Privacy and Power in Social Space: Facebook

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examine the impact of interaction and participation on Facebook between private individuals and certain hierarchical groups in society, particularly with regard to individual privacy; consider the structure of Facebook's privacy programming; and seek to establish where the balance of power lies between private individuals and commercial, political and media organisations. I make reference to Foucault's theory of power, Bourdieu's theories of power in social space and habitus and Althusser's theory of interpellation as I record my research.

This thesis is a qualitative research project, and I employ Critical Discourse Analysis as the principal research methodology. I focus on four cases studies: Facebook both as the internet platform which facilitates such interaction and the company which operates it; the developers of applications, such as online games, which are mounted on the platform; the network's use by political parties and their leaders during the UK 2010 General Election campaign; and traditional media platforms as represented by two television annual 'events'.

My findings relate the manner in which individual users are constantly prompted to upload content, principally personal information, thoughts, preferences and relationships to the network, and simultaneously are pressurised into granting access to this information as they seek to fully participate on the social platform. This pressure is applied through applications that are mounted on the platform by commercial, media and political organisations, and I find that Facebook's affordances to applications developers are instrumental in this process. My research associates these processes with the aforementioned theories of Foucault, Althusser and Bourdieu.

My conclusion is that while Facebook continually revises its privacy policy to grant private individuals control over the content, that is the personal information, they upload to the social network, access to this information is a prerequisite for their full participation in the network. Facebook's continuous introduction of new programmes ensures that private individuals have to choose between interaction and participation on the social network, or exclusion as access to many of the activities it offers is conditional on third party access to their personal information. Further pressure to grant access to the required information is applied through the ability of organisations to feature photographs of users' Friends who are already using the relevant application. The processes indicate that Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg is slowly progressing his aim to place the social network at the centre of a newly structured Web based on private individuals.

Key terms: social network; participation; interaction; privacy; power

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis represents the original work of Margot Buchanan unless explicitly stated otherwise in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out at the University of Stirling, under the supervision of Dr Graham Meikle and Dr Richard Haynes, during the period September 2008 to December 2011.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Facebook, the Social Network Site (SNS, social platform or social network) is a digital media phenomenon. When it was founded in 2004, its purpose was to provide a communication and support network for students at one North American university only, Harvard. Registration was subsequently extended to include those with an email address from one of Harvard's associate educational institutions. Registration restrictions were gradually withdrawn until by 2006 (boyd 2007: unpaginated) there were none in place and, whilst the website operated an open door policy, it continued to provide its services free of charge. In February 2009, it was recorded as having 175 million subscribers, and that figure was rising by five million every week (Hempel 2009). By autumn 2011, the SNS's popularity had grown exponentially and the number of its registered users from around the globe had risen to more than 750 million (Facebook Adverts 2011).

Social network environment

The social platform was the most frequently visited website in many countries, from Indonesia, to Nigeria, to Argentina (alexa.com 2011), although local social network sites predominate in countries such as Brazil, China, Japan, the Netherlands and Russia (Ofcom.org 2010). These local social networks enjoyed the advantage of being well established before Facebook was available (ibid.), but Ofcom's Communication Market Report 2010 notes evidence that local social networks may eventually lose users to Facebook. This was based on the situation recorded in Germany, where in November 2008, online traffic to local network StudiVZ

outnumbered Facebook by three to one. By September 2010, the situation had been reversed, with online traffic to Facebook dominant by four to one.

Facebook was the second most popular website in the United States of America, with Google being the most visited while in the United Kingdom, Facebook was the most popular social network site and the third most popular website after Google.co.uk and Google.com (ibid.). While social networks such as MySpace and Bebo had been developed, become popular and subsequently lost users to other new social platforms on the World Wide Web, Facebook's popularity has continued to grow.

Research aims

Much academic research is focused on how individual users utilise Social Network Sites, including Facebook, and examines issues such as online presentation of the self (boyd (2004); Donath and boyd (2004), friending and usage (Golder, Wilkinson and Huberman (2007), Ellison, Lampe, and Steinfield (2007); privacy, (Gross and Acquisti (2005; 2006), Lewis et al (2008)); the investment in social capital on SNSs (Zywica and Danowski (2008), Zhao (2006)). This thesis looks beyond the use of the website by private individuals, with research conducted between 2008 and September 2011. It examines

1. The Facebook platform; its structure; affordances; and operations

2. How it is used by representatives of social hierarchical organisations such commercial, political and media entities.

The thesis has two aims:

- To examine the impact on individuals' privacy of their participation and interaction on and with Facebook, and on the publicly accessible pages established on the SNS by commercial and professional organisations

- To examine how power is reflected on the social platform. It draws upon theories of privacy, visibility, surveillance and dataveillance, and on theories of power in social space.

Facebook traffic

In June 2011, more than 42% of global Internet users were recorded as having visited Facebook in just one day (alexa.com: 5/6/2011). The web information company stated that more than 41.7% of global Internet users had visited the social platform during the preceding three months to that day, (ibid), and that 1,216,699 other websites were linked to Facebook (ibid). The American newspaper, *The Wall Street Journal*, meanwhile, reported in May 2011 that Facebook Inc. was forecast to make more than $2 billion dollars before interest and tax (Das and Fowler 2011). Should that forecast be true, the newspaper predicted Facebook would be one of the world's largest technology companies, larger than online retailer Amazon (ibid.), while its financial value was estimated to be more than $.66.5bn in the approach to the company being floated on the stock market (*Financial Times* 2011).

These figures indicate that by 2011, Facebook appears to have eluded the fate which struck earlier rivals in the social network environment and instead has gone from strength to strength. While the website's initial university and college focus had lent Facebook the perceived appearance of a closed 'intimate, private community' (boyd 2007:1) with a clearly defined set of users, by 2011 Facebook had lost any illusion of exclusivity. It had been transformed from a social network initially designed for communication between an exclusive, small and restricted group of students into one which had become a global phenomenon.

State apparatus

The exponential growth in Facebook usage and its success within the social network site environment has led to its adoption by what the Frankfurt School and Althusser (1970) refer to as the apparatuses of state. Althusser divides state apparatus into two categories: the repressive state apparatus, the umbrella term which covers governments; administrations and the army, while religious; education; political and communication organisations and the family are categorised as ideological state apparatus. Facebook hosts pages for government – including the U.S.A.'s CIA - armed forces and educational institutions as well as major commercial and media companies and political organisations. The adoption of the website by these institutions and companies suggests a change in the meaning of *social* in SNS terms, moving from the personal relationships between, and activities of, private individuals towards matters pertaining to society in general. The extent of Facebook's perceived influence is perhaps best indicated by a headline from CNN's online magazine *Fortune* on 16th February 2009 which claimed 'President Obama used it to get elected. Dell will recruit new hires with it …No question, Facebook has friends in high places' (ibid). It is the extent of the social network's adoption by societal hierarchies which has prompted this research project.

Self promotion

Despite its current attraction for private users, state institutions and commercial companies, Facebook's genesis is not that of a community built around shared interests. Like earlier social platforms such as Friends Reunited, Bebo and MySpace, it was principally targeted at private individuals and became synonymous with the early twenty-first century phenomenon that is online social networking. Similar to other SNSs, Facebook enables private individuals to create and publish personal profiles,

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communicate with friends, share likes and dislikes, religious beliefs and political affiliations and upload favourite photographs, music and video clips. It therefore offers a range of digital affordances on one platform. Boyd and Ellison (2007) describe them as 'personal (or egocentric) networks with the individual at the center of their own community' (unpaginated). The same affordances for self promotion provided by Facebook which attracted private individuals to the social network have proved to be equally attractive to commercial and institutional organisations, as the *Alexa* and *Wall Street Journal* figures reveal.

Since Facebook's launch in 2004, the website has attracted millions of users who have embraced its key features of 'participation, interactivity and social networking' Flew (2008: 17). These users, in 2011, could therefore not only communicate with and participate in friends' online activities, but also communicate and interact with government, state, and commercial organisations on a platform on which not only the geographic but also the social distance which exists offline between individuals and these institutions appeared to have dissolved. What founder Mark Zuckerberg and network users have created in Facebook, therefore, is an online environment which elides the social, spatial and temporal boundaries of off- line sociability.

News Feed

Privacy has, however, been an on-going source of discontent amongst Facebook users. In 2006, the company upset its users when it introduced the News Feed on all users' landing pages (boyd 2008). This new feature publishes a list of the on-site activities of users' Facebook Friends (Friends is capitalised to clearly differentiate between mutually agreed friendship ties between network users and friends offline) as they post and change their status or preferences on their own profile pages and interact

with friends and acquaintances. Each action they perform on Facebook is collated to form a stream of information which features on the opening page that greets users' Friends when they log on. Facebook, in 2008, considered all Friend relationships to hold equal status and users' actions became visible to both close friends and casual acquaintances whom users had accepted as Friends. As boyd (2008) notes, although the information would have been visible on each individual's page, the News Feed collated all of all Friends' actions and published them in a constant stream of news and information. Since 2010, Facebook has enabled users to select the individuals to whom their posts are visible.

Visibility

As a result, any action performed by users on Facebook became highly visible and increased the surveillance opportunities on a peer-to-peer level. Dependent upon the privacy settings imposed by individual users, the actions could also be viewed by Friends of Friends, networks, any other Facebook user and potentially anyone on the web. The privacy settings available to site users have changed over the years, but Facebook's default setting remains unrestricted. Of the users who failed to impose adequate privacy restrictions because they were either unaware of the privacy options, or considered the platform was a private, gated community, or simply ignored the option to impose privacy restrictions, many have paid the price for the high level of visibility that their Facebook profiles have gained.

As Thompson notes, visibility in the public domain can be 'uncontrollable' (2005: 38), while the consequential potential for surveillance, panoptic and synoptic practices and the concomitant risk to private security that they present cannot be ignored. Social networks such as Facebook enable the few to watch the many, the many to watch the few, the many to watch the many, and the few to watch the few while at

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the same time they may convey private lives and experiences from the domestic domain into the public realm. As a consequence, the posting of personal issues and communication by certain users on their Facebook pages resulted in their communications also becoming highly visible on traditional media platforms. Information posted on the SNS has been cited in various news stories:

- a husband murdered his estranged wife – he was angry when she changed her status on her Facebook page to 'single' (Ferguson, 2008)

- a female juror was dismissed from a trial after she posted details of the case on her Facebook page and asked for her friends' opinions of the defendant's guilt (*The Times*: 25/11/2008 p. 11)

- a teenager was sacked after her employers learned she had described her new job as 'boring' on her Facebook page (Morgan (2008)

The results of comments posted on Facebook in these examples, only a few of the many newspaper articles prompted by individuals' revelations on their Facebook pages, may be attributed to the inattention to privacy settings by the individuals concerned. Clearly, however, the information posted on users' pages gained a higher visibility than possibly expected. It is certainly not possible to know the level of privacy restrictions the individuals concerned had imposed on their pages, if any, but the imposition of privacy settings does not necessarily prevent private information entering the public domain.

Boyd identifies four key elements of communication on 'networked publics' (2011: 46) such as social networks: persistence; replicability; scalability and searchability (ibid). It is persistent because, while individuals may subsequently delete

comments they have made on their Facebook pages, 'online expressions are automatically recorded and archived' (ibid: 46) by the companies which operate the relevant platform. Sections of online communication may be copied and re-used; the potential visibility of online content may be far greater than anticipated – comments may be copied and forwarded to others by those with access to it; content posted on networks such as Facebook may often be accessed through Internet searches.

Privacy

The point boyd is making is that users are unable to totally control either how the content they upload is used, or its visibility. This thesis will chart how issues of privateness and publicness are negotiated on Facebook. The network has a lengthy privacy policy and, although the default setting is visible to everyone on Facebook and the Web, it offers users a substantial number of detailed privacy settings which users can employ to control who can access the content they upload. With the exception of the default setting of 'available to all', the vast majority of these settings enable users to regulate to whom amongst their Facebook Friends different categories of their content, such as photographs or videos, may be visible. This thesis focuses on how accessible users' content may be to commercial, media and political organisations which create public pages on Facebook in order to interact with private individuals, and the power which users are given to control the visibility of their personal information.

Privacy is a major issue for many of the site's registered users - the level of protest which resulted in February 2009 from the site's attempt to change their terms of use and in 2010 from proposals which would have seen more of users' personal information entering the public domain is evidence of how serious many subscribers view the principle. These protests indicate that certain Facebook users regard the information, photographs and communication they post on the site as private, and they

challenged the company after it changed its terms of use. The 2009 move, for example, would have given Facebook permanent rights over the contents of users' pages, even if users subsequently deleted the information and photographs or de-activated their account. But the extent of users' influence over the company was noticeable when Facebook reversed its decision within days. In 2010, the company introduced new privacy settings apparently granting users more control over their content on site.

The commercial imperative

While access to the site is password protected, the privacy options which restrict access to individuals' personal pages have been subject to repeated revisions since 2009. Regardless of privacy settings, the company itself records and stores all content posted on users' pages. This information has a high commercial value, and Facebook seeks to monetize users' actions on the site to compensate for the fact that registration with and use of the social platform is free. The SNS has therefore been caught in a vice; it is apparently trapped between pressure from vocal users attempting to safeguard their privacy on one side and the commercial imperative to make money from user content on the other.

The site's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, has been planning far into the future, according to CNN's *Fortune* magazine (Hemple 2009). He wants to see the continuing and global expansion of the site, and imagines it as 'the main tool people use to communicate for work and pleasure … the central place where … people live their digital lives' (Zuckerberg (2009(a) in Hempel 2009). Zuckerberg can be seen to have envisaged Facebook as an online, global social space. But social space is not democratic as both Bourdieu (1989) and Castells (2009) have pointed out. Bourdieu comments 'symbolic relations of power tend to reproduce and to reinforce the power relations that constitute the structure of social space' (1989: 21), while Castells has

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commented that the 'discourses that frame and regulate social life are never the expression of "society" … [but] are crystallized power relationships' (ibid: 14) in which certain actors in society use their power to influence other social actors to behave in a way which benefits the powerful (ibid: 14). These notions are examined in relation to Facebook as the social platform positions users' information and actions on the site at the heart of a power struggle between private individuals who use the SNS, and the Facebook website and its institutional and commercial users.

Thesis outline

This thesis seeks to establish how the issues of privacy and power are negotiated on the social space that is Facebook, a symbol of 'all the relevant features we associate with twenty-first-century society' (Gruber 2008: 54), including decentralisation, multimodality and interactivity. New, or digital media, have changed the landscape of communication, 'have had a tremendous effect on communicative and discursive practices and have fostered the emergence of new communicative styles and genres (Bolter 1997 in Gruber 2008: 54).

Chapter Two sets the contextual background of the development of online social networks, and considers recent theoretical debates focused on new media and SNS such as Facebook. I discuss developments in the broadcast media, in communication, in technical advancements which enabled social networks to be established, in the progress of the private individual into the public domain, and the cultural impact of such individuals having a public voice.

Chapter Three details and explains the research method employed in the research process. I detail and support my decision to write a qualitative thesis based on Facebook, and my adoption of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine public

pages on the social platform, consider the ethical implications of online research and reflect on the research process.

