is best for them* on the platform in terms of their own well-being relays a neoliberal logic – specifically in the way it aligns allegedly beneficial behaviour change with market-based decision making tactics.

When combined, the findings of Chapter III and IV show that Facebook's discourse and designs of ideal 'active' usership are political in two distinct senses. Firstly, in enjoining its users to *live well* on the

platform through their choice of activity on the platform, Facebook individualizes user behaviour as the sole cause of, and solution to, any well-being issues they may face online. I argued that this mobilizes neoliberal discourses of self-interested responsabilization. However, the supposed empowerment of users to choose healthy behaviours on the platform is undermined by the nudges of the News Feed, which can be shown to structure user decision-making in a way that is biased toward the outcomes of active engagement. This conveys a core dilemma of neoliberal governance. Specifically, the way that users are nudged to act in a supposedly 'rational' manner on Facebook discloses a distrust in their ability to do so on their own accord. While repeatedly presented to be a natural extension of human sociality, the nudges of the News Feed reveal that the framework of self-interested social networking activity erected in Facebook's discourse of ideal use concomitantly requires careful construction. In this way, the forms of 'active' repetitious communication outlined throughout this thesis may not be quite as 'natural', or, indeed, inevitable as Facebook would wish us to believe.

Secondly, when we recognize that these designs of 'active' usership function to produce the profitable data-traces necessary to fulfill Facebook's current business model of data-driven targeted advertising, Facebook's attempts to shape user behavior in terms of health ought to be treated with suspicion. Instead of taking Facebook's nudges as authentic efforts to improve well-being on the platform, we should view Facebook's discursive designs of ideal usership as part of a political technology of power that actually works to produce disciplined and economically valuable users. This troubles the conceptualization of Facebook as neutral arbiter of human communication found in many of the studies surveyed in the literature review, simultaneously developing our collective understanding of the ways Facebook is relationally involved in the generation of the types of activity enacted on the platform, while also revealing the inherent politics of this activity beyond

their cumulative effects in contemporary processes of (anti)democratization.

In order to assess the extent to which actual users of Facebook respond to the socio-technical scripting of ideal use on the News Feed, Chapter V discussed the findings of 12 in-depth interviews with users of the News Feed, highlighting how users understand and present their habitual engagement with user-interface. Although these interviews did show that the users interviewed had adopted some elements of Facebook's discourse of *connection* and *relationship maintenance* to explain their habitual usership of the News Feed, the most significant findings revealed that patterned modes of user activity coalesced around other norms that diverged from Facebook's attempted inculcation of ideal 'active' usership. Specifically, for the users interviewed, appropriate usership of the News Feed constituted in only showing the best version of the self on the News Feed through their posting decisions, interactions and comments. These idealized presentations of self were evaluated in the form of likes and all participants stated that their desire to increase their social metrics on the News Feed often led to diverse affective responses. The habitual practices of News Feed usership were shown to be formed through, and extant within, the relations between individual users, others in their social network, affective responses, the specific design features of the News Feed and discourses of 'normal' use. Although the generation of user habits on the News Feed should rightly be understood as a form of negotiation as opposed to a form of coercion, the modes of usership identified in the interviews do follow distinct 'normal' patterns and, through their repetition, operate as the very mechanism through which Facebook is able to sustain the data-harvesting protocols necessary for its economic profitability.

As John Dewey states, "habits involve the support of environing conditions, [and] a society or some specific group" (Dewey, 1930, p. 16) to order human behaviour in certain environments. Once in place, the human routine that ensues, Dewey writes, naturally "insist upon its own

continuation” (Dewey, 1930, p. 76). Therefore, while the habits of News Feed usership outlined in the previous chapter do not always align with the habits of Facebook’s discursive and designed vision of healthy usership, they can still be seen to *function* in Facebook’s favour by keeping users predisposed to repetitious participation on the platform. The interviews, for example, revealed the way that the social analytics of the like counter represented individualized standards through which users assessed the relative success and failure of their idealized presentations of self, thereby supplementing Bucher (2016) and Grosser’s (2015) work with Foucault’s analytic of the panopticon to home in on the way Facebook’s social metrics become entwined with normalizing routines of appropriate News Feed behaviour. The power of social analytics, therefore, can be said to be expressed in the entrenchment of conventional forms of user activity and the restriction of others on the News Feed. While I have shown that the norms of the News Feed are not solely determined either by its technical design nor consciously developed by users alone, it remains that such norms are, nevertheless, generative of certain modes of behaviour at the expense of others; serve certain interests at the expense of others; and hold together a precise arrangement of discursive elements at the expense of others. Thus, a key outcome of the interviews is not merely the identification of the *qualities* of the News Feed habits discussed, but in the recognition of repetitious user habit as the tangible *effects* of Facebook’s operation as a disciplinary technology of power.

Despite the limitations of the qualitative methods of the interviews, as discussed in the previous chapter, I believe the empirical and theoretical approaches developed in this thesis can offer ways for future researchers to study different elements of Facebook, and other social media infrastructures for that matter, in terms of the socio-technical script, the production of users, “healthy” habits and power. For example, Instagram’s recent efforts to introduce tools on the platform that can assist users in “managing digital well-being” online (Instagram, 2019) could be scrutinized through the approach advanced in this

thesis. Where do Instagram's discourses of well-being originate? What norms are expressed in their articulation? And can these be seen to project culturally limited biases? Such research would entail the study of how specific social media user-interfaces attempt to inculcate habits of ideal use through their designs and explore how social media users themselves respond to the discursive and material scripting of healthy use on different platforms. The interview technique employed in Chapter V of this thesis could help facilitate this type of analysis. I found that the technique of sitting with the participant while he or she narrated their experience of scrolling down the News Feed offered insights into their thoughts and activity that could not have been accessed by other means as effectively. Supporting the thoughts of Monahan and Fisher (2010), the quality and insight of the data gleaned from the interviews was due to, rather than despite of, the inherent artificiality of the interview situation that was designed. In cultivating a shared bond of co-analysis and co-examination, the practice of scrolling down the News Feed prompted the users interviewed to reflexively engage with what was a habitual, everyday activity for them. This opened up an analytical distance between the user and the interface that often revealed surprising views for the participants involved. This demonstrates that the method of users guiding an external observer through a user-interface with which they were already familiar can actually offer fresh insights into the habitual interactions under examination.

The structured nature of the interviews, moreover, and their close focus upon a shared object of inquiry (i.e. the News Feed itself) can also help overcome some of the issues associated with interview stagnation (Knapik, 2006). For example, if the interviewee was struggling with questions surrounding a certain post, we could both decide to simply move on to another post down the News Feed and focus on another piece of content, affordance, or activity that was on display. Conversely, if the post under consideration was providing a fruitful prompt for dialogue, we could often linger on the post without feeling the need to

move away from it, allowing the conversation to naturally develop in a direction the interviewee felt comfortable with. The reflexive distance offered by the artificiality of the interview procedure, therefore, would be able to provide fresh insights to other types of habitual user engagements with other social media user-interfaces, such as Instagram or Twitter for instance, while the process of users narrating their experience of different user-interfaces offers a way for researchers to conduct salient empirical analysis of how users have come to understand and interact with the affordances of social media, in the words of Couldry and Powell (2014), “from the bottom up” (p. 1).

On a more general level, researching Facebook’s material design poses many challenges that shaped the direction of this thesis, as explored in more depth in Chapter II. For instance, intellectual property protections restrict full access to the coding of Facebook’s various algorithms and user-interfaces, while my own lack of training in this area would limit my ability to handle such data even if it became available for analysis. Notwithstanding a potential lack of access, however, interdisciplinary work with scholars trained in coding and software design, for instance, could offer a more thorough appraisal of the various technical mechanisms involved in the design of nudged user-interfaces, perhaps leading to a new set of empirical questions that this thesis has been unable to address

In this thesis, I have attempted to expose the historical assumptions implicit within Facebook’s constructions of ideal use, locating the politics of Facebook usership in its delimitation of appropriate modes of activity on the platform in discourse, design and in practice. As such, the modes of empirical and qualitative analysis employed in the preceding chapters can be usefully understood as processes of de-naturalization. Resonating with a vision of criticism advanced by Foucault in an interview from 1981, the type of critique developed in this thesis consisted in “showing that things are not as obvious as we might believe” (Foucault, 1982, p. 34) in Facebook’s account of itself as a ‘tool’ of healthy usership, and in “doing it in such a way that what we

accept as going without saying no longer goes without saying” (ibid). “To criticize”, for Foucault, therefore, “is to render the too-easy gestures difficult” (ibid). Thus, in attempting to move beyond the taken-for-granted notion that Facebook exists as a tool of human communication, as a platform that simply facilitates existing ‘natural’, ‘healthy’, ‘social’, tendencies, this thesis has tried to expose the limits of this scripted presentation, while highlighting the potentially dominating interests produced and maintained by its acceptance.