Empirical research begins in Chapter Four, with an examination of how Facebook operates in relation to user privacy. I apply CDA to Facebook's privacy statement and the privacy settings it offers private individuals, before moving on to consider the consequences of its programming, algorithms and the affordances these offer commercial, media and political organisations.

In Chapter Five I examine the role of applications on the social network; the technical options made available to applications developers by Facebook Inc.; and how these are employed by commercial companies when private individuals participate on and interact with the publicly accessible pages established on Facebook by the companies. I examine both the communication practices and the privacy policies of the developers of different types of applications, and consider the impact of these on users' ability to control access to their personal information.

Chapter Six considers how Facebook is employed by UK broadcasting companies. I focus on the use of the social network by the broadcasters of two major television event programmes, *Strictly Come Dancing* (BBC 1) and *X Factor* ((ITV 1), and examine how the broadcasters encourage participation by fans on Facebook. I further consider the implications on users' privacy of this interaction and participation, and whether they are empowered by the opportunities offered.

In the penultimate chapter, Chapter Seven, I consider how Facebook was employed by the three main political parties in the approach to the 2010 UK General Election. I examine the ways in which the politicians and their parties interacted with private individuals on Facebook, the impact on individuals' privacy and whether this

new vehicle for communication can be considered as empowering Facebook users and engendering a more participatory environment for national politics.

In Chapter Eight, I present my conclusion on the consequences to users of their participation and interaction with commercial, media, and political organisations on Facebook, with particular emphasis on their privacy and how power is made manifest in this form of online interaction.

Chapter 2

Critical Context

This chapter examines the critical context within which Facebook, as a social network, has developed. It is divided into two sections in order to first consider academic literature on the two key elements around which this thesis is constructed, privacy and power. Firstly, I consider Facebook in relation to the dichotomy of the public and private spheres and the development of a third, social sphere. I then progress to review the technological developments that have led to the formation of Facebook as an online social network, and the consequential sociological changes.Section One:

Privacy

The concept of private/public spheres is one that has been much debated in academia and there are competing theoretical frameworks on the theory's apparently binary polarity. The origin of private and public spheres is traced to Ancient Greece by scholars such as Papacharissi (2010), Nissenbaum (2010), Livingstone (2005) and Habermas (1962/1989). In his influential work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, (1962/1989), Habermas looks back to the practice by property-owning men in Ancient Greece of regularly meeting in a public forum to discuss issues of national importance free from state intervention. Their domestic, financial and commercial business, meanwhile, remained strictly private. Habermas sees a rebirth of this division of society into two separate spheres in Western European countries, including Britain, following the 15th century invention of the printing press and the subsequent industrialisation of previously agrarian economies. Increasing literacy, printed newssheets and growing urbanisation led to the development of a bourgeois public sphere. The *agora* of Ancient Greece was replaced by coffee houses and other

public meeting places, environments free from political and domestic concerns, and again the participants were solely property owning men. This served to create a clear division between what was regarded as being of public interest, for example political and state concerns, and what was considered to be personal and thus confined to the domestic domain, a private sphere hidden from public view.

But for Habermas, this new public forum eventually fell victim to the subsequent expansion of the commercially driven mass media (1992: 170); capitalism (ibid: 155); and the growing interventionist state, (ibid: 155), leading to the 'refeudilization' (1992: 155) of modern society. As a result, a sphere developed which is 'neither … purely private nor … genuinely public' (1992: 151). Habermas's theory has been criticised as being discriminatory, with access to his bourgeois public sphere restricted to property owning males only. Feminists (Carter and Steiner, 2004; McLaughlin, 1993; Fraser, 1992) claim that this division of society into public and private spheres discriminates against women, since they have traditionally been principally associated with the domestic realm, and also because it serves to impose a public silence on issues of concern within the private domain, such as domestic violence. Fraser further argues that the classifications 'private' and 'public' are discriminatory labels which perpetuate a system of unofficial segregation within society (1992: 131). She suggests that 'a multiplicity of publics is preferable to a single public sphere' (ibid: 137) in order that all voices may be heard.

Touchstone

Hartley (1996), Dahlgren (1995), and Thompson (1995) have also contested Habermas's vision of one public sphere and the role of the media in its demise as the site of rational debate. They argue that the media has played a pivotal role in the formation of modern democracy, and that their impact on the public sphere has been

beneficial. As Nissenbaum (2010) notes, technical developments in communication and the media in particular have challenged the traditional concept of a public sphere. It remains, however, a touchstone in debates around the distinction between topics that belong in the public domain, and those which should remain private and hidden. Dahlgren, for example, argues, similar to Fraser that while the term ''public sphere' is most often used in the singular form … sociological realism points to the plural' (2005: 148), since it constitutes 'many different spaces' (ibid: 148) of which the Internet is one since it 'extends and pluralizes the public sphere in a number of ways' (ibid: 148), an argument supported by (Castells (2007; Rheingold 2005; Thompson 2005). Castells (2007), for example, argues that the Internet has led to the establishment of a global public sphere which is not constrained by national boundaries, and which as a result impacts upon politics, industry and economies.

Hartley (1996) also takes issue with the notion of a single public sphere, arguing that such a view is too simplistic in postmodern times. He envisages a multiplicity of interconnected spheres of which a public, (political) sphere is only one and considers persistent criticism of the modern mass media by, for example, Habermas, cultural theorists and feminists, is misplaced. He points to the significant role played by the developing newspaper industry, when an alternative press was necessary to challenge the political and social status quo which was supported by religion and the approved press of the establishment, such as *The Times* (Hartley 2008: 311). These new 'radical papers' (ibid: 313) highlighted the plight of the poor by publishing the personal experiences and privations being experienced by the disadvantaged in order to gather support for democracy in the decades when only a small percentage of the British population enjoyed the franchise. Hartley thus emphasises the significance of the

media's use of private experiences in order to achieve political and social change and places the public/private boundary divide within a contest of power.

Habermas himself later revisits his theory on the bourgeois public sphere, describing it as 'too simplistic' (1992: 438), and suggests instead that modern society is divided into two orbits, the 'lifeworld' (ibid: 444) and the 'system' (ibid: 444). The lifeworld he describes as being the domain of 'culture, society and personality' (Habermas 1995: 154), while the system comprises of the state, capitalism and the media. In this revision of his theory, Habermas sees the lifeworld as an entity which is capable both of influencing the system, and of resisting the 'colonizing encroachment of system imperatives' (1992: 444), an argument relevant to this thesis.

Shifting boundary

Both Habermas's theories on the categorisation of lived experience are examined by Livingstone (2005) as she considers not only the shifting boundary between the private and the public, but the blurring of several traditional boundaries, such as those between work and leisure, education and entertainment. The former category in each set of opposites is obviously situated in Habermas's 'system', with the latter belonging to the 'lifeworld'. But similar to Dahlgren (2005/1995), McLaughlin (2004), Hartley (1996), Thompson (1995), and Habermas (1992), Livingstone (2005) places the media at the centre of the renegotiation of the traditional boundaries between these previously separate spheres due to their 'unique power to penetrate private spaces and to construct publics' (ibid: 168). Livingstone argues, however, that the division between the public and the private, or between the lifeworld and the system, is never absolute since the boundary between each set of binary oppositions is influenced by profit, participation, and governance. Consequently, the definitions of what is private and what is public are dependent upon the contexts in which they are applied and they

are not interchangeable (ibid: 180). She concludes that the new, 'interactive, personalised media contribute towards the blurring or renegotiation of several versions of the public/private boundary' (ibid: 14).

Her conclusion is supported by Nissenbaum (2010) who progresses Livingstone's argument of the relevance of context in regard to privacy by suggesting that the notion of contextual integrity offers a 'model of the structure of people's expectations in relation to the flows of information in society' (2010: 231). Nissenbaum argues that the level of privacy individuals expect varies according to context, citing the high expectations of privacy expected by patients in relation to their medical records. The relationship between context and privacy expectations therefore offers a response to the new social environment created by digital technologies that have extended channels of communication and flows of information.

Nissenbaum's argument is supported by Facebook users' protests over the visibility of certain categories of their information which indicate that they distinguished between personal information they wanted to publish in the public domain, and what they wanted to remain private or to direct only to their selected audience. As Papacharissi notes 'more than organising categories, *public* and *private* serve to qualify and distinguish manifested choices in everyday life', echoing the importance of context. (Papacharissi 2010: 25 italics original). The distinction between public and private is fluid, shaped by culture and influenced by historical context (ibid: 25). She highlights Arendt's (1958) argument that the subtle balance between what is private and what is public has been made more complex by the development of a new sphere – the social. The result of the confluence of the rise of the nation state and the influence of the industrial economy, the social sphere is where private interests have become significant and influential within the public domain (Arendt 1958 in

Papacharissi 2010), an argument that resonates with Habermas's (1992) theory of the lifeworld and system. It provides an alternative to the binary polarity of the public and the private spheres, and Papacharissi suggests that 'it is possible for the social to sustain elements of both public and private practices without being subsumed by either' (2010: 49) in an argument that is relevant to both Facebook and this thesis. The notion of the social, she argues

> gains relevance in late modern democracies as it collapses tropes of
> achieving individual and collective autonomy into a combined sphere
> of activity that is socially motivated, but employs public and private
> boundaries that are fluid and constantly renegotiated (ibid: 50)

Papacharissi (2010) thus suggests that in this new sphere the Habermasian vision of distinct private and public spheres is redundant, since the boundary is constantly shifting dependent upon context.

Nissenbaum (2010) similarly argues that social networks such as Facebook, an example of the developments within the social sphere, have had a significant impact on the public/private dichotomy, by creating new types of privacy issues such as:

- individuals posting comments which later rebound and cause them trouble

- individuals posting comments about others on their own Web pages

- the monitoring and tracking affordances that are part of the technical systems. (Nissenbaum 2010: 59-62)

She emphasises that Facebook users are unable to always control the level of visibility to which their content will be subject, as discussed in Chapter One. Nor can they control content posted online about them by others, or evade the monitoring and tracking, that are enabled by the digital technologies on which social network sites are

constructed. These practices further impact on privacy, she notes, as they enable the aggregation and analysis of the personal information gathered about individuals by the systems' operators. Online social networking can be seen to not only pressurise the dichotomy of the public/private boundary, Nissenbaum argues, but also to expose its limitations. Similar to Papacharissi (2010), she notes that the digital information technologies that enable the formation of social networks also enable greater access by commercial and governmental organisation to information about individuals in both private and public domains.

While Habermas envisions a distinct division between what is public and what is private, more recent academic literature implies the opposite as both Krug (2005) and Hartley (2008) indicate that private individual experiences entered the public domain via early newspapers in a bid influence social policy. The development of new media forms therefore has had and continues to play a significant role in the shifting plains of the public/private boundary and while Dahlgren argues that the Internet 'extends and pluralizes the public sphere' (2005 148), he does not acknowledge that it has equal impact on the private domain. The development of digital technologies and developments such as Facebook have significantly changed the topography of both public and private domains.

As online social space, Facebook may be taken as an illustration of the social sphere theorised by Arendt (1958) and subsequently by Nissenbaum (2010) and Papacharissi (2010). It mirrors Habermas's (1962/89) sphere that is neither completely public nor totally private, but it is one where the personal has significant impact. In offline social space, individuals may control the flow of their personal information; they may choose to whom they will reveal personal information and indeed choose the recipients for the different types of information they divulge. These decisions are

reached in relation to various contexts: personal/professional; family/acquaintance and are enacted secure in the knowledge that the act of participation in the social sphere does not result in their information being recorded, aggregated and provided to state agencies or local or national businesses. In this thesis, I consider privacy as the right of Facebook users to either control the flow of the content they upload to the platform, or to be informed of the destinations of the flows of their personal information, dependent upon the context of the information. While the social network enables private individuals to publish personal information, the significance of context in their communication (Nissenbaum 2010; Papacharissi 2010) is acknowledged by Facebook's provision of a range of privacy settings that users may apply to allow them to determine the flow of their personal information. The settings offered, however, are decided by Facebook Inc. and this thesis examines if users of this social sphere are truly empowered to control the flow of the personal content they upload to the social platform.

Power

The common theme that develops between the arguments of Habermas, Livingstone, Papacharissi and Nissenbaum and those of Thompson, Castells and Rheingold is power. While the former four argue that privacy has been subjected to considerable pressure by powerful governmental and commercial agents and the development of contemporary technologies, the latter three consider that the affordances such developments offer empower private individuals.

Bourdieu (1989) suggests that social space may be considered as symbolic space where participants who share similar tastes and lifestyles are grouped together, connected by their tastes and preferences and distinct from other participants who share different tastes and lifestyles. Facebook, however, operates as a social sphere that

brings together many levels of society and enables them to intermingle and communicate in the same online environment which elides spatial, temporal and hierarchical boundaries – leading to the development of mediated intimacy (Thompson 2005:41). But while 'social distance' (Bourdieu 1989: 16) appears to be overcome by common usage of the website 'one must not forget that the relations of communication par excellence – linguistic exchanges – are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized' (Bourdieu 1991: 37). Language is never neutral, he argues, and serves to disguise any underlying power structure (1991), a theory that is considered in this thesis.

Ideology

Individuals in social space, claims Bourdieu, are subject to 'a system of schemes of production and practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices' (1989: 19) which categorise them and position them in a certain 'habitus'. This concept of habitus, Bourdieu says, indicates an individual's awareness of 'a sense of one's place' (ibid: 19) and a 'sense of the place of the others' (ibid: 19) and suggests a subconscious categorisation by all individuals. His argument follows Althusser's (1984) theory that individuals inadvertently acknowledge, or are complicit with, their position as subjects of power (also Castells 2009). Ideology, Althusser argues, 'transforms' (1984: 48) individuals into subjects by what he describes as interpellation. '*All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*' (ibid: 47, italics original). In this way, ideology recruits subjects through the simple act of 'hailing' (ibid: 48); by responding as required, whether or not they are being personally addressed, individuals acknowledge their position as subjects.

Althusser claims the process begins at birth; a newborn child is subject to the preconceived notions of its family, and subsequently to the practices of ruling

ideologies such as religion, education and capitalism. Through compliance with the rituals of the respective ideologies, individuals subconsciously recognise they are not autonomous individuals, but are instead subject to predetermined practices. 'The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing' (Althusser 1984: 49), citing the way in which an individual will respond when hailed in the street, even when he is not addressed by name.

Foucault

Foucault examines the structure of power in *The History of Sexuality* (1991), and claims that the way society is structured determines whose voices are heard, and the positions and viewpoints from which they speak. In his account of the development of the discourse on sex, first by the Catholic Church and then by state organisations, Foucault traces the manner in which the French population became subject to the 'techniques of power' (ibid: 307) – particularly through the 'incitement to discourse' (ibid: 201) – exercised by the institutional requirement to speak in detail and at length about their sexual practices (ibid: 304). The growth of sex as public discourse not only shifted private sexual practices into the public domain, but enabled Church and state agencies to record, analyse and categorise individuals' sex lives (ibid: 306). Sex thus became 'a thing one administered' (ibid: 307) through the analysis of the information received and the imposition of regulations on its practice.