To do so is not to point out that the digitized power relations held together by Facebook are part of a fixed system of domination, but, rather, implies the opposite. That is, revealing how “fragile” (Foucault, 1982, p. 35) a ground Facebook’s social truths are situated upon can show them to be

held together more by contingencies than by necessities, more by the arbitrary than by the obvious, more by complex but transitory historical contingency than by inevitable anthropological constraints. (Foucault, 1982, p. 35).

This aspect of Foucault’s critique contains an emancipatory element that helps assuage the idea that engagement with Foucault’s analytics and methods always runs up against the invocation of rigidly oppressive, inescapable, edifices of power (Allen, 2011; Kerr, 1999). Rather than suggesting that there is no way out of the current way of doing things – that Facebook’s vision of networked neoliberal sociality is inescapable, pointing out the necessarily historical character of its constitution, in fact, opens up the door for imagining that things could, indeed, be re-arranged, re-ordered and enacted otherwise. Prior to any exploration of what this re-arrangement could look like, which I will briefly discuss below, this thesis has fulfilled the important initial task of more precisely clarifying what is actually taken-for-granted in discussions surrounding healthy use of Facebook’s services. In tracing these discourses, I have been able to outline how Facebook

discursively and materially constructs profitable modes of ideal user activity, while also demonstrating how the attempted inculcation of user habit on the platform upon this basis can be productively understood, and critiqued, through a Foucauldian rubric of disciplinary conduct.

Despite criticisms levelled at Foucault due to his lack of an emancipatory political program (Simons, 1995; Pickett, 1996), conceptualizing Facebook usership in terms of conduct can, in fact, lead to the possibility of resistance on the platform that operates on a micro-level. Foucault never developed a coherent account of political struggle, yet his insistent that power is “strictly relational” (Foucault, 1998, p. 95) always implied that “where there is power, there is resistance” (ibid). In this vein, other studies can point toward ways that Facebook users could undermine Facebook’s attempt to shape their activity on the platform, showing how users often participate reluctantly on the interface (Cassidy, 2016), for instance, or even disconnect from the platform altogether (Light, 2014; Light & Cassidy, 2016). Such attempts can be taken as examples of counter-conduct – the rejection of normalizing impositions of thought, behaviour and affect, or, as Foucault (2007) himself puts it, “the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price” (p. 75). Daniele Lorenzini (2016) writes:

A counter-conduct always implies, on the one side, a governmental mechanism of power trying to impose on a group of individuals a specific form of conduct (which is the target of resistance, of struggles) and, on the other side, a refusal expressed by the individuals who can no longer accept being conducted like that and want to conduct themselves differently. (Lorenzini, 2016, p. 11).

It is important to note, however, that the risks and possibility of counter-conduct on Facebook depends upon the specific situation of the users involved. Disconnection from Facebook is perhaps only viable if the only loss at stake is the opportunity to socialize and connect with

friends on the platform. While even this has been studied by Ori Schwarch (2019) as harmful to users' social capital, for those running small businesses, such as maintenance companies or restaurants for instance, or who work as freelancers on the platform, refusing Facebook's call of active engagement with social connections is tantamount to the refusal of custom, and, therefore, necessary economic income (Jones, Borgman & Ulusoy, 2015). When we consider the emancipatory effects such practices of counter-conduct could actually produce, we must be mindful of who can actually afford to engage in them, thereby leading to important considerations of digital labour and class.

Moreover, assuming that disconnecting from the platform is, indeed, desirable also relays certain normative biases when we consider that access to online social media raises specific issues for different groups of users around the globe. For instance, rural communities in the global south often rely on social media technologies to access information about distant neighbors (Pavez, 2016), people with physical disabilities are offered a communal social space on Facebook that may otherwise be lacking in their lives (Ryan, 2018), and stateless refugees often use Facebook as a space of transnational connection (Twigt, 2018). Furthermore, it could also be facile to garland practices of Facebook disconnection as "counter-conducts" when we think about what the refusal of apparatuses of normalization constitutes for individuals and groups whose lives, livelihoods and futures are at stake in their personal negotiations with different institutional infrastructures today. The limited sample of my interviews, combined with participants' relatively secure material, economic and social circumstance, has meant that this thesis has been unable to address other types of issues which emerge through the study of different user groups across the world.

Moreover, practices of counter-conduct are feasibly more risky for an individual in the UK trying to negotiate a path toward state welfare

benefits (Flint, 2018), for example, than for a user (that is able to do so) trying to resist Facebook's particular delimitations of healthy usership. Despite this comparison, however unfair, it does highlight the limitations of thinking about political resistance in terms of counter-conduct on a more general level. Resistance of Foucauldian conceptualized governance, that is, seems to operate on an individualized, micro-scale, existing only as the start, and perhaps not the full means or ends, of common emancipatory political struggle. This leads us to consider exactly what type of collective politics can actually emerge from this Foucault's focus on individual resistances, micro-transgressions and personal refusals of the norm (Death, 2010). Whichever way its political efficacy is weighed it up, it remains that both the desire and opportunity to resist Facebook's norm of active communication, along with the implications of doing so, depends upon the specific circumstances of the user in question.

For Mona Lilja and Stellan Vinthagen (2014), however, resistance to power does not always take the form of micro-scale counter conducts, but could also entail modes of re-appropriation. Resistance to Facebook's attempted creation of ideal users of neoliberal self-interest, for Lilja and Vinthagen, thus, may constitute

either openly refusing to participate in the construction of new subjectivity/ capacities/ skills/ organizations, or the de facto transformation of such social construction into something else – something not useful for power interests (Lilja & Vinthagen, 2014, p. 114).

Lemes De Castro (2016), for example, argues that although Facebook, and other social media, "function as devices of neoliberal governmentality" (p. 97), their "mechanisms also illustrate the alternatives to it" (p. 11). Specifically, De Castro argues that Facebook's ability to connect and project different forms of political activism from around the world, acting in protest against similar oppressions, could generate an alternative ethic of sharing that leads to the production of

radicalized political movements. In the 2019 mass protests in Chile, for example, where citizens took to the streets against the privatization of public life in the country and unacceptable living wages, Facebook was used to mobilize street protests and share tactics to combat police violence (Franklin, 2019), while Paulo Gerbaudo (2015) has similarly argued that the modalities of interaction and connection offered by social media enable collective forms of political protest and facilitate the spreading of alternative commentaries of neoliberal political hegemony. This is especially prevalent in recent forms of environmental activism, where Facebook has been shown to help educate children surrounding the political qualities of the Anthropocene (Besley & Peters, 2019) and is evidenced by Extinction Rebellion's decentered leadership structure that is divided into regional and national activist cells on social media platforms (Extinction Rebellion, 2019).

Although such accounts of political activism could be understood within Facebook's own discourse of democratization, as outlined in the introduction of this thesis, the examples above are able to demonstrate that engagement with an ostensibly neoliberal political technology of power does not automatically lead to the instantiation of neoliberal forms of life in the world. Yet, this is not to fall back on a social constructivist viewpoint. Rather than claiming that users of Facebook can utilize its communication features in any way that they so wish, I have rather sought to show the ways that any engagement with Facebook necessarily entails a negotiation with the particular social human history, ideal modes of self-interested communication, and programmatic accounts of what it means to *live well* as a social subject today. Not only this, however, these ideals have been shown to be in-built into the design of the News Feed in such a way that prompts user behavior along certain activity corridors, thereby materializing these discourses in a tangible, *felt*, manner. While the outcomes of user negotiations with the platform are different depending on user circumstance and location, it is not enough to simply point toward such variations and claim that Facebook is a neutral arbiter of the forms of

life enacted upon it as a result. Habitual conduct on the platform, while chosen, is always relational, and we should be attentive to how Facebook demarcates normal usership as the path of least resistance through discourse and design.

In highlighting how ideal and healthy modes of activity on the platform normatively configure Facebook's user as a neoliberal subject of self-interest, and in showing how engagement with the platform upon this basis crucially represents the *default* course of action on the site, this thesis has been able to demonstrate that Facebook usership exists on a political terrain way beyond fake news, filter bubbles, and linear tangents of democratization. This is a terrain of conduct; personal, flowing through the repetitious activity of users as they interact with the platform on a habitual basis; and functional, existing as the essential basis of value-extraction in processes of social media datafication. While these relations of power are by no means totalizing, and I have indicated ways users could resist the pathways of active usership delineated for them on the site, by showing how Facebook fixates upon and targets a very specific history of human sociality to validate its program of healthy usership, I have provided a critical foundation upon which users can decide whether or not they actually agree with the default forms of life set out for them on the platform. Although this thesis assumes nothing in this regard, it has more precisely outlined the well-being issues, functional economic qualities and relations of power generated through habitual Facebook usership, and, as a result, develops and expands our collective understanding of the issues surrounding seemingly innocuous, everyday engagement with social media platforms in the present day.