Foucault's case study of the growth of public discourse on sex emphasises the pressure exerted on private individuals to disclose personal information for the benefit of the state. It further signifies how repeated incitement and encouragement to disclose personal thoughts and actions, and to make them visible by placing them in the public domain, may result in an overarching acceptance of the benefits of disclosure. Foucault highlights the emergence of the concept of population and its control as 'one of the

great innovations in the technique of power' (ibid: 307). The disclosure of citizens'

sexual practices enabled the French government to manage the population in order to

make it productive. Disciplinary sanctions were introduced to target citizens whose

behaviour was considered to be unproductive, and therefore problematic. Foucault notes

that the incitements to divulge personal information, which can be seen as linking to

Bourdieu's theory of systems of practice, demanded compliance and thus enabled the

extension of government power. Foucault thus establishes a link between discourse,

knowledge and power with the result that 'power is no longer simply repressive, but

also *productive'* (emphasis original) Doyle and Fraser 2010: 227).

Castells, in an examination of the online environment, identifies online

networks' programming capacity as a highly significant source of power due to their

ability to 'generate, diffuse and affect the discourses that frame human actions'

(Castells 2007: 53). His argument suggests that the way a social platform such as

Facebook is programmed dictates the levels and manner of participation, how it is

conducted on the platform, and the context of discourse thereon. Castells supports

Mulgan's argument that 'of the three sources of power, the most important for

sovereignty is the power over the thoughts that give rise to trust' (Mulgan 2007 in

Castells 2009: 16). He claims these new digital channels of communication 'represent

the expression of the social relationships, ultimately power relationships that underlie

the evolution of the multimodal communication system' (ibid: 57).

What links the theories of Bourdieu, Althusser, Foucault and Castells is their

emphasis on the power to influence people's beliefs. Power is not applied in a physical

sense, but is exerted to influence people's thoughts and behaviours. This thesis

examines how this is manifested on Facebook by examining how Facebook Inc,

politicians, television companies, and games companies address and communicate with

the social network's users. It considers the issue of power by considering whose voices are heard, the manner in which they address private individuals on Facebook and the discourse that is developed on the public pages established by these commercial organisations and politicians.

Section Two

Issues of what is private and should not become public knowledge and what should enter the public domain, personal empowerment, individual visibility and online surveillance have become particularly significant due to the affordances offered by continuous developments in digital technologies. The development of Social Network Sites or social platforms such as Facebook has been made possible by continuing technical innovations since the 1990s. While computer technology has been progressing since it first began during the Second World War, the pace of innovation increased during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Technologies have developed which provide the users of networked computers with new means of communication and to become as innovatively creative as they wish. While these technologies have had a major impact on culture and society, their development must be acknowledged.

Web 2.0

Social networks such as Facebook are a product of Internet and World Wide Web technologies. According to Flew, the key features of Web 2.0 are 'participation, interactivity and social networking' (2008: 17). This link between social media and the affordances of Web 2.0 is essential to the 'understanding of new media in the 21st century' (ibid: 16) he argues, since social media platforms, such as Facebook, have been built upon Web 2.0 technologies, (presentation 2009) and are merely developments within Internet culture, rather than completely new innovations in their own right, (Flew 2008). The Web 2.0 concept has been promoted by Tim O'Reilly, a

key advocate of the technology, who has described it as 'the business revolution in the computer industry' (in Flew 2008: 17) due to its capacity to 'harness collective intelligence' (ibid: 17). This attribute echoes the desire of the Web founder Tim Berners-Lee that the technology be used to facilitate the development and sharing of knowledge and creativity, although the term Web 2.0 has also been criticised due to its potential use as a mere marketing tool (Woolgar (2002) in Flew 2008: 17). O'Reilly's enthusiasm for and promotion of the affordances of Web 2.0 remained unabated in 2009. 'The Web is no longer an industry unto itself – the Web is now the world' he stated in a special report to the Web2.0 Summit (O'Reilly 2009).

The continuing advances in technology that have expanded the affordances of Web 2.0 follow successive significant advances in computer technology over the previous fifty years (Flew 2008). These began with the introduction of the process which allows information to be digitally processed, stored and retrieved. This was followed in the 1960s and 70s by the development of common networking protocols which enabled the transfer and distribution of the digitised information. The following decade saw the introduction of a universal communication system among computers and subsequently, electronic mail, bypassing the traditional telephone and mail systems of communication (Flichy in Lievrouw and Livingstone 2010; the Internet Society 2011). By the late 1980s and 90s, the Internet, 'the most spectacular technology of electronic network communication' (Holmes 2007: 51), became more accessible in the private domain (ibid: 51), and subsequently increasingly popular. The development of the World Wide Web in the 1990s was another significant milestone in the expansion of both computer and communication technologies. The Web offers Internet users easy and increasingly faster access to information from a wide range of sources, for that information to be presented textually and visually, and for it to be shared.

Web history

Its development hinged on three main innovations: the development and
introduction of: Hypertext, which facilitated the linking of related information from
various sources; the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), which improved the
interconnection among web sites; and the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) which
offered users a simplified form of writing standard source code for the Web (Flew
2008: 7). Hypertext is credited with providing Internet users with the simple 'point-
and-click' method of accessing related information stored on the Web. Berners-Lee and
Connolly define HTML as 'a simple data format used to create hypertext documents
that are portable from one platform to another. HTML are documents … that are
appropriate for representing information from a wide range of domains' (1995,
unpaginated).

The introduction of the HTTP improved the interconnectivity among the
plethora of Internet connected computers regardless of their operating systems. Berners-
Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, has described the development in
emancipatory terms:

> new webs could be made to bind different computers together, and all
> new systems would be able to break out and reference others. Plus
> anyone browsing could instantly add a new node connected by a new
> link (Berners-Lee and Fiscetti 1999: 1)

 The development of the computer code HyperText Markup Language (html) was also
significant, as it enabled material to be read by all computers. Before its creation in
1990, information could not be shared by computers with different operating systems
(Lister et al 2007; Holmes 2006). HTML made the process of producing and publishing
material for and on the Web generally accessible, marking the 'historical' (Holmes

2006: 10) shift from the 'first media age [to] the 'second media age' (ibid: 10), 'in which the constraints of broadcasting will be breached' (Postman 1996: 18). The 'first media age' (Holmes 2006:10) Holmes summarises as being based on the principle of the broadcasting format of communication such as newspapers, books and television: it allowed a select few to address the many in a one way flow of communication that was 'predisposed to state control' (ibid: 10). Its centred structure, the exclusionary nature of access to it, the one-way flow of communication and its approach, which addressed audiences as a single amorphous mass, created the possibility that it could be used as a tool for state control or undemocratic purposes (ibid: 10; Flew 2009).

The phrase 'second media age', is attributed to Mark Poster following publication of his book *The Second Media Age* (1995) in which he describes the development of the interactive technologies enabled firstly by the Internet, such as email, discussion boards, news groups and multi-user domains, and secondly by the World Wide Web which enabled communication amongst different operating systems and access to and the sharing of documents. This created a de-centralised, multi-media and collaborative communication platform subject to continuous evolution due to the efforts of private individuals as well as commercial companies and led to the development of different modes of communication.

Computer-mediated communication

The new forms of communication enabled by the Internet have been collectively labelled Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Meyrowitz suggests that while CMC does not equate with 'interacting with others in live encounters' (1985: 118), it resembles 'face to face interaction' (ibid: 118) more than other forms of textual communication such as books or letters. Thompson, meanwhile, asserts that new communication media platforms have led to the creation by users of '*new* forms of

action and interaction which have their own distinctive properties' (Thompson 2005:

32, emphasis original), that are substantially different from face to face communication,

the latter being dependent upon co-presence. These new forms of interaction are created

by new means of communication that 'stretch … or compress' (ibid: 33) interaction

across time and space. Thompson's taxonomy of interaction traces the development of

different forms of communication media, from 'mediated' exemplified by telephone

and letter writing; through 'mediated quasi-interaction' that is created by books,

newspapers, radio, television and films; and 'computer-mediated interaction' (ibid: 34)

on the Internet. Computer-mediated interaction, between friends, acquaintances and

strangers, may be synchronous or asynchronous, meaning it is freed from spatial and

temporal restraints.

     Social media platforms are hubs for these new forms of communication, which

may also be textual, or visual. It differs from other forms of communication, since it can

be mediated or quasi-mediated to use Thompson's 2005 taxonomy of interaction, given

that many Internet groups such as news groups, and social platforms offer different

forms of CMC. Communication on the Internet can be dialogic, by means of real time

chat or email, alternatively it can be monologic, whereby it merely provides

information.

     Bordewijk and van Kaam offer their own taxonomy of communication

exchanges, which remains relevant to Internet communication in 2011. They categorise

as **allocution** (1986: 578/9) the communication/flow of information from a central point

to one or many individuals; **conversation,** they define as the flow of information

between two individuals, which may be mediated through a central point or, in 21st

century terms, via a computer or social platform. Bordewijk and van Kaam define the

term **consultation** as the process whereby an individual actively seeks information from

a source which they use at their discretion, such as the downloading of information from the Internet; while their fourth definition, **registration**, is defined as the reversal of consultation, since information is gathered from individuals by a central point. The government census offers an ideal offline example of registration. Online, this is exemplified by the requirement of websites such as Facebook where individuals are compelled to provide certain personal information as a condition of site use. All four of these classifications can be identified on Facebook where users must register to use the service and must consult Facebook for the terms and conditions on which they may use the service and to discover what services it provides. Users may also converse with Facebook Inc. and Facebook Friends through email, Instant Chat, and Wall posts; and Facebook provides pages of information for individual users and commercial organisations. Private users may also consult the Facebook pages of public organisations.

CMC may be synchronous, when two people are online and using the same communication platform such as instant messaging and video telephone conversations, or asynchronous, such as email and, on the Facebook platform, Wall posts. It thus enables the elision of temporal and spatial boundaries. Face-to-face communication is dependent upon the co-presence of individuals, while communication between two people by telephone is reliant on a form of co-presence in a temporal sense. While the correspondents having a telephone conversation may not share the same space, they must simultaneously be sharing a telephone link, although the development of message recording systems allows telephones to also work asynchronously. Communication by letter is asynchronous and like communication by telephone and email, is addressed to someone in particular. Communication posted online, however, such as on social

network personal pages or blogs, for example, may be addressed to someone in particular or to anyone in general.

Shirky argues that new media may encourage people to think that every communication within the public domain of the Internet is directed at them as well as everyone else, simply because it is visible. But, akin to overheard mobile telephone conversations, these communications are generally directed at someone specific, or at a specific group of acquaintances even if they are visible to all Internet users who happen to come across them (Shirky 2008: 87).

Creativity

Continual innovations in Web technology further widened the scope of interaction and communication on the Internet, such as multimedia formats. These enlarged the tool box made available to users via the Internet. Multimedia enabled users to download videos from websites and to upload, edit and store photographs and personal videos on their computers which could then be published and shared online by means of social platforms such as Facebook, Flickr and YouTube. For many, these tools are not so much about interactivity as what Berners-Lee calls intercreativity (1999), a description he defines as the actions of Web users' who have been enabled to 'build things together, which is more than filling out a form and hitting 'submit'' (undated interview: http://hpcv100.rc.rug.nl/tbl-int.html). Levinson observes that these tools empowered

> authors with the requisite minimal knowledge of HyperText Markup Language (html) and sense of Web-page design [who] can create online pages for their publications as attractive as those put up by the biggest corporations online (2001:11)

Leadbetter and Miller describe this new development in creativity as a 'Pro-Am Revolution' (2004) in which dedicated amateurs are able to produce creative work to professional standards.

   As Shirky points out the significant change introduced by these developments is not the capability to create *per se*, nor to share what is created with others, but to do so without recourse to professional publishers (Shirky 2008: 83). This is perhaps best exemplified by web sites such as YouTube and Flickr. YouTube enables members of the public with no professional expertise to post their home-made videos online, while Flickr encourages the publishing and sharing of creative photography. Web 2.0 technologies thus allow subscribers to share their creative talents with others who are similarly inclined and with a wider audience on the Internet. Encouragement to make these videos and photographs to a high standard comes in the public recording of peer reviews. Berners-Lee was particularly keen that his innovation should enable all users to become active, to create new material and to distribute that material on the Web, rather than simply passively using the technology to access existing online data (Berners-Lee 1999). 'The idea was not just that it should be a big browsing medium. The idea was that everybody would be putting their ideas in, as well as taking them out' (ibid). Berners-Lee's original idea is reflected in the user-generated content which is posted by social media users. Networks such as Facebook provide the Web architecture for the social platforms, but rely upon the interaction and intercreativity of their users for their success.

   Although they are more structured, social networks, like blogs, allow participants to create and share individual narratives of their lives and encourage a two way flow of communication with other platform users. Unlike novels and television programmes, these platforms allow individuals authorial, creative, directorial, and

productional control of their self presentation. As a result, the boundary between lay people and media people, as described by Couldry (2004) appears to evaporate. Hassan notes that 'technologies are the product of a particular social system; they are social constructions that reflect the nature of the society that created them' (Hassan 2004: 36). Lievrouw and Livingstone similarly argue that private individuals adopt technologies which may have been developed for official or commercial purposes, and subsequently influence their future development (2006: 4).

Networked Communities

The concept that online communication plays a major role in the formation of online communities as opposed to physical and geographic communities is longstanding, and its genesis rests with Howard Rheingold and his seminal text *The Virtual Community* (1993/2000). While Rheingold acknowledges the prediction of online communities to Licklider and Taylor in 1969 (1993/2000: Chapter 1), it is he who has made the phrase 'virtual community' a key element of Internet discourse. In *The Virtual Community*, Rheingold describes how individuals can gather together in online discussion groups which develop around issues of mutual interest and lead to the formation of virtual communities. But online communication *per se* does not necessarily create an online community, he warns. 'Virtual communities require more than words on a screen at some point if they intend to be other than ersatz' (ibid).

His vision appears to have been personally fulfilled, as in 2007 he told an educational conference in Melbourne 'virtual communities are more than an area of expertise for me. They are places where I live a great deal of the time'. In 2011, Ofcom's statistics on the flow of Internet traffic to Facebook suggests that Rheingold's comment may be applied to many users of social platforms and especially Facebook. By implication, if users of Facebook and other social platforms conduct much of their

lives through these networks, they are uploading and publishing a substantial amount of personal information on their favourite online network.

Jones considers online networks as a new form of community – users may choose in which 'electronic community' they participate and their decision is not determined by geographic restraints. 'We may forge our own places from the many that exist, not by creating new places, but simply by choosing from the menu of those available by joining in (and opting out)' (Jones 1998: 3) – a comment made before the development of online social networks in their current forms. While obviously true, again this viewpoint seems to ignore the creative potential available to Internet users. Jones makes a point similar to that of Rheingold, that CMC does not inevitably create a community, but further highlights issues of inclusion and exclusion, therefore

> connection does not inherently make for community (ibid: 5) ...
>
> the exclusivity, inflexibility, isolation, rigidity, homogeneity of
>
> the 'old concept of community' can also take root in computer
>
> mediated ones' (ibid: 8).