Bibliography

Agger, B. (2011). iTime: Labor and life in a smartphone era. *Time and Society*, 20(1), 119-136.

Ajana, B. (ed.). (2018). *Self-Tracking: Empirical and Philosophical Investigations*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Akrich, M. (1992). The De-Description of Technical Objects. In Bijker, W. B. Law, J. (eds.) *Shaping Technology/Building Society* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. pp. 205– 224.

Alaimo, C., & Kallinikos, J. (2017). Computing the everyday: Social media as data platforms. *The Information Society*, 33(4), 175-191. doi: 10.1080/01972243.2017.1318327.

Albanesius, C. (2011, March 11). Facebook starts rolling out revamped homepages. *PC Mag*. Retrieved from <https://www.pcmag.com/news/237987/facebook-starts-rolling-out-revamped-homepages>.

Allen, A. (2011). Foucault and the politics of our selves. *History of the Human Sciences*, 24(4), 43–59. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695111411623>.

Amsterdamska, O. (1990). Surely You Are Joking, Monsieur Latour! *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 15(4), 495-504.

Anderson et al. (2016). Responsibility and well-being: Resource integration under responsabilization in expert services. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, 35(2), 262-279. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1509/jppm.15.140>.

Andreassen, C. S., Torsheim, T., Brunborg, G. S., & Pallesen, S. (2012). Development of a Facebook addiction scale. *Psychological Reports*, 110(2), 501-517. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2466/02.09.18.PR0.110.2.501-517>.

Appel, H. L., Gerlach, A. L., & Crusius, J. (2016). The interplay between Facebook use, social comparison, envy, and depression. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 9, 44–49. doi: 10.1016/j.copsyc.2015.10.006.

Aristotle. Crisp, R. (ed.) (trans.) (2004) *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).

Backstrom, L. (2016, June 29) Helping Make Sure You Don't Miss Stories from Friends. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/06/news-feed-fyi-helping-make-sure-you-dont-miss-stories-from-friends/>.

Bakshy, E., Messing, S., & Adamic, L. (2015). Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook. *Science* (Online). doi: 10.1126/science.aaa1160.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>.

Baym, N. K. (2010). *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Baym, N. K. (2015). Social Media and the Struggle for Society. *Social Media + Society* (online). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115580477>

Baym, N. K. (2018). *Playing to the Crowd: Musicians, Audiences and the Intimate work of Connection*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Becker, G. (1964). *Human Capital*. New York, NY: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Beer, D. (2008). Social network(ing) sites... revisiting the story so far: A response to danah boyd and Nicole Ellison. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 516–529. doi: 10.1111/j.1083–6101.2008.00408.x.

- Beer, D. (2016). *Metric Power*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Beer, D., Burrows, R. (2007). Sociology of and in Web 2.0: Some initial considerations. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(5). doi: <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/5/17.html>.
- Behavioural Insights Team (2012) Annual Update 2011-2012. *Gov.uk*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/83719/Behavioural-Insights-Team-Annual-Update-2011-12_0.pdf.
- Behavioural Insights Team (2016) Update Report 2015-2016. *The Behavioural Insights Team*. Retrieved from <http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/BIT-Update-Report-2015-16.pdf>.
- Bennet, T. (2013). Habit: Time, Freedom, Governance. *Body and Society*, 19(2/3), 107-135. doi :10.1177/1357034X13475828.
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739-768. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661.
- Berelson, B. (1952). Democratic Theory and Public Opinion. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 16(3), 313-330. doi: www.jstor.org/stable/2745778.
- Bermaway, M. (2016 Nov) Your filter bubble is destroying democracy. *Wired*. Retrieved from <https://www.wired.com/2016/11/filter-bubble-destroying-democracy/>.
- Besley, T., & Peters, M. A. (2019). Life and death in the Anthropocene: Educating for survival amid climate and ecosystem changes and potential civilisation collapse. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, doi: 10.1080/00131857.2019.1684804.

Besser-Jones, L. (2016). Eudaimonism. In: Fletcher, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-being*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Binkley, S. (2011). Psychological life as enterprise: social practice and the government of neo-liberal interiority. *History of the Human Sciences*, 24(3), 83–102.

Bode, L. (2016). Political news in the News Feed: Learning politics from social media. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19, 24–48. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1045149>

Bode, L. (2016). Political news in the News Feed: Learning politics from social media. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19, 24–48.

Bohman, J. (1990). Communication, Ideology, and Democratic Theory. *American Political Science Review*, 84(1), 93-109. doi:10.2307/1963631.

Borgesius, F. Z., Trilling, D. Moeller, J., Bodó, B., de Vreese, C. H., & Helberger, N. (2016). Should We Worry About Filter Bubbles? *Internet Policy Review: Journal on Internet Regulation*, 5(1). 1-16. doi: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2758126>

Bossetta, M. (2018). The digital architectures of social media: Comparing political campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. election. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(2), 471–496.

Bossetta, M., Dutceac Segesten, A., & Trenz, H. J. (2017). Political participation on Facebook during Brexit: Does user engagement on media pages stimulate engagement with campaigns? *Journal of Language and Politics* (online). doi: <http://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17009.dut>.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). Forms of capital. Richardson, J. E. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York, NY: Greenwood. pp. 46-58.

Bourdieu, P. (1992). *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Boutyline, A. Willer, R. (2016). The social structure of political echo chambers: variation in ideological homophily in online networks. *Political Psychology*, 38(3), 551–569.
- boyd, d. (2008). 'Facebook's Privacy Trainwreck: Exposure, Invasion, and Social Convergence'. *Convergence*, 14(1), 13–20. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856507084416>.
- boyd, d. (2010). Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications In Papacharissi, Z. (ed). *Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*. London: Routledge. pp. 39-58.
- boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- boyd, d., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social Network Sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 210–230. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x p. 211.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2). 77–101.
- Brown, B. J., & Baker, S. (2013). *Responsible Citizens: Individuals, Health and Policy under Neoliberalism*. London, UK: Anthem Press.
- Brown, W. (2005). *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brubaker, J. Hayes, G. Dourish, P. (2013). Beyond the grave: Facebook as a site for the expansion of death and mourning. *The Information Society*, 29(3), 152-162.
- Brügger, N. (2015). 'A brief history of Facebook as a media text'. *First Monday*, 20(5). doi:10.5210/fm.v20i5.5423.

Bucher, T. (2016). Want to be on the top? Algorithmic Power and the Threat of Invisibility on Facebook'. In Chun, W. H. K. Fisher, A. W. (eds.) (2016). *New Media, Old Media: 2nd Edition*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Bucher, T. (2017). The algorithmic imaginary: exploring the ordinary affects of Facebook algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 30-44. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1154086.

Burchell, G. (1996). Liberal government and techniques of the self. In Barry, A., Osborne, T., Rose, N. (eds.) *Foucault and political reason: liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*. London, UK: UCL Press. pp.19-37.

Burke, M., & Kraut, R. E. (2016). The Relationship Between Facebook Use and Well-Being Depends on Communication Type and Tie Strength. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 21(4), 265-281. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12162>.

Burke, M., Kraut, R., & Marlow, C. (2011). Social capital on Facebook: Differentiating uses and users. *ACM CHI 2011: Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 571-580. doi: 10.1145/1978942.1979023.

Burke, M., Marlow, C., & Lento, T. (2010). Social network activity and social well-being. *New York: ACM: Proceedings of the 28th international conference on human factors in computing systems*, 1909-1912. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1145/1753326.1753613>.

Busby, M. (2018, May 8). Social media copies gambling methods to create psychological cravings. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/may/08/social-media-copies-gambling-methods-to-create-psychological-cravings>.

Cadwalladr, C. (2019, Oct 26). What happened when Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez came face to face with Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/oct/26/what->

happened-when-alexandria-ocasio-cortez-came-face-to-face-with-facebooks-mark-zuckerberg.

Cadwalladr, C., & Graham-Harrison, E. (2018, May 17). Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/cambridge-analytica-facebook-influence-us-election>.

Caers et al. (2013). Facebook: A literature review. *New media & society*, 15(6), 982–1002.

Calhoun, C. (1992). (ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Callon, M. (1986). Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay. In Law, J. (ed.) *Power, action and belief: a new sociology of knowledge?* London, Routledge. Pp. 196-223.