Issues of exclusivity and inclusivity can be further seen in SNSs' system of 'Friending', which enables users to decide whether to accept or reject an offer of 'Friendship' from another user, while the public recording of a user's circle of Friends may be viewed as establishing an in-group and out-group environment. The observable practice on Facebook of users collecting large numbers of 'Friends' leads inevitably to Bourdieu's theory of the accumulation of social capital (1992), described as 'the sum of the resources, actual or virtual' (Bourdieu in Ellison et al: 1145) that is accrued by someone recognised as having a 'durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (ibid: 1145).

Relationship bonding

Facebook users may have hundreds of Friends, but this description of the relationship between both parties does not truly reflect the different depths of the relationships between two parties. The social network's designation of the mutually agreed relationship as Friends does not distinguish between close friends, casual acquaintances, and friends of friends. The concept of users' establishment of a Friendship with others has been labelled as the formation of 'weak ties' and 'close ties' on the social platform (Ellison, Steinfield and Stampe 2007: 1144; Donath and boyd 2004; Wellman et al 2001). The description of relationships as 'weak ties' refers to the formation of relationships between casual acquaintances and Friends of Friends which are 'cheaply and easily' (Ellison, Steinfield and Stampe 2007: 1144) maintained due to the affordances of the social network.

Social networks are generally, however, considered to be heavily influenced by off-line relationships, with most communication taking place between people who already know each other (Ellison et al 2007; Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006; Thurlow et al. 2004; Jones 1998). This is emphasised in boyd and Ellison's history of the development of social network sites from the launch of the first 'recognisable social network site' (2007: 2) in 1997 until 2006. 'Most users were not interested in meeting strangers' (2007: 2), they claim, and further note that while new relationships may be formed on social networks, the main focus appears to be to 'enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks' (ibid: 2). Boyd and Ellison's argument is that social networks may be recognised as an electronic means of communicating with existing friends and acquaintances, or of reviving former relationships, rather than as a means of forming new relationships and communities. Social networks have also been described as tools for interpersonal social organisation (Lievrouw and Livingstone

2006), and any claims that they might foster the development of new relationships is called into question (Jones 1998). Thurlow et al (2004) also argue that 'pre-existing offline structures heavily influence online communities', that 'online communities are shaped by embeddedness in the real world' (2004; 114) and that these are often 'supposedly traditional communities which are exploring new ways for their members to be a community with each other' (ibid: 114). Baym, however, suggests that 'the sense of shared space, rituals of shared practices and exchanges of social support all contribute to a feeling of community in digital environments' (2010: 86), a notion supported by Rheingold (1993/2000).

Broader horizons

Castells, however, takes an opposing view. He considers the new network society to be emancipatory because it expands the horizons available to individuals. He regards the information society created via the Internet to be a natural successor to the narrow, industrialised, individual nation due to the Internet's global, political and social reach (2007). It is less about the formation of communities online and more about the extension of individual reach, not only horizontally, in terms of peer to peer communication, but also vertically, by enabling them to personally communicate with representatives of government and societal institutions with relative ease. Online networks allow individuals to have a voice in the public domain (2009: 55) and represent the 'growing interaction between horizontal and vertical networks of communication' (ibid: 70). This follows Castell's claim in 2002 that the political landscape had been changed by the interactivity offered by the Internet, as communication between politicians and voters could be dialogical rather than monological (Castells 2002: 155), an issue that is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Castells (2009) also looks beyond individual horizons to the potential these social platforms offer the business community, citing the acquisition in 2005 by Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp conglomerate of the SNS MySpace (p.252) which in 2006, had over 100 million pages and seventy-seven million subscribers. He further cites Murdoch's address to shareholders in which he stated that the acquisition 'eased access to new customers and markets' (ibid.), and that MySpace offered NewsCorp 'a huge potential advertising market' (ibid). The potential remained unfulfilled, however, as NewsCorp sold the social network in July 2011 after the once leading social network lost users to other social platforms including Facebook.

Another major business acquisition took place in 2007 when YouTube, the video sharing network, was bought by Internet search engine Google. Castells observes that at the time of the takeover, YouTube generated little, if any, income from advertising and Google has remained reticent over whether the video sharing company has returned any profits. As Castells indicates, the moves signify a shift away from the previously independent and less commercial environment of social networks as they become the focus of and are absorbed by global commercial companies. The independent networks' *modus operandi* of harnessing the personal details of millions of subscribers, with the resulting potential benefits for advertising, has been recognised by international media conglomerates. For Castells, this is a clear example of another form of 'networking' (2007: 254), between 'old and new media' (ibid: 254) rather than a takeover of new media by old media concerns. He adds the caveat, however, that the advertising potential harnessed by social networks must be used with caution by established media companies if they are to avoid alienating subscribers.

Identity

Castells' note of caution highlights the significant role of individuals within the social platform environment. The desire to control access to their personal content on Facebook may be attributed to the fact that many users of the social platform have uploaded much personal information to the network. Social networks such as Facebook have a mutually beneficial relationship with their users. The SNS's existence depends on individuals choosing to register with, establishing a personal profile on and uploading personal details to the platform. Users rely on the site in order to create personal space online. While other social platforms do exist, Facebook has much to offer individuals by the sheer scale of its popularity and that fact that it may be the social network of choice for the offline circle of friends to which they belong. Not only are users able to communicate with friends, but they can also establish and publish a carefully crafted public identity alongside their preferences in what amounts to the creation of an online autobiography.

The presentation of the self, or the increasing focus on the individual, is considered to have its roots in what cultural theorists have described as modernity and post modernity – periods which stretch forward from the Industrial Revolution that took place in the United Kingdom in the 18th century. While there was a growing awareness that individuals' identities were not stable entities (Freud, 1923; Goffman 1959; Butler, 1990), the concept of identity as an on-going construct is commonly associated with the period from the 1960s, a period of social change in Western Europe. Goffman argues that individuals perform identity, constantly adjusting their performance to suit the circumstances in which they find themselves (1959: 253), and further adjusting their presentation of self – either 'front-of-house' when in public or 'backstage; when in

private. Butler (1990) meanwhile considers that the core of a person's identity – their gender – is performed to meet societal expectations.

Generally, however, until the second half of the twentieth century, a person's identity was considered to be fixed; it was established by the traditional framework in which they lived and worked; one in which their future was mapped out and in which individuality had no place (Scott, 2007; Giddens, 1991; Durkheim, 1893). This began to change in the 1960s, and the tempo of change increased with successive scientific, technological, social and industrial developments that challenged traditional frameworks and beliefs. Traditional ways of life were officially declared dead in the UK when, in the 1980s, then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced that there was 'no such thing as society'. The uncertainty created by these changes thus made each individual responsible for him/herself and resulted in a continuous process of self-assessment and revision. At the same time, the public presentation of self became increasingly important.

Since the final years of the last century, the Internet has granted individuals not only the capability for greater self-presentation, but also an extensive and far-reaching platform from which to publicise themselves, a process that has been labelled 'mass self communication' by Castells (2009). Internet users can create their own personal web pages and thus establish a public presence and presentation of self on a global platform. The more advanced technologies developed under the rubric of Web 2.0 have further enhanced users' abilities to carve a public place for themselves online. The concept of self presentation online has been much debated: Andrejevic (2004) describes personal webpages as individually produced forms of reality television in which control lies within the individual's (lay person's) hands. Thus they cross the boundary from 'merely media consumers' to become 'content producers' (2004: 5).

Holmes similarly claims that personal web pages 'break up the monopoly of the culture industry' (2006: 220), while Cheung (2000) suggests that they are emancipatory, since the pages enable individuals to control their presentation of self, and to distribute this self image to a wider audience – factors which have been perceived as increasingly important in both social and professional contexts. 'Self identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour' (Giddens 1993:5), a phenomenon which Giddens says is partly attributable to 'new forms of mediated experience' (ibid: 5). While Scots poet Robert Burns recommended that each person should be granted the power to gain an insight into how other people perceive them – which may be completely different from how they perceive themselves – the modern individual wants to shape how they are regarded by others; to construct and publish their own version of self in order that it is accepted by others. Identity is now seen as a work in progress, 'as more open-ended and a lifelong project' (Thurlow et al 2004: 97); a 'reflexive project' (Giddens 1991 in Scott 2007: 101).

Krug, however, argues that the construction of self identity is far from new. The development of letter writing from a tool to convey information within a specific official environment such as the government or church to a means of communication between private individuals in the seventeenth century signalled early attempts to develop a public persona. Krug claims.

> The culture of writing letters was clearly an extremely important public area for the dressing, make-up and promenade of the self ... letter writing was the most popular form of written self-expression open to most people until the late twentieth century and the development of email (Krug 2005: 117)

Now, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Internet can be seen as offering individuals further opportunities to develop their self identity and express themselves. The creation of personal homepages, and of personal profiles on social platforms such as Facebook, for example, offer individuals

> profound, creative opportunities for people to reflect on themselves ...
> it's the various processes of writing, recording and presenting their
> chosen facts and thoughts for the webpage which construct their
> thoughts, feelings and their identities (Thurlow et al 2004: 99).

Turkle (1997) similarly suggests that Internet users 'are able to build a self by cycling through many selves' (p. 178). This fluidity in identity construction and the subsequent online presentation of the self is enabled by the general lack of visual or oral identification in Internet communication.

Benwell and Stokoe (2007) argue that the textual mode of CMC impacts on self-presentation online due to the tension between spoken and written communication present in online communication. They describe CMC as 'speech-in-a-written-mode' (Benwell and Stokoe 2007: 278) which can be restrictive and which 'affects and determines issues of identity online' (ibid: 278). The performance or adoption of online personae, they continue, can prove problematic due to this dependence upon CMC. Meikle describes online posts as a 'hybrid' (2002:55) form of communication, arguing that they may 'accorded a degree of authority' (ibid: 55) because they are written texts, but suggests they bear more resemblance to the spoken word.

User-Generated Content

Individuals posting information and uploading photographs on social networks such as Facebook are not only using them as vehicles for self promotion or to communicate with Friends. They are also providing the essential material that

encourages other individuals to join the social networks, which are dependent upon user-generated content for their existence. The companies which develop the websites such as social networks provide the software programming that forms the basis of the platforms. To be successful they rely upon Internet users providing the content which attracts other individuals online to visit their pages.

User-generated content has been defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as

1. content made publicly available over the Internet which

11. reflects a 'certain amount of creative effort and

111. which is created outside of professional routines and practices' (OECD 2007)

This definition is reflected in the practices of Facebook users, who upload content onto the social network in the comments they post on their own pages and on their Friends' pages, the photographs and videos they upload, and the links they provide, as well as the personal information they publish about themselves and their lives. The work users perform is done during their leisure time, it is unofficial and not employment related, and may be creative, as in the production of photograph albums and videos. 'Broadband users produce and share content at a high rate' stated the OECD Report into the Participative Web: User-Generated Content (ibid).

The concept of user-generated content has proved controversial due to its perception as the provision of free labour by users, work which subsequently creates financial rewards for the companies. The notion that users work while engaging with digital entertainment technologies is not new; in 2000, Terranova noted the connection between the 'digital economy … and … the "social factory"' (p. 33). She defines the social factory as 'a process whereby "work processes have shifted from the factory to

society"' (ibid: 33), where the efforts of private individuals are 'voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited' (ibid: 33) on the Internet and represent free labour which contributes to the development and success of websites. The extent to which this free labour contributes to commercial enterprises on the Internet is not often recognised, Terranova argues, since it may take the form of 'chat … and real life stories' (ibid: 38). Terranaova's point is clear, that even the most trivial of exchanges may contribute to the success of a social platform dependent upon user-generated content. If she is identifying 'chat' as a synchronous instant message system, such as Facebook Chat, this fails to comply with the OECD definition since interaction through Chat, like email messages, is not published. Her arguments can, however, be seen to be particularly relevant eleven years later in relation to Facebook, a social platform developed to provide online personal space and opportunities for social interaction among users.

Two years later, Andrejevic suggested that interactive technologies have enabled advertisers and market researchers to 'offload' (2002: 235) the work of gathering information about consumer habits and preferences onto the consumers themselves. In 2004, he developed his argument in relation to the development of the digital television system known as TiVo, which was hailed at its launch as offering audiences a more interactive and empowering means of watching television; in reality TiVo provides a wealth of personal information about private individuals. 'The promise of shared control reveals itself, once again, as an invitation to productive self – disclosure' (Andrejevic 2004: 24). Andrejevic argues that the offer of 'convenience and shared control' (ibid.) by the developers of TiVo was in fact 'an invitation to them [individuals] to perform the work of self-disclosure in exchange for – in many cases – less than the minimum wage' (ibid: 24). Andrejevic's theory is also relevant to Facebook, as the social media platform continuously issues invitations to users to

upload content, to disclose personal information and preferences, in exchange for participating on the network.

Social Networks

Social media platforms offer a comprehensive example of the harnessing of Internet and Web technologies by both commercial organisations and individual users and of a reliance on user-generated content. Many online social networks cater for specific shared interests: Flickr attracts people interested in photography; YouTube has built a substantial following of users interested in producing and sharing videos; others are based on language and cultural communities. Despite the differences in categorisation, the networks all share the same roots in the development of the technologies that are considered to fall within the Web 2.0 rubric, and on their provision of online outlets for the sociable impulses within society.

These outlets enable individuals to communicate, interact, and to share their photographs and favourite books, music and videos with friends and/or casual browsers. Social networks, a particular development built on these innovations, have been defined as websites that allow participants 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

(3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others

within the system (boyd and Ellison 2007: unpaginated)

Despite its position as the second most popular website in the world (Alexa.com 2011), Facebook was not one of what may perhaps be considered as the first generation of SNSs. The first, Six Degrees.com, was launched in 1997 and built upon the then very new Web technologies which enabled both interaction and intercreativity (boyd 2007).

Ten years later, Hargittai (2007) noted social networks 'have become some of the most popular online destinations in recent years' (2007: unpaginated).

There are many different kinds of networks such as: centralised, with television and the Internet as examples; decentralised, those with multiple hubs such as airlines; and distributed, with motorways as a case in point. In regard to networks on the Internet, the term 'network' plays a dual role: there is the network of technical connections that create and link the vast web of personal computers across the globe, and there is the network of social connections which are enabled by this technical infrastructure. Social networks combine both of these definitions, as Lievrouw and Livingstone note that 'network' 'denotes a broad, multiplex interconnection in which many points or 'nodes' (*persons*, groups, *machines*, collections of information, organisations) are embedded' (2006: 24, emphasis mine).

The notion of social platforms as networks of social connections is supported by boyd and Ellison, who argue that while social networks have proved a major attraction for millions of people, their popularity is not influenced by any 'networking' opportunities the platforms provide. Boyd and Ellison argue that the term networking implies the initiation of relationships, particularly between strangers (2007: 2). 'Networking … is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication' (ibid: 2). This distinction is valid, as research has shown that most social network users interact with their offline social network rather than seek to engage with people whom they have not already met, as previously indicated (boyd and Ellison 2007; boyd undated; Hargittai 2007).

Innovations theory

Flew offers an alternative proposition, claiming that 'social networking media is a commonly used term to Web 2.0' (2008:17). But this suggestion, while relevant to certain Web 2.0 sites such as the commonly identified social networks Facebook and MySpace, is not relevant to websites such as Flickr, the photo sharing website or to Wikipedia, the online participatory encyclopaedia. The fact that a website is participatory does not *ipso facto* make it a social network. Like Lievrouw (2010), Flew (2008) supports the diffusion of innovations theory, which is of particular relevance to Facebook and which offers a hypothesis on the introduction and adoption of new ideas or practices in society. The aforementioned theory argues that innovations, such as new technologies, are introduced to a particular group, community or organisation by 'a change agent with an interest in promoting it' (Lievrouw 2010: 250). This is exemplified by Facebook's university origins. The technology is adopted by only a few people, 'early adopters' (ibid: 250) who then influence others in the group to do likewise.

Lievrouw emphasises the importance of these early adopters to the success of individual innovations, particularly in terms of the influence they wield, or their social status which may determine the level of adoption by others within their group. If they influence others to adopt the innovation, then as a rolling snowball gathers snow, the number of users increases until adoption of the innovations reaches 'critical mass' (ibid: 250), at which point its success is guaranteed – a theory which is illustrated by the growth in the popularity of Facebook. Flew similarly contends that the success and expansion of a network in dependent upon an increasing number of users, which enhances the quality of participation and which then attracts more users. In ever increasing circles the network expands in both numbers and quality (Flew 2008: 17).

Facebook

This theory is particularly relevant to Facebook, which was launched in 2004 to enable online communication between a small number of university students. The original restriction on registration to students of the North American university of Harvard, and subsequent requirement to have an email address from an associate institution lent Facebook the perceived appearance of a closed 'intimate, private community' (boyd 2007: 8). A year after its inception Facebook began to lower the drawbridge and extended registration in stages, first to closed networks for universities, then to high schools, and then, in 2006 to major companies.

Despite the fact that Facebook had widened its recruitment net, the social network could still be regarded as a gated community as registration was restricted to users belonging to specific categories. In essence, it may have remained a predominantly private network. Once the social network became available to the general public, however, conditions on registration with Facebook were abandoned and all that is required is the provision of users' names, dates of birth and email addresses. The context of communication on the site therefore changed as it became a publicly accessible, social platform. In the years since its launch in 2004, the platform has also developed to significantly extend the facilities it offers users as they seek to communicate, interact, and share with online friends and acquaintances. The open access to the network, the exponential growth in registered users and the increased communication affordances have all had an impact on users' privacy, resulting in Facebook facing complaints and campaigns from users.

One development which resulted in users' concerns becoming public knowledge was the significant change made in the autumn of 2006, when Facebook introduced a new feature called 'News Feeds' (boyd 2008: 13). This feature functions as users'

landing page which, when they have logged in, provides them with a detailed list of their Friends' activities within the Facebook system, for example: who they have beFriended on Facebook; changes to Friends' relationship status; and any actions they have performed on the platform. This information had already been available on the pages of the respective individuals, but was visible within context (boyd 2008). The News Feed combined the information from all of users' Friends, and gave it a high profile on users' landing pages with the result that users' actions were published out of context, prompting protests by Facebook subscribers. Boyd cites Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg as defending the move and explaining that the News Feature enabled people 'to keep tabs on their friends – and only their friends (Zuckerberg cited in boyd 2008: 14). This explanation did not placate many of the site's users, however, who objected to what they saw as an invasion of their privacy and what boyd described as a 'privacy trainwreck' (2008: 13).

In February 2009, users rebelled again over a change to Facebook's Terms of Use agreement, which would have allowed the company to use all the information and photographs posted on their personal pages in perpetuity, even if individuals had subsequently deleted or deactivated their account. The extent of the outcry over users' privacy and rights to their information was such that Facebook quickly backed down. Both episodes indicated that many users possessed expectations of greater privacy and control over the information they post on the social platform than the company anticipated. They may, as Andrejevic notes, be willing 'to surrender information for convenience and customisation' (2004: 231) of services, but this does not necessarily signify their acceptance that this information should enter the public domain. These protests indicate users' awareness of contextual integrity (Nissenbaum 2010).

Mediated participation

The contentious issue of privacy notwithstanding, hundreds of millions of individuals have adopted Facebook as a means of participating in a mediated sphere that combines both public and private domains. Despite the lengthy history of private individuals' experiences being recorded in media, as indicated by Krug, above, communication and information were directed at readers and audiences by the media in a broadcast, one-to-many flow. Lay people continued to be featured only within specific roles: as eye witnesses to events or cloaked in anonymity in advice columns or in vox pops in newspapers. In television, they were again cast in the roles of witnesses, participants in vox pops, callers to phone-in shows, or as participant performers within specific categories of programming such as news reports, documentaries and game shows. In terms of Bourdieu's discussion (1989) on social space, members of the public who gained visibility in the broadcast media were confined to what was considered their natural habitus, which he describes as the field of practice in which people live and work (1989). When their brief visibility in the media ended, they returned to their former lives (Couldry 2004).

This has changed considerably over the past twenty years with the growing emphasis on the individual and his/her hitherto hidden life. Coverage of the 'private' lives of celebrities and lay people grew extensively in the print media and in television, where the reality format which began in the last two decades of the twentieth century repositioned private individuals centre stage, rather than in the wings. The seachange can be tracked from 'the public's ever greater visibility … to its growing activity' (Mehl 2005: 81) in the media. It must be noted, however, that the access granted lay individuals to Thompson's mediasphere (1995) in the form of print and television industries only appeared to be unconditional. While private individuals could become

visible by participating in the public sphere via the traditional media forms, particularly television, their visibility was and remains dependent upon their ability to perform in the requisite manner (Dovey, 2000; Kilborn, 2003; Tolson, 2006). It also was and remains restricted, as access to the front of television cameras remains within the control of media gatekeepers – and once their time in the limelight is over the vast majority return to their previous, everyday lives.

Mediated participation in the political sphere

Facebook may not convey celebrity status on private individuals, but it has become a platform that is much used by celebrities, commercial companies, television and radio companies and politicians. In 2010, it provided a new communication tool during the General Election campaign; a tool that opened new channels of communication between voters and politicians, and offered private individuals far greater access to public debate without the need to negotiate media gatekeepers. The social network offered a new way of participating in the political sphere by providing voters with a more direct channel of communication with political actors and *vice versa*. That is not to say that mediated participation in political activities is a completely new concept, however. Voters have been able to take part in political debate through the media since the introduction of newspapers as a mass medium. They have been able to write to the letters pages of newspapers in order to convey their opinions to the public domain (Krug 2005) and since the latter half of the 20th Century have been able to deliver them into the public domain via radio and television (McNair et al 2003). Like access to the public domain via television, these forms of participation have been accessible to comparatively few private individuals as citizens seeking to participate in political debate via newspapers and television are always subject to a selection process as discussed above. Public participation in political debate is an essential part of the

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system of democratic governance, and Facebook provided a platform for political debate on which there were no obstacles to participation.

Garnham (1992) argues that while the growth in the number of communication channels may be viewed as 'inherently desirable because pluralistic' (1992: 364), this is not necessarily the case. This viewpoint is based on 'technical utopianism', he states (ibid: 364), claiming that Habermas's theory of the public sphere provides a more legitimate base for the critical analysis of developments within the media and democratic politics that is necessary to 'rebuild systems of both communication and representative democracy adequate to the contemporary world' (Garnham 1992: 364). The freedom of citizens to physically gather together meant that public meetings were accessible to all and provided channels of communication between the appropriate authorities and the citizenry. Mediated participation means that the content of the communication is also mediated and is not delivered directly from voters to political authorities. Curran (1991), however, considers that a genuinely democratic media system has a duty to enable citizen participation in the public domain (1992: 30), to encourage citizens to participate in public debate and to contribute to the formation of public policy (ibid: 30). Thompson also argues that the media have a substantial role to play in encouraging private individuals to participate publicly in political debate. New communication channels have 'created new forms of interaction [and] visibility' (1995: 75) that elide spatial and temporal restraints and enable private individuals to observe and interact with people whom they may never meet face to face. He considers that political debate based on co-presence (the public sphere ideal), is no longer feasible in modern democracies as a means of ensuring democratic accountability, while access to various forms of media ensures a plurality of voices and opinions are heard (ibid).

A study of the political discourse on Facebook is particularly valuable since the 2010 General Election in the United Kingdom was the first time a social platform had been adopted by UK politicians for election campaigning. Communication between politicians and voters on Facebook was transmitted more directly and in individuals' own words, offering a counter-argument to Garnham's suggestion that mediated communication resulted in mediated content. The elision of temporal and spatial restraints and accessibility of the social network ensured that politicians could deliver their arguments to voters without mediation by a third party, while the voices and opinions of tens of thousands of voters could simultaneously be heard.

Democratic governance

The use of Facebook as a means of political participation may therefore have a beneficial impact upon democratic governance, the political system by which the United Kingdom is governed, and in which regular elections and public participation are key. The United Nations (2012) decrees that a crucial factor of 'good' and 'democratic' governance is the transparency of a country's institutions and processes, as exhibited by regularly held elections, laws that must clearly be seen to be free of corruption and political accountability to the people. Countries' credibility and standing in the world are dependent upon their success in achieving these goals (UN 2012). The Democracy Web, (2012) emphasises the requirement for elected representatives to 'have a direct relationship with the country's citizens' and that 'the principles of accountability hold that government officials are responsible to the citizenry for their decisions and actions' (Democracy Web 2012), while Hassan emphasises the 'historic responsibilities' (2008: 190) that governments have 'to [their] people' (ibid: 190).

Democratic governance, therefore, is reliant for its legitimacy on: the active participation of citizens in the political process (Curran et al 2011; Diamond 2004;

Pilkington 1997), especially by voting in elections; governmental transparency and accountability (Diamond 2004); strong political parties (Curran et al. (2011); plurality of voices and a system of rule by law (The United Nations 2012; Papacharissi 2010; Blanca 2006; Kalathi 2006; Polat 2005**;** Diamond 2004**);** the protection of human rights for all citizens (Diamond 2004)**.** It requires the holding of regular elections in which citizens select their preferred political representatives to govern on their behalf (Oxford English Dictionary 2006). Politicians who gain the most votes are elected, and the political party with the most elected representatives forms the government. Democratic government demands the consent of the governed, with power lying in the hands of the people and flowing to government leaders whose grip on power is only temporary (Diamond 2004). This concept is discussed in Chapter Seven.

The concept of democracy has its roots in Ancient Greece (Habermas 1991; Pilkington 1997), and is linked to Habermas's notion of the public sphere, with public debate and consensus on matters in the public interest. Pilkington argues that while the literal meaning of democracy is the rule of the people, the word further connotes 'the rule of the people, by the people', and furthermore 'the rule of the people, in the interests of the people and with the consent of the people' (1997: 4/5), emphasising that power rests with the electorate. Pilkington describes

> the concept of government by consent, and of popular consent lending
>
> legitimacy to government … [as] more important to our understanding
>
> of democracy than the mechanics of how the people as a whole can be
>
> involved with government in a participatory sense' (ibid: 5).

His argument thus focuses on the issue of power, and with whom it lies. Like Diamond, he emphasises that in a democracy, a government cannot be considered to be legitimate if it does not rule with the popular consent of the citizenry. This signifies the

importance of the engagement of private individuals in public debate and by voting in

elections, and by association, the importance of Facebook as a new, widely accessible

channel of communication between political actors and private individuals and as a

public platform for a wide plurality of voices.

Visibility

The opportunities offered to individuals to participate in the online environment

do not simply empower them to communicate with others across the globe and at

various social levels, including politicians. It also confers upon them a far higher level

of visibility, one that was unimaginable until the last two decades. Thompson (2005)

observes that the essence of visibility has been greatly changed by ongoing

developments in communication media, and is now no longer constrained by spatial and

temporal boundaries and reliant upon co-presence. New technologies, he suggests, offer

everyone not only a greater public visibility (2005: 38), but also 'a new form of

intimacy' (ibid: 38) that he labels 'mediated intimacy' (ibid: 41) in the public domain.

This increased visibility engenders a sense of familiarity with those to whom it

is granted - politicians, for example – as their personal lives become more visible. As a

result, the 'social conditions of privacy are changing (ibid: 44). This is equally

applicable to private individuals who take advantage of the opportunities offered by

digital technologies to create a presence in the 'public space' (ibid: 49) which is created

by mass communication. Private individuals' use of digital media can be seen to trace a

trajectory similar to that previously witnessed in the print and television media (Mehl

2005). When each of these media was first introduced, communication between them

and the public was predominantly a one-way flow. The media belonged within

Habermas's public sphere or system, while their readers and audiences were located in

the private sphere/lifeworld. As these media platforms became established, the role of private individuals grew, facilitating the acquisition of a higher public visibility.

As discussed previously, however, this was not a particularly new development. Krug (2005) argues that the private lives of citizens were first welcomed into the public domain in the eighteenth century via the letters pages of newspapers. Krug again stresses the importance of the letter both to and within communication history, pointing out the reliance of the early newspaper industry upon private letters. When Benjamin Franklin took over the Pennsylvania Gazette in 1729, he appealed to 'gentlemen' to send him 'private letters' to put in his newspaper. 'He wished to link up with an existing network of exchanges that …bridged the public and the private' (Hall (1996) in Krug 2005: 128). The input from private 'gentlemen' was therefore welcomed, but confined to a specific area. What is significant is the importance placed on making the personal experience visible within the emerging public arena, and Krug, like Hartley (2008) contests the notion that the sharing of private experiences in the public domain is a modern development.

Online visibility

Following the development of the Internet, Web 2.0 and social platforms such as Facebook, however, the visibility of individuals' lived experiences has been greatly extended. The only prerequisites are access to a networked computer and an ability to follow the instructions provided by the many social networks online. A similarity can be discerned between the trajectory of access to the public domain via new technical developments, and access to the mediated public sphere through the print media and television. Initially, the Internet served clearly identified and specialised groups, the American military and university researchers in the mid Twentieth Century, and while computing technology developed, computers were not introduced into the working and

domestic environments on a large scale until the 1980s. Continuous developments, including the World Wide Web in 1991, gave lay individuals greater scope for communicating and collaborating with others. They enabled private individuals to participate in and to develop a voice in this new mediated public space, and to become producers of content on the Internet. Mirroring the previous developments in the print and television media, to paraphrase Mehl, the public 'move[d] … comfortably' (ibid: 81) into the online environment. Jones claims that those who choose to become visible on the Internet, similar to those who participate in the Italian tradition of the 'passeggiata', do so for no particular purpose other than 'to see and be seen' (Berman 1982 cited in Jones 1998: 12). This practice may be considered representative of Lasch's description of post- Sixties society as a 'culture of narcissism' (Lasch (1978) in Shattuc 1997: 120).

For boyd and Ellison visibility is a major factor in the popularity of social networks, since the networks not only enable individuals to create and publish online personae and profiles, but also to make their offline social networks (2007: 2) publicly visible. Meikle and Young (pre-publication) also regard visibility as a key issue in the online environment, since there are many ways in which it 'affects different aspects of our daily lives in networked digital environments' (ibid: Chapter Six). They elect to place the emphasis on visibility instead of privacy because 'not all aspects of these issues can easily be accommodated under the umbrella of privacy, as mediated visibility has further dimensions through which people perform and display themselves, and connect with others, in ways which may not be intended to be private '(ibid).