Camic, C. (1986). The Matter of Habit. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(5), 1039–1087. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/228386>.

Canguilhem, G. (1991). *The Normal and the Pathological*. New York, NY: Zone books.

Caple, H. (2018). News Values and Newsworthiness. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Communication* (online), 1-21. doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.85.

Carey, B. (2019, Jan 30). This is your brain off Facebook. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/30/health/facebook-psychology-health.html>.

Carlilse, J. E., & Patton, R. C. (2012). Is Social Media Changing How We Understand Political Engagement? An Analysis of Facebook and

the 2008 Presidential Election. *Political Research Quarterly*, 66(4), 883-895.

Carlisle, C. (2014). *On Habit*. London, UK: Routledge.

Cassidy, E. (2016). Social networking sites and participatory reluctance: A case study of Gaydar, user resistance and interface rejection. *New Media & Society*, 18(11), 2613–2628. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/146144481559034.1>

Centre for Humane Technology (2019). *Centre for Humane Technology*. Retrieved from: <https://humanetech.com/>.

Chakrabarti, S. (2018). Hard Questions: What Effect Does Social Media Have on Democracy? *Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/01/effect-social-media-democracy/?frame-nonce=bd5e374778>.

Chou, H.-T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). They are happier and having better lives than I am”: The impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others’ lives’, *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking*, 15(2), 117–121.

Chun, W. H. (2016). *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Clark et al. (2014). Participations: Dialogues on the Participatory Promise of Contemporary Culture and Politics. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 1446–1473.

Clarke, J. (2005) New Labour’s citizens: Activated, empowered, responsabilized, abandoned? *Critical Social Policy*, 25(4), 447-463. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018305057024>.

Cole, A., & Ferrarese, E. (2018). How capitalism forms our lives. *Journal for Cultural Research*, 22(2), 105-112. doi: 10.1080/14797585.2018.1461597.

Coleman, J. (1988). Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, 95-120. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2780243>.

Collins, H. and Yearley, S. (1992). 'Epistemological chicken'. In Pickering, A. (Ed.), *Science, Practice and Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research (3rd ed.)* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Costa, E. (2016). *Social media in Southeast Turkey*. London, England: UCL Press.

Costa, E. (2018). Affordances-in-practice: An ethnographic critique of social media logic and context collapse. *New media & society*, 20(10), 3641–3656.

Couldry, N. , Fotopoulou, A. & Dickens, L. (2016). Real social analytics: A contribution towards a phenomenology of a digital world. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 67, 118-137. doi: 10.1111/1468-4446.12183.

Couldry, N., & Powell, A. (2014). Big Data from the bottom up. *Big Data & Society*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951714539277>.

Couldry, N., & van Dijck, J. (2015). Researching social media as if the social mattered. *Social Media + Society*, 1(2), 1-7. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604174>.

Cox, J. M. (2017). The source of a movement: Making the case for social media as an informational source using black lives matter. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40. 1847–1854.

Creedon, P., & Cramer, J. (eds.) (2007). *Women in Mass Communication*. London: Sage.

Crossley, N. (2013). Habit and Habitus. *Body and Society*, 19(2/3), 136–161. doi: 10.1177/1357034X12472543.

- Crouch, C. (2011). *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cyphers, B. & Gebhart, G. (2019). Behind the One-Way Mirror: A Deep Dive Into the Technology of Corporate Surveillance. *Electric Frontier Foundation*. Retrieved from: <https://www.eff.org/wp/behind-the-one-way-mirror>.
- Danker, D. (2017, Aug 9). Introducing Watch, a New Platform For Shows On Facebook. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/08/introducing-watch-a-new-platform-for-shows-on-facebook/>.
- Dardot, P., & Laval, C. (2013). *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*. London, UK: Verso.
- Davies, W. (2014). *The Limits of Neoliberalism*. London: Sage.
- Davies, W. (2015). The return of social government: From 'socialist calculation' to 'social analytics'. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 18(4), 431–450.
- Dean, J. (2005). Communicative capitalism: Circulation and the foreclosure of politics. *Cultural Politics*, 1(1). 51–74.
- Dean, J. (2015). Affect and Drive. In *Networked Affect*. Cambridge MA: MIT press. pp. 89-101.
- Death, C.(2010). Counter-conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest. *Social Movement Studies*, 9(3), 235-251. doi: 10.1080/14742837.2010.493655.
- Delueze, G. (1986). *Foucault*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Dewey, J. (1930). *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*. Random House: New York. doi: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.213957>
- Diepeveen, S. (2019). The limits of publicity: Facebook and transformations of a public realm in Mombasa, Kenya. *Journal of*

Eastern African Studies, 13(1), 158-174. doi:
10.1080/17531055.2018.1547251.

Dredge, S. (2015 Nov). Digital Politics: Are we trapped in our online filter bubbles?. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/nov/11/digital-politics-online-filter-bubbles>.

Dreyfus, H. Rabinow, P. (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Ellison, N., Vitak, J., Gray, R., & Lampe, C. (2014). Cultivating social resources on social network sites: Facebook relationship maintenance behaviours and their role in social capital processes. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(4), 855–870.

Eltantawy, N. Wiest, J. B. (2011). The Arab Spring| social media in the Egyptian revolution: Reconsidering resource mobilization theory. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 1207–1224.

Espeland, W., & Mitchell, S. (1998). Commensuration as a social process. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24(1), 313–43.

Evans, S. K., Pearce, K. E., Vitak, J., & Treem, J. W. (2017). Explicating affordances: A conceptual framework for understanding affordances in communication research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22, 35-52.

Extinction Rebellion (2019). *Extinction Rebellion*. Retrieved from
<https://rebellion.earth/>.

Facebook Help Centre (2019) What does it mean to “Like” something? *Facebook help centre*. Retrieved from
<https://www.facebook.com/help/110920455663362?helpref=search&sr=1&query=what%20does%20it%20mean%20>.

Facebook Help Centre (2019a) News Feed. *Facebook Help Centre*. Retrieved from
[rehttps://www.facebook.com/help/964154640320617/?helpref=hc_fnav](https://www.facebook.com/help/964154640320617/?helpref=hc_fnav)

Facebook Newsroom (2006, Sept 8). Facebook Launches Additional Privacy Controls for News Feed and Mini-Feed. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2006/09/facebook-launches-additional-privacy-controls-for-news-feed-and-mini-feed/>.

Facebook Newsroom (2019). Company Info. *Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://about.fb.com/company-info/>.

Facebook Research (2019) *Facebook Research*. Retrieved from <https://research.fb.com/>.

Fallan, K. (2008). De-scribing design: Appropriating script analysis to design history. *Design Issues*, 24(4), 61-75.

Faraj, S., Azad, B. (2012). The materiality of technology: An affordance perspective. In Leonardi, P. M., Nardi, B. A., Kallinikos, J. (eds.) *Materiality and organizing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 237–258.

Feinstein, B., Hershenberg, R., Bhatia, V., Latack, J., Meuwly, N., & Davila, J. (2013). Negative social comparison on Facebook and depressive symptoms: Rumination as a mechanism. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 2(3), 161-170. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0033111>.

Ferragina, E., & Arrigoni, A. (2017). The rise and fall of social capital: Requiem for a theory? *Political Studies Review*, 15(3), 355–367. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929915623968>.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. New York, NY: Row, Peterson.

Flaxman S, Goel, S. Rao, J. M. 2016. 'Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption.' *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(S1). 298–320.

Flint, J. (2018). Constructed narratives and webs of meaning in anti-social behaviour and welfare benefits governance in the United Kingdom. In Bevir, M., McKee, K., & Matthews, P. (eds.) *Decentring*

Urban Governance: Narratives, Resistance and Contestation.

Abingdon: Routledge.

Fogg, B. J. (2003). *Persuasive Technology: Using computers to change what we think and do.* San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufman.

Foot, P. (2001). *Natural Goodness.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Foucault, M. (1980). The Confession of the Flesh. In Foucault, M., Gordon, C. (ed.). *Power/Knowledge.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf. Pp. 194 – 229.

Foucault, M. (1981). The order of discourse. In Young, R. (ed.) *Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader.* Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul. pp. 48-79.

Foucault, M. (1982). Is it really important to think? *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 9(1), 30-40.

Foucault, M. (1986). The subject and power. In Dreyfus, H. Rabinow, P. (eds.) *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. pp. 208-229.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* New York, NY: Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1998). *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction.* London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (2002). *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977–1978.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2010). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France.* Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2015). *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France 1972-73.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fraley v. Facebook, Inc., No. 11-CV-01726-LHK, 2011 WL 6303898 (N.D. Cal. Dec. 16, 2011). Retrieved from <https://casetext.com/case/fraley-v-facebook-inc>.