Visibility online is 'asymmetric' according to Brighenti (2007: 326). It can only be symmetrical in conditions in which reciprocal visibility is possible, he states (ibid: 325). Despite this asymmetry, he claims that 'shaping and managing visibility is a huge

work that human beings do tirelessly' (ibid: 327), 'not only is there a form of seeing, but also a form of being seen' (ibid: 331, emphasis author's), while Mills comments that 'the acts of seeing and being seen are fundamental to social performance' (2008: 53). The Internet is therefore a singular form of the media, since it not only offers individuals the opportunity to become visible, but also empowers them by enabling them to select how they are seen, or represented, within the public domain. This new form of visibility also facilitates various forms of surveillance practices, such as synopticism in which the many to watch the few, Mathiesen (1997: 222). Thompson argues that these new forms of visibility, or publicness, may come at a price. Since they are no longer dependent upon shared temporal and spatial presence, they are 'uncontrollable' (ibid: 38).

Village life

The extent to which such personal experiences are visible is, however, much greater due to the affordances of the Internet and the Web, and indeed Halavais (2009), states that this has in fact turned back the clock. 'Search engines have thrown us back into village life in many ways' (2009: 139) he argues. The 'burgeoning exhibitionist technologies' (ibid: 139) such as social networking sites 'provide us with information on parts of their [colleagues, friends and families'] lives that would otherwise remain hidden, at least to most of the world' (ibid.). As a result, Halavais states that there is a shift in the conception of private information and more of individuals' private lives are subject to greater surveillance. This view echoes Andrejevic's (2007) argument that a higher level of visibility facilitates greater surveillance opportunities. Both opinions can be seen to relate to Thompson's (2005) claim that technical developments have created an uncontrollable, greater visibility (p.38). Halavais argues that the language that is used in the discourse of privacy, such as sousveillance and dataveillance, (2009: 139)

indicates that the concept has been reassessed from the initial notion that it was performed by societal hierarchies. Such reassessment must also take into consideration the fact that many individuals consciously seek the visibility offered through social networking sites such as Facebook, to harness the opportunities they provide for 'personal brand management' (Halavais 2009: 140), and self-presentation 'Social network sites … present the latest networked platform enabling self-presentation to a variety of interconnected audiences' (Mendelson and Papacharissi 2011:252).

Surveillance

Traditionally, surveillance is considered in a negative light, and this is particularly evident in literature and films. Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four remains the ultimate surveillance novel with its representation of a dystopian society in which few acts or words go unrecorded by the State. *The Truman Show* (1998 Paramount) in which a man unknowingly lives his life before the cameras in a giant television studio, being watched by, and entertaining millions of television viewers remains a perfect mediated example of Mathiesen's synopticon (1997). Other films based on the theme of surveillance include *The Conversation* (1974, Paramount), *Enemy of the State* (1998, Touchstone) and *Red Road* (2006: Advanced Party Scheme).

A social platform such as Facebook therefore has much to offer both individual users and institutional and commercial hierarchies through its facilitation of surveillance. Andrejevic observes that commercial surveillance, while active, is not operated from 'a centralised point' (Andrejevic 2004: 236). A social network such as Facebook, however, functions as a focal point for all types of surveillance, from friendly, peer-to-peer surveillance, to dataveillance by commercial entities and offers surveillance potential by and of state hierarchies such as politicians. Nevertheless, the operation of surveillance techniques, whether used by peers or those with a specific

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purpose, must inevitably be linked with power. Doyle and Fraser, for example, suggest that states can use social platforms such as Facebook 'to spy on their own citizens' (2010: 221).

Mathiesen offered his concept of the synopticon in opposition to Foucault's vision of Bentham's Panopticon, a blueprint for a prison which would allow large numbers of prisoners to be watched by very few guards. The building's construction was such that the surveillance was not detectable, and therefore the prisoners would have to discipline themselves to behave in the required fashion at all times because they had no way of knowing whether or not they were being observed at any given time. For Foucault, Bentham's blueprint could be applied equally well in hospitals, schools and the workplace (ibid: 206) with its key aim of imposing self-discipline, self-monitoring and control rather than inflicting physical punishment. The asymmetry of Panoptic surveillance is also applicable to digital media and social platforms such as Facebook. Andrejevic, for example, claims that users of social platforms such as Facebook will find 'their own activities … turned back upon them in complex and opaque forms with the express purpose of channelling and directing their behaviour' (Andrejevic 2011:96) as illustrated in Chapter One.

Simon (2005) suggests that a modern mediated version in the shape of 'dataveillance' (p.1) replicates many aspects of Panoptic surveillance. Dataveillance functions by the recording and storing of individuals' information through, for example, supermarket loyalty cards, all of which, by their requirement for user registration, comply with Bordewijk and van Kaam (1986)'s taxonomy of communication flows. While offering users some benefits, use of these cards also enables the recording of shoppers' personal information and shopping habits for commercial purposes. Contemporary technological innovations are frequently viewed as changing the aspects

of surveillance techniques because they render them invisible and thus enable them to be more easily and widely used. These same innovations also make surveillance, or dataveillance, extremely difficult to avoid. Castells observes 'reports of the growing threat to privacy concern less the state as such than business organisations and private information networks, or public bureaucracies following their own logic as apparatuses' (Castells 2004: 341/2)

Surveillance is not, however, solely associated purely with discipline and control (Mills 2008; Lyon 2007; Albrechtslund and Dubbeld 2005), or with commercial gain. The operation of closed circuit television cameras in car parks, shopping malls and the streets can be viewed as reassuring on safety grounds (Lyon 2007), while in the field of television entertainment, surveillance can be viewed with a self-conscious irony (Mills 2008). The increasing popularity of the Internet during the 1990s also saw the development of games (Albrechtslund and Dubbeld 2005: 218) in which surveillance techniques were applied 'to create surprising, innovative and sometimes even interactive entertainment' (ibid: 218). The authors note, however, that the surveillance practices applied in contemporary games are not subjected to critical scrutiny, but instead are viewed purely as means of entertainment (ibid: 19).

Peer-to-peer surveillance

While surveillance can be used as a form of control or discipline and as a form of entertainment, Andrejevic suggests that the new communication technologies also enable 'lateral or peer-to-peer surveillance' (2007: 212). Internet users can now 'check up on' (ibid: 212) family, and friends and acquaintances, old and new by going online. Andrejevic notes the transition of Google from a proper noun to a transitive verb that describes the activity of performing an online search. Any Internet user can initiate a search, for either information or for individuals. He cites Facebook in particular as a

social platform which enables individuals to track friend's activities and backgrounds (ibid: 230) without their knowledge. Halavais (2009) describes the Facebook search facility as enabling 'social search' (p. 160) in which users search for people they know. Social platform searches are dependent upon the recorded actions of users which enable them to be identified and linked to mutual acquaintances (ibid: 160). He further notes the supplementary surveillance aspects of social media searches since they enable users to perform searches not only for individuals, but also for information about them.

Lyon observes that the new communication media offer the 'electronic means of entertainment, leisure and even education [that] operate alongside the media or surveillance' (2007: 155). Castells, however, cautions that there is yet another aspect of surveillance which must be considered – its use by commercial interests which, while they cannot be compared with the use of surveillance by state agencies, have an equally powerful motive for collecting information on individuals. Particularly relevant to Facebook is his claim that 'the real issue is … in the gathering of information on individuals by business firms, and organisations of all kinds and in the creation of a market for this information. (Castells 2004: 342).

His comment may be viewed as displaying remarkable foresight in light of the (currently ongoing) police investigations into phone hacking by journalists working for the British newspaper The News of the World, part of the News International global media empire. Events began to unfold in 2005, when the newspaper published an article about Prince William suffering a knee injury; information which Buckingham Palace suspected had been obtained through someone hacking into the Prince's telephone message service. The following year, the newspaper's Royal Editor Clive Goodman and private investigator Glen Mulcaire were arrested for illegal phone hacking and the two men were jailed in 2007. But in 2008 further allegations about phone hacking were

made against the News of the World and in 2009 the UK Parliament launched an investigation. Further revelations of the interception of telephone calls and messages belonging to the victims of crimes and their families eventually led to the demise of the newspaper in 2011 and a lengthy legal investigation. In these circumstances, employees of a global media conglomerate used digital technologies to acquire information which was never intended for public consumption.

The information was obtained through invisible methods normally associated with state control but which are now more accessible and easily used, and was used for purely commercial gain. The relevance of Castells' observation about the existence of a market for personal information is clear, particularly in peer-to-peer surveillance terms. The newspaper's future was threatened only in 2011 when the extent of the phone hacking operation and the surveillance of the victims of crime became common knowledge. As a result, contemporary society, which Mathiesen describes as the 'viewer society' (Mathiesen 1997 in Lyon 2007) operates concurrently as both panopticon and a synopticon. New forms of media not only allow the few to watch the many, but the many to watch the few (Lyon, 2007), while offering the new form of surveillance – peer-to-peer.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the key issues which are relevant to the discussion of privacy and power in the social space provided by the social network Facebook. Issues of privacy and power have been the focus of much academic research and theory, and in reflecting on existing literature on the subjects, I have considered my own perceptions of both issues in relation to Facebook and how existing theories relate to the social platform. I have subsequently examined the technical and social developments which have aided the creation of this new communicative form and the social changes

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and consequences that have arisen. In the following chapter, I discuss the methods

chosen to research Facebook as a social network and the selected research population.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The methodologies which have been applied in this research project are situated within the constructivist research paradigm. In contrast to the quantitative methodologies situated within the positivist paradigm, qualitative research methods do not conclude by proving or disproving a hypothesis or theory. Researchers approach a project with an open mind, seeking to answer predetermined research questions which have no affirmative or negative answers. Methodologies within the constructivist paradigm are directed at the analysis of narrative using various qualitative research methods which rely heavily upon the interpretation of the researcher. 'There is no burden of proof. There is only the world to experience and understand' (Halcolm in Patton 1990: 7).

In this project, I sought to experience the 'world' that is Facebook, the Internet social media platform. As indicated in Chapter One, in 2011 this social platform has hundreds of millions of registered users each of whom have established their own pages on the platform. Facebook offers private individuals various privacy options that determine who can access the content they upload to their pages. The social network has also been adopted by a substantial range of other users for promotional purposes, as previously indicated, and these users have established public pages which may be accessed by any other Facebook user or anyone on the Web.

In order to establish the communication practices adopted by these groups on Facebook, the impact of such interaction with these groups on the privacy of individual users, and how power is manifest in these interactions, I have therefore applied qualitative research methods to study these public pages. This thesis focuses on four cases studies as research subjects, with Critical Discourse Analysis being employed in

the study of: Facebook both as the Internet platform which facilities such interaction and the company, which also communicates with users; the developers of applications, such as online games, which are mounted on the platform; political parties and their leaders in the UK 2010 General Election campaign; and traditional media platforms as represented by two television annual events. These hierarchical organisations use the social network in order to interact with private individuals on a participatory online platform, but such interaction cannot be viewed as value free. 'Communication networks' claims Castells, 'are the fundamental networks of power-making in society' (2007: 421).

Qualitative Methodologies

As Cresswell states, qualitative research methods 'rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis and draw on diverse strategies of inquiry' (2009: 173). They also, significantly, and in contrast to research methods within the positivist paradigm, position the researcher, rather than technical processes, as the principal instrument in the process of data collection and analysis. What qualitative methods do therefore is to focus on data 'which are not: numerically coded, quantified or do not consist of numbers' (Hansen et al 1998: 308). Rather, qualitative research is 'largely an investigative process' (Miller 1992 in Cresswell 2009: 195) which is conducted to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction and which aims to understand a 'particular social phenomenon' (ibid: 195).

As a consequence, the data collected are textually descriptive, and indeed they have been defined as 'the techniques associated with the gathering, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of narrative information' (Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009: 6). Qualitative research methods also differ in another respect. While quantitative methods rely on the processing of large amounts of data which provides 'a

broad, generalizable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously' (Patton 1990: 14), qualitative methods 'typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This provides a more in-depth understanding of the cases and situations studied, but reduces generalizabilty' (ibid: 14). To paraphrase, quantitative research methods produce clear numerical analysis of large scale research populations, the results of which can then be applied to a greater number of people. Qualitative research methods produce a deeper level of information about a smaller group of people and cases and result in a deeper understanding of the research population. The results, however, cannot be applied on a wider and larger scale.

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of how certain hierarchical groups use the Facebook social platform, therefore, I have selected qualitative research methods belonging within the constructivist paradigm as being the most relevant. Lofland (in Patton : 32) has suggested four main requirements in the collection of qualitative data: the researcher needs to get close enough to the people and situation being studied to gain a sufficiently deep understanding of the details of what is taking place; the researcher must capture what is actually being said and what is taking place; qualitative data must include a great deal of pure description of what is taking place and where it is taking place; qualitative data must include direct quotations from the people who have been subject to research. Jensen argues that while qualitative research is 'a heterogeneous area' (2003: 236), it has three principal features: meaning – 'human beings experience both ordinary lives and extraordinary events as meaningful' (ibid: 236); naturalistic contexts – those being studied should so in their own culture and situation; and interpretive subject – the researcher as the interpreter of 'meaning in

action' (ibid: 236). Jensen's identified features can therefore be seen to support the selection of qualitative methodologies for use in this project.

Facebook is a social platform on the Internet, but also the social context within which the interaction and communication among the groups and individuals takes place; it is the context which enables the institutional representatives' experience of interaction and communication with private individuals and enables the researcher to witness, record and analyse these interactions in order to provide a deeper understanding thereof. I have therefore applied the qualitative research method of Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate how issues of individual privacy are negotiated and how power is made manifest in a range of documents and recorded communication on the website between Facebook Inc., applications developers, television broadcasters and politicians and private individual users on the social platform.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been selected since it is a form of textual analysis which goes beyond the examination of texts themselves. It widens the scope of textual analysis in which critical linguistics is the defining theory, to a practice in which each of three different forms of analysis are 'mapped … on to one another in an attempt at integrated statements which link social and cultural practices to properties of text' (Fairclough 2005: 144). These three analytical practices include not only the content of the texts, either spoken, written, visual or multi-modal, but also the conditions, or situations, in which texts are both produced, distributed and consumed (Jensen 2003: 106), and thirdly the 'sociocultural practices which frame discourse practices and texts' (ibid: 106). This latter point is particularly relevant due to the use of Facebook by commercial companies and state hierarchical agencies. 'A key feature of this version of

CDA [as promulgated by Fairclough] is that the link between texts and society/culture is seen as mediated by discourse practices' (Fairclough 2005). Chouliaraki and Fairclough describe CDA as bringing 'a variety of theories into dialogue, especially social theories on the one hand and linguistic theories on the other' (1999: 16).

Discourse can therefore, within the remit of CDA, be seen to extend beyond critical linguistics to social and cultural practices. Facebook is a specifically constructed social space; it was originally created to serve a defined population, but has developed into a manufactured social space which has not been constructed around shared interests or geographical proximity. Its position of significant prominence in both online and offline contexts provides an environment in which CDA is appropriate. It is a social platform on which communication is multi-modal, textual, and visual, and it has had a significant impact on both social and cultural practices. The 'cornerstones of CDA' (Weiss and Wodak 2007 (2003):10) are 'discourse, ideology and power' (ibid) with the result that the research method offers a valid means of examining communication by identified agents on Facebook. CDA interrogates the context of a text, the relationship between those participating in the communication, and how the text is constructed.