Frankel, S. J., Brookover, L., & Satterfield, S. (2012). Famous for Fifteen People: Celebrity, Newsworthiness, and Fraley v. Facebook. *Stanford Law Review* (online). Retrieved from <https://www.stanfordlawreview.org/online/privacy-paradox-famous-for-fifteen-people/>.

Franklin, J. (2019 Oct 30). Chile protesters: 'We are subjugated by the rich. It's time for that to end'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/30/chile-protests-portraits-protesters-sebastian-pinera>.

Freelon, D. (2017). Campaigns in control: Analyzing controlled interactivity and message discipline on Facebook. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 14. 168-181.

Friedman, M., & Friedman, R. (1980). *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*. New York, NY: Harcourt.

Fuchs, C. (2015). *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Fuller, M., & Goffey, A. (2012). *Evil Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Galloway, A. R. (2012). *The Interface Effect*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gerbaudo, P. (2015). Populism 2.0: Social media activism, the generic Internet User and interactive direct democracy. In Fuchs, C. Trottier, D. (eds.) *Social Media Politics and the State*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. pp. 67-88

Gerlitz, C., & Helmond, A. (2013). The like economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web. *New Media & Society*, 15(8), 348–1365. DOI: 10.1177/1461444812472322.

- Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Gilbert, E., & Karahalios, K. (2009). Predicting tie strength with social media. *CHI '09 Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 211-220.
- Gillespie, T. (2010). The politics of 'platforms.' *New Media & Society*, 12(3), 347–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809342738>.
- Gillespie, T. (2017). Governance of and by platforms. In Burgess, J., Marwick, A., & Poell, T. (2017) *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*. London: SAGE.
- Gil-Lopez, T., Shen, C., Benefield, G. A., Palomares, N. A., Kosinski, M., & Stillwell, D. (2018) One Size Fits All: Context Collapse, Self-Presentation Strategies and Language Styles on Facebook. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(3), 127–145. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy006>.
- Ginsberg, D., & Burke, M. (2017, Dec 15). Hard Questions: Is spending time on social media bad for us? *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/12/hard-questions-is-spending-time-on-social-media-bad-for-us/>.
- Gitelman, L. (ed.) (2013) *"Raw data" Is an Oxymoron*. Cambridge: MIT Press
- Gladwell, M. (2010). Small change. *The New Yorker*, 4, 42–49.
- Gleason, M., & Lida, M. (2015). Social support. In Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (eds.) *APA Handbook of Personality and Social Psychology (Vol.3. Interpersonal Relations)*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association. pp.351–370.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- Goode, J., Greatbatch, D., O'cathain, A., Luff, D., Hanlon, G., & Strangleman, T. (2004). Risk and the Responsible Health Consumer:

The Problematics of Entitlement among Callers to NHS Direct. *Critical Social Policy*, 24(2). 210–232.

Granovetter, M. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380. doi: www.jstor.org/stable/2776392.

Greater Good Science Centre (2018). Who we are. *Greater Good Science Centre*. Retrieved from <https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/> Accessed on 05/11/2018.

Grosser, B. (2014). What Do Metrics Want? How Quantification Prescribes Social Interaction on Facebook. *Computational Culture* 4. doi: <http://computationalculture.net/article/what-do-metrics-want#fnref-2082-72>.

Grosz, E. (2013). Habit Today: Ravaisson, Bergson, Deleuze and Us', *Body and Society*, 19(2/3), 217-239.

Guardian Live (2018, April 10). Mark Zuckerberg testifies before congress. *YouTube*. Video file. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZaec_m1q9M.

Guest, G., Bruce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1). 59–82.

Guittari, F., Pindar, I., & Sutton, P. (trans.) (2000). *The Three Ecologies*. London: Continuum.

Gulati, G. J. Williams, C. (2012). Social media and campaign 2012: Developments and trends for Facebook adoption.' *Social Science Computer Review*, 31(5), 577–588. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439313489258>.

Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation Of The Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Polity

Haim, M., Graefe, A., & Brosius, H. B. (2017). Burst of the filter bubble? *Digital Journalism*, 6(3), 330–343.

- Halpern, D. (2015). *Inside the Nudge Unit: How Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference*. London, UK: W.H. Allen.
- Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2017). What is News?. *Journalism Studies*, 18(12), 1470-1488. doi: [10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193).
- Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2001). What Is News? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 261-280. doi: [10.1080/14616700118449](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700118449).
- Harvey, D. (2007). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hashemi, N. (2013). 'The Arab Spring two year son: Reflections on dignity, democracy and devotion'. *Ethics and International Affairs*, 27(4), 207-221.
- Haybron, D. M. (2008). *The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-being*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hayes R. A, Carr, C. T., & Wohn, D. Y. (2016). One click, many meanings: interpreting paralinguistic digital affordances in social media.' *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 60(1), 171–187.
- Hearn, A. (2010). Structuring feeling: Web 2.0, online ranking and rating, and the digital 'reputation' economy. *ephemera*, 10(3/4), 421-438.
- Hearn, A. 2008 'Meat, Mask, Burden' Probing the contours of the branded 'self' *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8(2), 197-217.
- Hemp, P. (2009). Death by information overload. *Harvard Business Review*, 87, 82–89.
- Herman, Edward S. & Chomsky, Noam (1988). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Hern, A. (2019 July 30) Cambridge Analytica did work for Leave.EU, emails confirm. *Guardian*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/jul/30/cambridge-analytica-did-work-for-leave-eu-emails-confirm>

Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010). Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review', *PLOS* (online). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>.

Hook, D. (2001). Discourse, Knowledge, Materiality, History: Foucault and Discourse Analysis. *Theory & Psychology*, 11(4), 521–547.

Hookway, B. (2014). *Interface*. Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press.

House of Commons, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee. (2019). *Disinformation and 'fake news': Final Report*. Retrieved from: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcmds/1791/1791.pdf>.

Hoy, D. C. (1986). Power, Repression, Progress: Foucault, Lukes and the Frankfurt school. In Hoy, D. C. (ed.). *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell. pp. 123-149.

Hutchby, I. (2001). Technologies, texts and affordances. *Sociology*, 35(2). 441–456.

Hyland, J. L. (1995). *Democratic Theory: The Philosophical Foundations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Instagram (2019) Community. *Instagram*. Retrieved from <https://about.instagram.com/community>.

Iyengar, S., & Hahn, K. S. (2009). Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. *Journal of Communication*, 59, 19–39.

Jacobs, K., & Spierings, N. (2016). *Social media, parties, and political inequalities*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Johnson, E. J., & Goldstein, D. G. (2003). Do Defaults Save Lives? *Science*, 302, 1338-1339, 2003. doi: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1324774>

- Jones, N., Borgman, R. and Ulusoy, E. (2015), "Impact of social media on small businesses", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 611-632.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-09-2013-0133>
- Juris, J. S. (2012). Reflections on #Occupy everywhere: Social media, public space, and emerging logics of aggregation. *American Ethnologist*, 39. 259–279.
- Kahneman, D., Diener, E., & Schwarz, N. (eds.) (1999). *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Found.
- Kant, I. (1966). Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals. In Paton, H. J. (trans.) *The Moral Law*. London, UK: Hutchinson.
- Kant, I. (2007). Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1798). In Zoller, G., & Loudon, R. B (eds). *Immanuel Kant: Anthropology, History and Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53, 59–68.
- Kellner, D. (1997). Critical Theory and Cultural studies: The missed articulation. In McGuigan, J. (ed.) *Cultural Methodologies*. London: SAGE. pp. 12-42.
- Kember, S., & Zylinksa, J. (2012). *Life after New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Kennedy, H. (2016). *Post, Mine, Repeat Social Media Data Mining becomes Ordinary*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kennedy, H., & Hill, L. R. (2017). The Feeling of Numbers: Emotions in Everyday Engagements with Data and Their Visualisation. *Sociology*. 1–19. doi:10.1177/0038038516674675.

- Kerr, D. (1999). Beheading the King and Enthroning the Market: A Critique of Foucauldian Governmentality. *Science & Society*, 63(2), 73-202.
- Khamis, S., & Vaughn, K. (2012). "We Are All Khaled Said": The potentials and limitations of cyberactivism in triggering public mobilization and promoting political change. *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research*, 4. 145–163.
- Klapper, J. T. (1960). *The effects of mass communication*. New York: Free Press.
- Knapik, M. (2006). The Qualitative Research Interview: Participants' Responsive Participation in Knowledge Making. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 77–93.
- Kraut, R. (2007). *What is good and why: The ethics of well-being*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Kroese, F., Marchiori, D., & de Ridder, D. (2016) Nudging healthy food choices: a field experiment at the train station. *Journal of Public Health*, 38(2), 133–137. DOI: 10.1093/pubmed/fdv096.
- Kross, E., Verduyn, P., Demiralp, E., Park, J., Lee, D. S., Lin, N. et al. (2013). Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults. *PLoS ONE*, 8(8). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0069841>
- Krug, S. (2016, Feb 24). Reactions Now Available Globally. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/02/reactions-now-available-globally/>.
- Ksiazek, T., & Malthouse, E. Webster, J. (2010). News-seekers and avoiders: Exploring patterns of total news consumption across media and the relationship to civic participation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54(4), 551–568.

- Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2011). Addiction to social networks on the Internet: A literature review of empirical research. *International Journal of Environmental and Public Health*, 8, 3528-3552.
- Lada, A., Li, J., & Ding, S. (2017 Jan). New signals to Show You More Authentic and Timely Stories. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/01/news-feed-fyi-new-signals-to-show-you-more-authentic-and-timely-stories>.
- Lapowsky, I. (2019 March 17). How Cambridge Analytica Sparked the Great Privacy Awakening. *Wired*. Retrieved from <https://www.wired.com/story/cambridge-analytica-facebook-privacy-awakening/>.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (1994). On Technical Mediation. *Common Knowledge*, 3(2). 29-64.
- Latour, B. (1996). *Aramis or the Love of Technology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (1999). *Pandora's hope: Essays on the reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B. (2008). Where Are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts. In Johnson, D. J., & Jameson, M. W. (eds.) *Technology and Society, Building Our Sociotechnical Future*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. pp.151-180.
- Lavrusik, V. (2016, Jan 28). Expanding Live Video to More People. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/01/expanding-live-video/>.
- Lazzarato, M., Jordan, J. D. (trans.) (2015). *Governing by Debt*. South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e).

- Leith, S. (2016 Aug). Social media and the persuader's challenge. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.ft.com/content/26236ee6-6ba4-11e6-a0b1-d87a9fea034f>.
- Lemes De Castro, J. C. (2016) 'Social Networks as Dispositives of Neoliberal Governmentality' *Journal of Media Critiques*, Vol. 2, No. 7.
- Lemke, T. (2012). *Foucault, Governmentality and Critique*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- Leonardi, P. M., Nardi, B. A., & Kallinikos, J. (eds.) (2012). *Materiality and organizing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leonardi, P.M., & Barley, S. R. (2008). Materiality and change: Challenges to building better theory about technology and organizing. *Information and Organization*, 18(3), 159–176.
- Lev-On, A., & Haleva-Amir, S. (2018). Normalizing or equalizing? Characterizing Facebook campaigning. *New Media & Society*, 22, 720-739.
- Lewis, J., & West, A. (2009). 'Friending': London-based undergraduates' experience of Facebook. *New Media & Society*, 11(7), 1209–1229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809342058>
- Light, B. (2014). *Disconnecting with Social Networking Sites*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Light, B., & McGrath, K. (2010). Ethics and social networking sites: a disclosive analysis of Facebook. *Information Technology & People*, 23(4), 290-311. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09593841011087770>.
- Light, B., Cassidy, E. (2014). Strategies for the suspension and prevention of connection: Rendering disconnection as socioeconomic lubricant with Facebook'. *New Media & Society*, 16(7), 1169–1184. DOI: 10.1177/1461444814544002.
- Lilja, M., & Vinthagen, S. (2014). Sovereign power, disciplinary power and biopower: resisting what power with what resistance?. *Journal of*

Political Power, 7(1), 107-126. Doi: 10.1080/2158379X.2014.889403

Lincoln, S. Robards, B. (2016). Making it 'Facebook Official': Reflecting on romantic relationships through sustained Facebook Use. *Social Media and Society*, 2(4). 1-10.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116672890>.

Lorenzini, D. (2016). From counter-conduct to critical attitude: Michel Foucault and the art of not being governed quite so much. *Foucault Studies*, 21. 7-21.

Lyndon, A. Bonds-Raacke, J. D Cratty, A. (2011). 'College Students' Facebook Stalking of Ex-Partners'. *Cyberpsychology, behavior and social networking*, 14(12). 711-6. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2010.0588.

Marin, A., & Hampton, K. (2007). Simplifying the personal network name generator. *Field Methods*, 19(2), 163–193.

Marra, C., & Sourov, A. (2015, Oct 6). 'Building for all connectivity'. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2015/10/news-feed-fyi-building-for-all-connectivity/>.

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). 'I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience'. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114–133. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>

Marwick, A., Fontaine, C. boyd, d. (2017). "Nobody sees it, nobody gets mad": Social media, privacy, and personal responsibility among low-SES youth. *Social Media + Society* (online). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117710455>.

Mayer-Schoenberger, V., & Cukier, K. (2013). *Big Data. A Revolution that Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think*. London, UK: John Murray Publishers.

McCarthy, A. (2006). From the Ordinary to the Concrete: Cultural Studies and the Politics of Scale. In Schwoch, J., & White, M. (eds.)

Questions of Method in Cultural Studies. Malden, MA: Blackwell. pp. 21-53.

McCosker, A. (2017). Data literacies for the postdemographic social media self. *First Monday* 10(20). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v22i10.7307>.

McGuigan, J. (2014). The Neoliberal Self. *Culture Unbound*, 6, 223-240.

McLean, C., & Hassard, J. (2004). Symmetrical absence/Symmetrical absurdity: Critical notes on the production of Actor-Network accounts. *Journal of Management Studies*, 41(3), 494-519.

McNamee, R. (2017, August 10). I invested early in Google and Facebook. Now they terrify me. *USA Today*. <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/08/08/my-google-and-facebook-investments-made-fortune-but-now-they-menace/543755001/>.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. 3rd ed. LA, CA: SAGE.

Miller, D., & Venkatraman, S. (2018). Facebook interactions: An ethnographic perspective'. *Social Media + Society*, (online). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118784776>.

Moghadam, V. M. (2013). What is democracy? Promises and perils of the Arab Spring. *Current Sociology*, 61(4), 393–40.

Monahan, T., & Fisher, J. A. (2010). Benefits of 'observer effects': lessons from the field. *Qualitative Research*, 10(3), 357–376.

Moody-Ramirez, M., & Church, A. B. (2019) Analysis of Facebook meme groups used during the 2016 US Presidential election. *Social Media + Society*, (online). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118808799>.

Morgans, J. (2017, July 6). The Inventor of the 'Like' Button Wants You to Stop Worrying About Likes. *Vice*. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/mbag3a/the-inventor-of-the-like-button-wants-you-to-stop-worrying-about-likes.

Morozov, E. (2011). *The Dark side of Internet Freedom: The Net Delusion*. New York: Public Affairs.

Mosseri, A (2018a). From Consumption to Connection. *Facebook for Developers*. Video file. Retrieved from <https://developers.facebook.com/videos/f8-2018/from-consumption-to-connection/>.

Mosseri, A. (2016, June 29). Building a Better News Feed for You. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/06/building-a-better-news-feed-for-you>.

Mosseri, A. (2018, Jan 11). Bringing People Closer Together. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/01/news-feed-fyi-bringing-people-closer-together/>.

Moyer, L. M., & Enck, S. (2018). Is my grief too public for you? The digitalization of grief on Facebook'. *Death Studies* (online). doi: 10.1080/07481187.2018.1522388.

Mueller, (2019). The Special Counsel's Indictment of the Internet Research Agency and Others. *New York Times*. Pdf text. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/16/us/politics/document-The-Special-Counsel-s-Indictment-of-the-Internet.html>.

Mundt, M., Ross, K., & Burnett, C. M. (2018). Scaling social movements through social media: The case of Black Lives Matter. *Social Media and Society*, (online). doi: 10.1177/2056305118807911.

- Murthy, D. (2018). Introduction to social media, activism, and organizations. *Social Media + Society*, (online). doi: 10.1177/2056305117750716.
- Nagy, P., & Neff, G. (2015). Imagined affordance: Reconstructing a keyword for communication theory. *Social Media+ Society*, 1(2), 1–9.
- Neff, G. & Nafus, D. (2016) *Self-Tracking*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Newsroom (2018a). News Feed Ranking in Three Minutes Flat. *Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/05/inside-feed-news-feed-ranking/>.
- Newsroom (2018b). The Three Part Recipe for Cleaning up Your News Feed. *Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/05/inside-feed-reduce-remove-inform/>.
- Newsroom (2018c). Head of Analytics explains how News Feed works. *Newsroom*. Retrieved from: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/04/inside-feed-zigmond-podcast/>.
- Nguyen, S., & Freitas, R. (2017 Aug 15). Making News Feed an easier place to connect and navigate'. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/08/making-news-feed-an-easier-place-to-connect-and-navigate/>.
- Nimmo, R. (2012). *Milk, Modernity and the Making of the Human: Purifying the Social*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Nissenbaum, H. (2011). From pre-emption to circumvention: if technology regulates, why do we need regulation (and vice versa)? *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 26(3), 1367–1386. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38BQ3P>.
- O'Neil, L. (2019 Feb 1). Delete your account: leaving Facebook can make you happier, study finds. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/feb/01/facebook-mental-health-study-happiness-delete-account>.

- Oakes, O. (2019, Aug 28). Facebook launches UK ad campaign to promote privacy controls. *Campaign Live*. Retrieved from: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/facebook-launches-uk-ad-campaign-promote-privacy-controls/1594936>.
- Osatuyi, B. (2013). Information sharing on social media sites. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 29(6), 2622–2631.
- Oudshoorn, N., & Pinch, T. (eds.) (2003). *How Users Matter The Co-Construction of Users and Technologies*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Oudshoorn, N., Rommes, E., & Stienstra, M. (2004) 'Configuring the User as Everybody: Gender and Design Cultures in Information and Communication Technologies'. *Science Technology Human Values*, 29(1), 30-63. DOI: 10.1177/0162243903259190.
- Owens, E., & Vickery, D. (2014 Sept 14). Showing More Timely Stories from Friends and Pages. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2014/09/news-feed-fyi-showing-more-timely-stories-from-friends-and-pages/>.
- Pace, J. (2018). The concept of digital capitalism. *Communication Theory*, 28(3), 254–269. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtx009>.
- Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Pariser, E. (2012). *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*. London: Penguin.
- Pavez, T. C. I. (2016). Digital Inclusion in Rural Areas: A Qualitative Exploration of Challenges Faced by People From Isolated Communities 21(3), 247-263. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12154>.
- Pedwell, C. (2016). Mediated Habits: Images, networked affect and social change. *Subjectivity* (Online), 1-23). doi: 10.1057/s41286-017-0025-y.

- Pedwell, C. (2017). Habit and the politics of social change: A Comparison of nudge theory and pragmatist philosophy. *Body and society*, 23(4), 59–94. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X17734619>.
- Pfaffenberger, B. (1992). Technological dramas. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 17(3), 282-312.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/016224399201700302>.
- Pichert, D., & Katsikopoulos, K. V. (2008). Green defaults: information presentation and pro-environmental behaviour. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28, 63-73.
- Pickett, B. L. (1996). Foucault and the Politics of Resistance. *Polity*, 28(4), pp. 445-466
- Prasad, M. (2006). *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Quattrociocchi, W., Scala, A., & Sunstein, C. R. (2016). 'Echo Chambers on Facebook'. Available at SSRN: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2795110>.
- Raibley, J. (2013). Health and well-being. *Philosophical Studies*, 165(2), 469-489. doi: from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42920516>.
- Rains, S. A., & Brunner, S. R. (2015). What can we learn about social network sites by studying Facebook? A call and recommendations for research on social network sites. *New media & society*, 17(1), 114–131.
- Reed, T. V. (2014). *Digitalized Lives: Culture, Power and Social Change in the Internet Era*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Richards, L. (2015). *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.
- Ritzer, G., Dean, P., & Jurgenson, N. (2012). The Coming of Age of the Prosumer. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 56(4), 379–398.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211429368>

- Roberts, S., & Dunbar, R. (2010). Communication in social networks: Effects of kinship, network size, and emotional closeness. *Personal Relationships*, 18(3), 439–452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01310.x>
- Rommes, E. (2002). *Gender Scripts and the Internet: the Design and Use of Amsterdam's Digital City*. (Enschede: Twente University Press).
- Rose, R. (1998). *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenblum, K. E. (1987). The In-depth interview: Between science and sociability. *Sociological Forum*, 2(2). 388-400.
- Russell, D. W. (1996). UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3): Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 66(1), 20–40. doi: https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa6601_2.
- Ryan, F. (2018 April 4) The missing link: why disabled people can't afford to #DeleteFacebook. *Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/apr/04/missing-link-why-disabled-people-cant-afford-delete-facebook-social-media>.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2008). Living well: A self-determination theory perspective on eudaimonia. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9(139), 139-170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9023-4>.
- Saha, A. (2012). "Beards, scarves, halal meat, terrorists, forced marriage": Television industries and the production of "race." *Media, Culture & Society*, 34(4), 424–438.
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers 2nd Edn*. London: Sage.
- Sanghvi, R. (2006, Sep 5). Facebook gets a facelift. *Facebook Notes*. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/facebook-gets-a-facelift/2207967130/>

- Sauter, T. (2014). 'What's on your mind?' Writing on Facebook as a tool for self-formation. *New Media & Society*, 16(5), 823–839.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813495160>
- Schiller, D. (1999). *Digital Capitalism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Schmidt, T. S. (2006, Sept 6). 'Inside the backlash against Facebook'. *Time*. Retrieved from:
<http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1532225,00.html>.
- Schonfeld, E. (2009, March 4). Facebook's response to Twitter. *Techcrunch*. Retrieved from
<https://techcrunch.com/2009/03/04/facebooks-response-to-twitter/>.
- Schrage, E. (2017, June 15). Introducing Hard Questions. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from
<https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/06/hard-questions/>.
- Schüll, N. D. (2012). *Addiction by Design: Machine gambling in Las Vegas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Schüll, N. D. (2016). Data for life: Wearable technology and the design of self-care. *BioSocieties*, 11(3), 17-333.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/biosoc.2015.47>.
- Schultz, T. (1961). Investment in Human Capital. *American Economic Review*, 51, 1-17.
- Schwarz, O. (2019). Facebook Rules: Structures of Governance in Digital Capitalism and the Control of Generalized Social Capital. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36(4), 117–141. doi:
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276419826249>
- Selwyn, N. (2004). Reconsidering Political and Popular Understandings of the Digital Divide. *New Media and Society*, 6(3). 341–362. doi:
[10.1177/1461444804042519](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444804042519).

- Sengers et al. (2005). Reflective Design. CC '05 *Proceedings of the 4th Decennial Conference on Critical Computing: Between Sense and Sensibility*, 5, 49–58. doi: 10.1145/1094562.1094569
- Shade, L. R. (2007). Feminizing the mobile: Gender scripting of mobiles in North America. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 21(2), 179–189. doi: 10.1080/10304310701269032.
- Shen, J. (2019). Making public comments more meaningful. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://about.fb.com/news/2019/06/making-public-comments-more-meaningful/>
- Shoemaker, P. J. (1996). Hardwired for news: Using biological and cultural evolution to explain the surveillance function. *Journal of Communication*, 46(3), 320-47.
- Shoemaker, P. J. (2006). 'News and newsworthiness: A commentary'. *Communications*, 31, 105-111. doi: 10.1515/COMMUN.2006.007.
- Sieber, A. (2019). Does Facebook Violate its users' basic human rights? *Nanoethics*, 13(2). 139–145. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11569-019-00345-4>.
- Silverstone, R. (1994). The power of the ordinary: On Cultural Studies and the sociology of culture. *Sociology*, 28(4), 991-1001. doi: www.jstor.org/stable/42857781.
- Simons, J. (1995). *Foucault and the Political*. London: Routledge.
- Singel, R. (2010, Aug 18). Facebook launches 'check-in' service to connect people in real space. *Wired*. <https://www.wired.com/2010/08/watch-facebooks-location-sharing-announcement-live/>
- Skeggs, B., & Yuill, S. (2016). The methodology of a multi-model project examining how Facebook infrastructures social relations. *Information, Communication and Society*, 19(10), 1356-1372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1091026>

Smith, J., Jackson, G., & Leavitt, A. (2018, April 8). Designing New Ways to Give Context to News Stories. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/04/inside-feed-article-context/>.

Spangler, T. (2018 Feb 28). Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg. *Variety*. Retrieved from <https://variety.com/2018/digital/news/facebook-sheryl-sandberg-social-media-well-being-1202713211/>

Splichal, S. (1999). *Public Opinion: Developments and Controversies in the Twentieth Century*. Maryland: Rowman and Littleford.

Spohr, D. (2017). Fake news and ideological polarization: filter bubbles and selective exposure on social media, *Business Information Review*, 34(3), 150–160.

Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Standlee, A. (2018). Friendship and online filtering: The use of social media to construct offline social networks. *New media & society* (online) <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818806844>.

Stanfill, M. (2015). The interface as discourse: The production of norms through web design. *New Media & Society*, 17(7), 1059–1074. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814520873>.