Ideology

A communicative tool on the scale of the social platform that is Facebook cannot be expected to be value-free in terms of ideology and power, and the application of CDA may be expected to reveal how both are manifested on the website. 'Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997 in Weiss and Wodak 2007: 12). Wodak summarises CDA as taking 'an interest in the ways in which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations of power' (2001: 11), which justifies its use in a research project such as this. Critical

Discourse Analysis is a particularly effective tool in establishing a relationship between the forms of communication adopted by the various users of Facebook, and the social structure which operates on the site. 'It is in the context of this relationship that the term discourse becomes important' (Deacon et al. 1999: 146) and, they add, 'the discursive and the social mutually inform and mutually act upon each other (ibid: 147). Fairclough (1992), meanwhile, describes discourse as a contributory factor in the construction of not only self identity, but also of inter-personal relationships and 'systems of belief and knowledge' (p. 64). Discourse, he argues, is 'three dimensional' (ibid: 72); it comprises the text, social practice, and discursive practice, that is how the text is produced, distributed and consumed. As Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) point out, however, the multi-media platforms provided by contemporary computer technologies offer users a wider range of communicative tools beyond the written text which is the focus of discourse analysis. Sound, graphics and images must also be taken into consideration, therefore these are acknowledged in the textual analysis in an approach described as 'multi-modal' (Kress et al. 1997: 258).

Computer-Mediated Communication

In this thesis, CDA is applied not to a traditional broadcast mass medium, but to a digital media platform on which communication is computer mediated. Computer-mediated communication (CMC, online communication) is multi-modal, it may be written, visual, oral, monological, dialogical, broadcast, and can be directed at one person, a group of clearly identified people, or at anyone or no-one in particular. Whatever its form, it

> has become ubiquitous at least in modern Western societies and
> investigating various forms of CMC can therefore provide us with

important insights into the 'communicative households' of inhabitants

of the twenty-first century. (Gruber 2008: 58)

Gruber further notes that the research of forms of communication in digital

media provide significant insights into

1. the appropriation of new means of communication by users

2. the emergence of new genres as combinations of existing

generic conventions, new technical means of communication and new

communicative goals of users

3. the formation or maintenance of (discourse) communities

through new ways of communication (ibid: 72).

For Mann and Stewart, 'the most exciting suggestion is that digital

communication is a new kind of discourse' (2005: 182); it is a new type of language

that is unlike any genre which has previously been studied (ibid.) due to the fact that it

is a combination of oral and written language. Communication as featured on Facebook

may certainly be described as hybrid, since it cannot be categorised as purely written or

spoken. Users communicate by the written word, in that their communication is typed

into a device with Internet access, but the form of their communication often belongs

more in the spoken genre than in the written. As the subject of research, therefore it

'shares some of the advantages which can characterize oral *and* written forms of data

collection' (ibid: 189). Mann and Stewart suggest that qualitative researchers may be

considered to benefit from a form of research data which combines access to a deeper

level of meaning and involvement in communication by oral communication, with the

more considered and thoughtful communication of the written word (ibid: 189).

The application of CDA to communication on a digital platform offers a variety

of advantages, not least of which is its capacity to overcome the potential offline

hurdles of both space and time. Communication on the Facebook platform is easily accessible from any geographical location providing that it has Internet access, and frees the online researcher from time restraints, as access to the texts is readily available regardless of temporal issues; it is always 'on tap' as it were. This freedom from spatial and temporal restraints not only facilitates the construction of a research population, but also ensures that said population is constantly accessible to the researcher. However, this also raises ethical issues. Because online texts may be easily accessible, online researchers cannot ignore ethical issues raised by Internet research. Online researchers must consider whether 'the individual or group considers their correspondence to be public or private' (Madge, 2009: 11).

Ethical issues

In compliance with this point, the question of ethics has been considered during the formation of this research project, since it takes as its subject textual and visual communication on the social network Facebook. While this website requires users to register before gaining access to the site, there are no prerequisites to registration other than an email address. Coupled with the vast number of registered users, therefore, Facebook cannot be considered to be a private, restricted community. Secondly, the texts which have been analysed originated with public organisations and companies, and have been published on public pages, on which no privacy settings have been imposed and which are intended to be accessible to everyone on the social network and the Web. These factors led me to conclude that there were no 'expectations of privacy' (ibid: 11; Ess et al 2002: 3) on the part of the public agencies which had established the pages for promotional purposes. The communication being researched was on 'publicly accessible archives and inter/actions by authors/agents were public and performative' (Madge: 11; Ess et al 2002: 7). In addition, the texts subject to analysis did not discuss

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intimate or private topics, while the research did not contravene ethical guidance to 'do no harm' (Ess et al 2002: 8). This is a prerequisite of online research as set out in the Ethics Guide (2002) published by the Association of Internet Researchers, an international organisation dedicated to the study of the Internet and which establishes ethical standards for academic online research.

Academic interest in social networks has been increasing over the past decade, and Facebook itself has been subject to much academic examination; it forms an extensive research field. Boyd, Ellison and Hargittai have paid particular attention to the online site, with boyd and Ellison (2007) providing a comprehensive overview of the development of SNSs and how they have been researched. Social network studies in general have considered such diverse subjects as: the online presentation of self (boyd (2004); Donath and Boyd (2004); Marwick, (2005); friending and usage (Golden, Wilkinson and Huberman (2007); Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2007); the relationship between online and offline social networks (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007); the issue of privacy, (Gross and Acquisti (2005; 2006), Lewis et al (2008); the investment in social capital on SNSs ((Zywica and Danowski, (2008), Zhao (2006)). Christian Fuchs applied CDA in his study of Social Networking Sites and the Surveillance Society (2009) in the context of electronic surveillance. He conducted a critical study in to how students in Salzburg used three SNS including Facebook. While the aim of this thesis is to apply CDA in order to establish how state and commercial hierarchies use Facebook to communicate with private individuals on the site, and to establish how this interaction impacts upon the privacy of individual users, the notion that 'power is an omnipresent facet of discourse and beyond' (Farfan and Holzscheiter 2011: 139) remains pervasive.

Documents

I began my empirical research with an examination of the communication published on the social platform by Facebook Inc., its Chief Executive Officer, Mark Zuckerberg and other members of staff. In the following two chapters, in which I critically examine how Facebook operates and the affordances it makes available to third party companies such as applications developers, I have therefore applied CDA to a wide range of pages on the social platform. Firstly, I consider the initial pages which greet individuals when they wish to join the social network; the registration page, followed by the page on which new Facebook users are invited to compile their personal profile which will be published on the SNS, looking at both the processes and the way in which Facebook Inc. addresses users.

I then proceeded to critically examine the following pages published by Facebook Inc.on the social network platform: Facebook's Home Page; Privacy Policy; Privacy Guide; Privacy Settings; Choose Your Privacy Settings; Controlling How You Share; Facebook and Privacy; Facebook Principles and Facebook Statement of Rights and Responsibilities. Critical Discourse Analysis was subsequently employed in the consideration of the documents Facebook Inc. published to inform private individuals of developments on the social platform: Facebook Blog and Facebook Live, which included video links and presentations by Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook staff and that provided information on the launch of Facebook Connect, Facebook Platform and Facebook mobile. CDA was also applied to the pages on which Facebook communicates with advertisers and applications developers, again not only for the information they provided, but for the manner in which these external companies were addressed and in order to establish the consequences for private individuals. These pages include F8 Live, including video footage of Mark Zuckerberg's address to

developers at the biennial conference for apps developers; the Facebook Developers Pages and Blog, which each provided detailed information on the development and application of ongoing affordances for Developers: Like Button; Developers: Activity Feed; Login Button; Developers: Plugins; Apps on Facebook; Developers: Real-time Updates; Developers Policy; Developers: Preferred Developer Consultant Programme; Facebook Advertising; Advertising: Getting Started; Facebook for Websites; Facebook Statistics. Examination of these documents charted the expansion of the Facebook social platform, and the continuous developments that led to the erosion of the boundary between the social network and the rest of the Web.

Critical Discourse Analysis was also performed on the Facebook pages, websites privacy policies and Terms of Use of three gaming companies and three commercial companies which have mounted applications on the Facebook platform: CrowdStar; Playdom; Zynga; Foursquare; Kremsa Design; TripAdvisor. An examination of the companies' own websites and privacy policies was necessary in order to gain access to their Privacy Statements and in certain cases, because their Facebook pages had no content other than a link to their applications, their company blogs. Three gaming companies were selected as representative of companies that mount online games on Facebook in order to establish if they shared operation practices, and the three companies operated the games that were, at the time the chapter was researched, the most popular on Facebook. The three other web companies were selected as representing different types of web applications on the social platform.

In Chapter Six, I critically examine the Facebook pages of two annual 'event' television programmes: *Strictly Come Dancing* (BBC 1) and *The X Factor* (ITV 1). These television programmes were chosen to represent the adoption of Facebook by established broadcasters on a longstanding media platform, and in order to consider

what advantages the social platform offers a public service broadcaster and an independent broadcaster that already operated their own websites. The programmes were chosen for their status within the broadcasting calendar year as being distinct from other reality/talent shows on U.K. television. The Facebook pages of both programmes were critically examined for their communication styles, interaction with the shows' fans and their content. The websites of BBC1 and ITV1 were also examined, as were their privacy policies, since interaction on the Facebook pages of each show were governed by the broadcasters' own privacy statements. The Facebook pages of the applications linked to *Strictly Come Dancing*, that is 'Be a *Strictly* Judge', *Strictly* Dance Badge and *Strictly* Get Dancing apps were also examined to determine the conditions of use. CDA was applied to *The X Factor*'s Facebook page, as were the dialogue boxes for the page's commercial applications: The *X Factor* Karaoke and The *X Factor* Party Box, the Chicago Town Pizza page on Facebook.

The final research chapter for this thesis offers a critical analysis of politicians' use of Facebook during the U.K. 2010 General Election. Critical Discourse Analysis was principally conducted on the Facebook pages of The Labour Party, its Leader Gordon Brown, when this was accessible; those of The Conservatives and their Leader David Cameron; and those of the Liberal Democrats and their Leader Nick Clegg as well as the special Election campaign landing pages introduced by the Parties in the weeks before Polling Day. The Facebook page of Number 10 Downing Street, and its application of the same name were also consulted. The applications pages launched by the Parties: 'Share for Change', Conservative Voting Application' by the Conservatives and 'Word of Mouth' by the Labour Party were examined in order to establish what they offered both voters and the Parties. A further political page, Democracy UK on Facebook, was also subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis as its content was distinct

from the pages established by the political parties. The applications relating to the page, Vote Match and My Vote Adviser were also examined for their content, any conditions imposed upon access and to establish by whom they had been created.

Reflections on the research process

If the research process cannot be described as following a smooth pathway, the same must apply for the reflective process. In a three year research project, both present challenges, highlights and difficulties, as the reflective process is one which accompanies the research process as the project progresses. This has been particularly evident in this research project on an online social platform, since in general, digital technologies are continuously progressing, and specifically due to the continual evolution of Facebook as a social media platform. As a result, the research landscape was subject to frequent advances as Mark Zuckerberg pursued his aim of establishing Facebook at the centre of the Web. The Facebook Privacy Policy, for example, was amended several times during the research period and the consequences of each change had to be examined. Simultaneously, the new developments and affordances for external companies that were regularly introduced had also to be examined individually in order to assess their impact on users' content. Both issues led to frequent reassessments of research already conducted, and a final check at the conclusion of the research process in order to establish that the thesis content remained relevant. In order to overcome this difficulty, I established a final date for the research process and indicated in Chapter One that this thesis represented the situation on Facebook at that date. The frequency of change on Facebook means that this thesis provides an examination of the social network within a defined timeline, and therefore can only offer the development of the platform until September 2011.

A further difficulty was the manner in which pages on the network suddenly became unavailable, as in the case of the Facebook page in the name of Labour Leader Gordon Brown, and also Facebook's monitoring practices. Preliminary research into politicians' pages on the social network led to a page in Gordon Brown's name but when the General Election was called, the page was unobtainable. A Facebook search delivered more than thirty pages in the name of the Labour Party Leader and Prime Minister. While browsing through them to locate a genuine page for Mr Brown, I was blocked from Facebook for forty-eight hours. As a result of this incident, I had to exercise great care while browsing the site, but it also emphasised the need to ensure credibility of the public pages I was examining. That is, that there was some evidence I was researching pages genuinely established by the person whose communication I wanted to examine.

The rapid growth in the number and diversity of users of Facebook presented a further challenge, especially during the process of selecting which categories of users to research. The selection of Facebook Inc. and applications developers was self-evident due to their impact on private individuals' use of the social platform. Again, however, the rapid development of apps and the affordances made available to them substantially changed the research environment on Facebook. The decision to include a chapter recording the use of Facebook by politicians' and political parties' again seemed self-evident due to their position in the social hierarchy. The Labour Government's decision to call a General Election in spring 2010 was a highlight of the research process since it enabled me to record how politicians deployed Facebook in particular and a social network in general, during an election campaign for the first time. The choice of BBC 1 and ITV 1's flagship entertainment programmes was a further highlight, as they presented far more material than anticipated.

The large number of potential subjects for research on Facebook made the selection process difficult, particularly since the selected research population produced an unexpectedly large amount of material. As a result, this thesis contains fewer research chapters than anticipated. I had to decide to either write smaller, but more chapters, which may have restricted the research process, or to restrict the research population and ensure that I presented an extensive analysis on the ways in which interaction and participation on Facebook impacted upon the privacy of users' content and the way users became subject to the practices of more powerful hierarchical agencies. This provided another highlight; the ability to establish the relevance of several cultural theories to digital media.

In conclusion, the research process had more highlights than difficulties. While many challenges had to be overcome, these provided valuable experience from which I hope to benefit in future social media research. The process emphasised the importance of decision making and the role of reflexivity in the process. Decisions cannot be made arbitrarily; alternatives choices must be carefully assessed and decisions taken must be justifiable when subjected to examination. While this process is not easy, it is one on which rests the success or otherwise of a PhD thesis.

Chapter Four

Facebook's *Modus Operandi*

In February 2010, Facebook celebrated its sixth birthday, and for users the event was marked with the launch of a new-look home page. The home page is the one on which users land when they log in and comprises their News Feed, a list of the on-site activities of their Friends, and the tools for navigating the site. This revamp of what Facebook labels the navigation dashboard was much criticised by users, but it reinforced Facebook's ethos of continuous change. Seven years after its launch, Facebook 2011 is vastly different from its origins as a tool to allow Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg, and his fellow students at Harvard University to 'connect easily and share information' (Zuckerberg, 2010). The difference is marked in four significant ways: unconditional registration; the number and diversity of its users; the range of services it provides; and, finally, the erosion of the boundary between Facebook and other sites on the World Wide Web.

This chapter examines Facebook as a social network, its affordances; its structure; the manner of its communication with users; and its privacy policy. Facebook's *raison d'etre* and its principal designation has been as a Social Network, a website that enables registered users to create their own personal space online within the site's boundary; to communicate with friends who also have a presence on the site; and to access the pages of their Friends (boyd and Ellison (2007). Meikle and Young (forthcoming) have added a fourth element to this definition – Facebook as a social media tool which 'blur[s] the distinction between personal communication and the broadcast model of messages sent to nobody in particular'. Facebook, as signalled above, has been subject to continual change as the services it offers users have grown

and developed; this has included access from mobile phones, from external email accounts, and from other websites. Meikle and Young therefore argue that to label Facebook a website is no longer accurate, since the Facebook website is 'only part of [the] network' (2012 forthcoming). They employ the designations of either social network media or social media tools (ibid) while Gillespie describes websites such as YouTube and Google as 'intermediaries' (Gillespie 2010: 2) – another useful label - and Burgess and Green (2009) have applied the term 'platform' to the Web mounted video sharing network YouTube (p.4).

Once logged in to Facebook, users choose from the diverse range of activities available; some of these services are provided by Facebook the company while a wide range of other onsite services are provided by third parties supported by the Facebook platform. Facebook is principally, but not solely, 'a platform for and aggregator of content' as Burgess and Green describe the video sharing network YouTube (2009: 4). It is dependent upon content generated by its users, but at the same time produces content itself as it communicates with its users and potential users. The focus of this chapter is to examine Facebook as a social platform, and the way in which it operates in what has been, in the first ten years of the 21st century, an extremely competitive and challenging online environment for SNSs.

Web 2.0

As discussed in Chapter Two, social media sites are closely identified with the term Web 2.0, although the term 'platform' in relation to the Internet was first adopted by Netscape Communications Corporation and other developers such as DoubleClick and Akamai (O'Reilly 2005: 2) in the early years of the World Wide Web. These companies played influential roles in the development of the web browsing, Internet tools and software which are retrospectively considered to fall within the rubric of Web

1.0 (O'Reilly 2005: 2; Netscape 2009). O'Reilly, a key advocate of the technology, particularly in relation to its potential as a business application, considers 'platform' also to be an apt name or description of the online networks which have been developed under the umbrella of Web 2.0. The term Web 2.0, commonly used in relation to Web developments from 2005 onwards, implies major changes to the structure of the Web that differentiate it from its early years and which are considered to come under the term Web 1.0.

As early as 2002, however, Meikle coined the descriptions 'Version 1' and 'Version 2.0' (2002: 29) during a discussion on interactivity on the Internet. O'Reilly, however, is credited as the originator of the labels Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 as a way of differentiating between the years preceding the financial crash of 'first dot.com bubble' (Meikle and Young 2012, forthcoming), and the subsequent emergence of 'successful new Internet firms' (ibid). Cormode and Krishnamurthy note that although 'most Web 2.0 runs on the same substrate as Web 1.0, there are some key differences' (2008: 1), and O'Reilly defines Web 2.0 as 'a set of principles and practices that tie together a veritable solar system that demonstrate some or all of those principles, at varying distances from that core' (2005: 2). Despite indicating that Web technologies have continued to develop, the above comments clearly signify few substantive changes in the use of the Web.

Free access

While O'Reilly (2005) emphasises the ability to gather together and adapt information and intelligence from countless sources as one of the principal attributes of a web-based platform, he is echoing what was previously stressed by the founder of the Web, Tim Berners-Lee (1999: unpaginated). For Berners-Lee, intercreativity, that is the ability to collaborate in order to create, has always been a major aim of the World Wide

Web (1999: unpaginated) in order that it develops organically, and can be accessible to anyone both in technological and participatory terms. Berners-Lee's belief that access to the development of these new technologies should be unrestricted by copyright and technical restrictions led him to make his technological advances freely available rather than subject them to copyright. This ensures that the World Wide Web lacks a central control point, unlike traditional broadcast media platforms. O'Reilly's image of Web 2.0 can therefore be seen to echo Berners-Lee's original vision that the affordances linked to Web 2.0 were clearly possible from the Web's creation.

Web 1.0

The years of Web 1.0 were those that followed the creation of the Web, when networked computers were first gaining a foothold in the personal domestic realm and when Internet and Web use often required the purchase of computer programmes or software (O'Reilly 2005: 1). These were 'commodities' (ibid: 1), which meant that developments were sold as continuously updated packages. Under the Web 2.0 rubric, much software is freely provided as a service which is continually being improved. Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) emphasise that while there are few technical differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (2008: 1), 'there is clear separation between a set of highly popular Web 2.0 sites such as Facebook ... and the 'old web'' (ibid. 1). The key differences, they suggest, are primarily design and usage due to 'a fundamentally different philosophy' (ibid: 1) which they summarise in the following taxonomy. Technically, the various sites identified with Web 2.0 such as Facebook have been developed specifically to enable user interaction, although interaction through special interest groups and games was already enabled by Web 1.0; structurally, the difference lies in the sites' purpose and layouts; and sociologically, in their principal purpose, which is based on the notion of friendship and groups (ibid: 1).

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In summary, Web 2.0 sites are those which 'incorporate a strong social component, involving user profiles, friends and links' (ibid: 4) which encourage user-generated content in various forms including textual and visual; or, they suggest, websites which have gained substantial popularity leading to financial speculation and investment (ibid: 4). Cormode and Krishnamurthy further state that 'Facebook … [is] easily classified as Web 2.0 due to its social network aspects which include the user as a first class object but also due to their use of new user interface technologies' (ibid: 4).

Flew (2008) similarly believes that websites which come under the rubric of Web 2.0 are those which focus on their users, are simple to use, and facilitate many-to-many connectivity (2008: 17). He offers an alternative definition of the differences between the two versions: Web 1.0 as offering 'an information portal in which everyone has their personal own little corner in the cyberspace' but which lacks 'context, interaction and scalability'; Web 2.0 as 'the power of the community to create and validate, seemingly freer from any form or organisation' but lacking in 'personalization, true portability and interoperability' (Terry Flew 2008: Web 3.0). Web 1.0 was the 'mostly read only web', while Web 2.0 is the 'widely read-write web' (ibid) he summarises. This emphasis on interaction implies that it only became possible under Web 2.0, and ignores the establishment of several means of interactivity from the early days of the Internet such as email, news groups and groups based around common interests such as the WELL, a computer conferencing system which developed in California.

Facebook

The creation of Facebook, therefore, is due to the continual development of digital technologies which bring together a variety of previously existing affordances of the Internet and the Web with the expanding affordances enabled by new technologies

to create new social platforms. Castells has described this as the emergence of 'the cluster of technologies, devices and applications that support the proliferation of social spaces on the Internet thanks to increased broadband capacity, innovative open-source software, and enhanced computer graphics and interface' (Castells 2009: 65).

Facebook has expanded by its focus on providing social space and increasing online personalisation for individual users, and by continually evolving its services in order to maintain a high level of stickiness – the encouragement to users to remain on the site rather than browse from one website to another. While Facebook, as a social media platform does have a hard boundary – users can be online and using Web services without being logged in to Facebook – it offers a diverse range of users a diverse range of services. In 2011, Facebook appears to operate as a 'gravitational core' (O'Reilly 2005: 1) for a continuously increasing number of sections of society. The definition of platform in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2006) includes the term 'structure' and, in digital terms, Facebook is a web-based platform constructed on the 'technical infrastructure of computers and other digital devices'(Flew 2008: 4) that is the Internet, and which supports a wide range of applications. Software and applications are constantly being developed and mounted on the Facebook platform as the company strives to maintain and to further enlarge its prominent position on the Web, and to maintain the engagement of its ever growing number and diversity of users.

At its core are the private individuals, however, who not only use the service, but whose use determines its success. Registration on Facebook is a simple process; little computing competency is necessary and users are obliged to provide very few personal details: name; email address; gender; and date of birth by answering questions on an online form. The provision of this information is sufficient to enable them to establish a presence on the platform – to carve out personal space on the Web and the

Internet if they wish. In this space, they are able to upload a photograph of themselves as their profile photograph which will accompany every post they make on their own home page, or on the 'Wall' – communication board – of anyone or any organisation with whom they communicate on Facebook. The requirement for users to register with a website as a condition of use has been identified as a significant issue (Meikle 2002) due to the role it plays in enabling Web companies to build a database of the personal information of their users. In order to use networks such as Facebook, the cost of inclusion is the provision of personal information.

Personal profiles

While Facebook demands very few personal details on registration, they are essential components in the process of identifying users, but they are unlikely to be particularly difficult to discover from other sources. The brevity of the registration form make the process very simple and user-friendly since it is, unlike lengthy and detailed forms, unlikely to deter prospective users. The details required are aimed at fulfilling Facebook's aim to have a register of authentic users, as Halavais notes, 'social media and search engines … insist on positively identifying members of the community as 'real individuals'' (2009:156) Once registered, however, the task of providing details for their personal profiles may be very lengthy as Facebook asks an extensive number of questions about various aspects of users' lives: their relationship status; education and employment history; religious and political beliefs; favourite books; quotations; films; music; television shows; and hobbies. Facebook therefore invites users to upload a wide range of personal information, but what is equally significant is the informal and personal mode of address it adopts when communicating with private individuals.

These questions are pro-forma: the same questions are asked in the same order and manner of all users once the registration process has been completed. Although it is

not compulsory for users to answer, this system and the informal, personal mode of address encourages users to comply, whilst simultaneously, it is prescriptive and does not offer them the opportunity to freely express themselves. The company can therefore acquire a substantial range of detailed information about its users, but the issue of power is very much in evidence as Facebook determines which types of information it wants users to provide. The information provided acts as a means of categorising people firstly by age and gender as supplied in the registration process, and then by their tastes; hobbies; religion; and employment. It may also be used to build a web of connections among users through the identification of family relationships and mutual circles of acquaintances via schools; universities; employers; and religious beliefs. Castells comments 'the use of the Internet as a communication system and an organising form exploded in the closing years of the second millennium' (Castells 2002:3).

Facebook developments

Facebook began as a 'communication system' (ibid:3) and as it has expanded it has also encouraged users to categorise their Friends and their preferences. This enabled users to organise activities and their social and working lives in addition to categorising the people to whom all their personal information and online Facebook activities are available. Between the years 2009 and 2011, Facebook made many changes to the privacy settings it offers as users demanded more power to control the visibility of the content they uploaded. The timing of these demands coincided with Facebook beginning to dismantle the boundary it had established between the social network and the rest of the Web.

In 2008, Facebook Connect was launched, a programme which allowed businesses to link and publicise their Facebook presence and connections on their external web applications and websites. While the Internet is viewed as a platform that

enables software and applications to be delivered to users as continually updated services, the Facebook platform operates in a similar manner but within what was originally a clearly defined boundary. The launch of both Platform, that enables external organisations to mount applications on Facebook, and Connect services began the gradual erosion of the boundary between Facebook and the rest of the Web, as they introduced links to third party and commercial interests into what had previously been a rather self-contained unit supported by display advertising. As indicated in Chapter One, newspaper financial reports estimate that the social network's revenue for the last financial year is expected to be around $2 billion. Since Facebook is a private company, however, it is difficult to give a definite figure for its advertising revenue.

During the course of 2009 and at the start of 2010, the continuing evolution of the Facebook platform saw the further erosion of its boundary, when, in 2009, access became available from mobile phones; by February 2010, 100 million Facebook users were linking to the site from their mobile phones (Palihapitiya 2010). Mobile phone access ensured that users could be continuously connected to the social platform; as Castells observes 'the key feature of wireless communication is not mobility but perpetual connectivity' (Castells 2009:69). Perpetual connectivity to Facebook ensures that users can be constantly uploading data to the social platform as they go about their day to day daily lives. Facebook services were further extended by the introduction in February 2010 of Facebook Chat which enables users to link their offsite instant messaging account to their Facebook account, with no requirement to remain logged on to the social platform, and of a new service enabling users to link documents available online to their Facebook home pages.

External websites

Facebook also linked up with Microsoft and Yahoo to allow users to connect to their Facebook accounts through their offsite email service. Castells (2009) and Meikle and Young (2012 forthcoming) note the integration of established broadcast media platforms and the new digital platforms on the Internet. This is resulting in the creation of 'a new global multimedia system' (Castells 2009:73) in which the new multimedia networks work towards the 'privatization and commercialisation of the Internet' (ibid:73) in order to take advantage of the new markets being created. While Facebook can be seen to have extended the services it provides to users, it has simultaneously encouraged them to place more personal information and more details about their lives on Facebook, thereby blurring the boundary between their online, onsite lives and their offline lives. This suggests a link with the arguments of Castells and Meikle and Young in the ways that this information may flow among different companies.

The merging of what were once separate areas can be seen to benefit both users and Facebook since it allows the company to extend its access into users' lives, and encourages users to place more information, and thus content, on the platform. Users taking advantage of the convenience of the new services are also simultaneously placing more information within the Facebook domain and database. Facebook has continued to erode the boundary between its own network site and other sites on the Web and in 2011 has completely abandoned its original exclusivity by forging links with other websites and by enabling the companies behind these sites to have access to its registered users. This has been achieved by extending the services Facebook offers to external companies including the opportunity to embed the Facebook Like button on their own websites, as well as the introduction of the Activity Feed and Login buttons.

The Like Button

The Like button is a social plugin which was originally embedded in the Facebook system. This feature was previously restricted to the News Feed, the stream of information detailing users' Friends' activities and which is published on their Friends' landing pages. The Like Button allows users to indicate if they approve of a Friend's comment or action; its use was extended in 2010 and replaced the Fan button which was previously confined to the profile pages of public figures and organisations. When a user clicked on the Fan button, their approval of the relevant public page was published on their Wall – communication board, on their personal pages and profile, and on their Friends' News Feeds. 'Fanning' was a popular feature of Facebook, as revealed in November 2009 when the company's Chief Operations Officer Sheryl Sandberg stated that an average of ten million individuals 'fan' a new page every day (Sandberg 2009). Although the button has been re-named 'Like', it serves the same purpose.

What is significant is that at no time, either on users' Walls or on the pages of public figures and organisations, has Facebook embedded its binary opposite – a 'dislike' button. Users may 'unlike' a site they have previously 'Liked', but are unable to indicate that they dislike a website or company. This omission indicates that users' views are only welcome if they are favourable and that Facebook not only determines what actions users may perform on the network, but also the commercial imperative behind the omission. Users may post unfavourable comments about a public figure or company's Facebook page, but these are likely to be dispersed in the general flow of discussion and comment, or removed by the page moderator. A dislike button might be expected to publicly record the number of users who clicked on it, similar to the Like Button, and give an unfavourable impression to page visitors. It would also be expected

to feature on users' Walls, and to publicise to their Friends and everyone with access to their pages that they disliked a certain company. In 2011, however, the Like Button is ubiquitous on the Web. Previously restricted to the Facebook pages and the Facebook profiles of public figures and organisations, the button can now be embedded on the external web pages of commercial companies. Should a Facebook user click the Facebook Like button on the external webpage, their action is recorded in their Friends' News Feeds on the social platform, accompanied by a link to the page (Facebook 2011(a)).

If a company includes the Open Graph tags, developed by and available from Facebook, as well as the Like Button on their Web page, it subsequently becomes the equivalent of a Facebook page (