Statista (2019). 'Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 2nd quarter 2019 (in millions)'. *Statista*. Retrieved from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>.

Stedman Jones, D. (2012). *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Steers, M., & Wickham, R. (2014). Seeing everyone else's highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 33(8), 701–731.

Stevens et al. (2017). The digital hood: Social media use among youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods.' *new media & society*, 19(6), 950 – 967.

Stevens, R., Bleakley, A., Hennessy, M. et al. (2018). #digital hood: engagement with risk content on social media among black and hispanic youth. *Journal of Urban Health* (Online)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-018-0314-y>.

Stocky, T. (2014, Dec 8). Updates to Facebook Search. *Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved from:
<https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2014/12/updates-to-facebook-search/>.

Stoycheff, E., Liu, Y., Wibowo, K. A., & Nanni, D. P. (2017). What have we learned about social media by studying Facebook? A decade in review. *New media & society*, 19, 1–13. doi:
[/doi.org/10.1177/1461444817695745](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817695745).

Strandberg, K. (2013). A social media revolution or just a case of history repeating itself? The use of social media in the 2011 Finnish parliamentary elections. *New media & society*, 15(8), 1329–1347.

Stupp, C. (2018, May 23). MEPs outraged over Zuckerberg's EU Parliament show. *EUACTIV*. Retrived from:
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/data-protection/news/meps-outraged-over-zuckerbergs-eu-parliament-show/>.

Sujon et al. (2018). Domesticating Facebook: The shift from compulsive connection to personal service platform. *Social Media + Society*, (online). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118803895>.

Sumner, E., Ruge-Jones, L., & Alcorn, A. (2017). A functional approach to the Facebook Like button: An exploration of meaning, interpersonal functionality, and potential alternative response buttons. *New media & society*, 20(4) 1–19. doi: 10.1177/1461444817697917.

Sunstein, C. R. (2017). *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Sussman, W. (1984). *Culture as history: The transformation of American society in the 20th century*. New York: Pantheon.
- Thaler, R., & Sunstein, C. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth and happiness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Thompson, N. (2018, June 7). How Facebook checks facts and polices hate speech. *Wired*. Retrieved from <https://www.wired.com/story/how-facebook-checks-facts-and-polices-hate-speech/>.
- Toma, C. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2013). Self-affirmation underlies Facebook use. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(3), 321–331. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212474694>
- Treem, J. W. & Leonardi, P. M. (2012). Social media use in organizations: exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. *Communication Yearbook*, 36, 143–189.
- Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone Together*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Twenge, J. (2017). Have smartphones destroyed a generation? *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/>.
- Twigt, M. A. (2018). The Mediation of Hope: Digital Technologies and Affective Affordances Within Iraqi Refugee Households in Jordan. *Social Media + Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118764426>
- Valverde, M. (1998). *Diseases of the Will: Alcohol and the Dilemmas of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Van Dijck, J. (2014). Datafication, dataism and dataveillance: Big Data between scientific paradigm and ideology. *Surveillance & Society*, 12(2). 197-208.

- Van Dijck, J. Poell, T. (2013). Understanding Social Media Logic (August 12, 2013). *Media and Communication*, 1(1), 2-14. Retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2309065>.
- Van Dijck, J. Poell, T., De Waal, M. (2018) *The Platform Society*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Van Oost, E. (2003). Materialized gender: How shavers configure the users' femininity and masculinity. In Oudshoorn, N. Pinch, T. (eds.) *How Users Matter The Co-Construction of Users and Technologies* (pp. 193-209). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Venkatraman, S. 2017. *Social Media in South India*. London, England: UCL Press.
- Verbeek, P. (2005). *What things do: philosophical reflections on technology, agency and design*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Verduyn, P., Lee, D. S., Park, J., Shablack, H., Orvell, A., Bayer, J., ... & Kross, E. (2015). 'Passive Facebook usage undermines affective well-being: Experimental and longitudinal evidence'. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144(2), 480-488. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/xge0000057>.
- Verduyn, P., Ybarra, P., Résibois, M., Jonides, J., & Kross, E. (2017). Do social network sites enhance or undermine subjective well-being? A critical review. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 11(1), 274-302. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12033>.
- Welcome to the News Feed (2019). *Welcome to the News Feed*. Retrieved from: <https://newsfeed.fb.com/welcome-to-news-feed/>.
- Whitehead, M., Jones, R., & Pykett, J. (2011). Governing irrationality, or a more than rational government? Reflections on the re-scientisation of decision making in British public policy. *Environment and Planning*, 43, 2819-2837.

- Whittle, A., Spicer, A. (2009) Is Actor Network Theory Critique? *Organization Studies* 29(04), 611–629. doi: 10.1177/0170840607082223
- Williams, C., & Gulati, G. J. (2009). The political impact of Facebook: Evidence from the 2006 elections and 2008 nomination contest. In Panagopoulos, C. (ed.) *Politicking online: The transformation of election campaign communications*. East Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. pp. 272–291.
- Williams, R. (2002). Culture is Ordinary. In Highmore, B. (ed.) *The Everyday Life Reader*. London Routledge. pp. 91-100.
- Wilson et al. (2012). A review of Facebook research in the social sciences. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(3), 203–220.
- Winner, L. (1980). Do artefacts have politics? *Daedalus*, 109(1), 121-136.
- Wise et al. (2010). Emotional responses during social information seeking on Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, behaviour and social networking*, 13(5), 555-562.
- Wohn, D. Y., Carr, C . T., & Hayes, R. A. (2016). How affective is a “Like”? The effect of paralinguistic digital affordances on perceived social support. *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking*, 19(9), doi: 10.1089/cyber.2016.0162.
- Wolfsfeld, G., Segev, G., & Sheafer, T. (2013). Social media and the Arab spring: Politics comes first. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(2), 115–137.
- Wong, J. C. (2017 12 Dec). Former Facebook executive: social media is ripping society apart. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/dec/11/facebook-former-executive-ripping-society-apart>.

Woolgar, S. (1991). Configuring the User: The Case of Usability Trials. In Law, J. (ed.). *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination* (pp. 58–99). London, UK: Routledge.

Wright, C. (2013). Against Flourishing: Wellbeing as Biopolitics, and the Psychoanalytic Alternative. *Journal of Health, Culture and Society*, 5(1), 20-35. <https://doi.org/10.5195/hcs.2013.151>.

Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. New York: Public Affairs.

Zuckerberg, M. (2006 Sept 6). Calm down. Breathe. We hear you. *Facebook notes*. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/calm-down-breathe-we-hear-you/2208197130/>.

Zuckerberg, M. (2017, Feb 16). Building Global Community. *Facebook*. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/notes/mark-zuckerberg/building-global-community/10154544292806634.1>.

Appendix

Interview schedule of questions

1) Opening questions:

- Age?
- Occupation?
- How long have you been a member of Facebook?
- How often do you use Facebook?
- How often do you check Facebook for notifications?

2) Basic structure of questioning about posts:

- What is the post (status/photo/video etc.)?
- Who posted it?
- When was it was posted?
- Why do you think that individual posted that object?

3) Ask questions specifically pertaining to that post. For example:

- If the post has received likes: 'Why do you think this post has received this number of likes?'
- If the post has received comments: why do you think this post has comments?'

4) Repeat stages 2 & 3 a number of times, interspersed with questions from the list below:

- Can you talk about the content you post on Facebook?
- What do you think a post has to 'do' to receive attention on the News Feed?
- Do you think people post certain things simply to be seen on the News Feed?
- Do you feel as if people share certain things over others?
- Why do think people share certain events more than others?
- Do you think it matters what time of day certain posts are posted?
- Do you think people post certain things they know will receive attention on the News Feed?

5) Once the participant has answered all the questions above, ask questions from the list below:

- Do you think there is any element of 'success' or 'failure' on the News Feed?
- Do you think any element of ranking is observable on the News Feed?
- What does the position of each post on the News Feed mean to you?
- Do you ever imagine your posts appearing on other News Feeds?

- Can you talk about how it feels if your post receives a lot of attention on the News Feed?
- What do likes mean to you?
- Do you ever wonder what people will think of your posts?
- Have you ever considered if others will see your posts?
- Have you ever worried about something you have posted?
- Have you ever posted something knowing that it would get a lot of attention?
- Have you ever posted something thinking it would probably not get a lot of attention?
- Do you think people post things at certain times of the day to get a certain response?
- How often are you in scenarios where what you are doing could potentially be captured and posted on Facebook?
- Do you ever think about how your behaviour might appear on Facebook?
- Do you think that people consider how something will look on Facebook before they carry out a certain action?
- Have you ever worried about how your behaviour might look on Facebook before engaging with or during a certain activity?

Page intentionally left blank.

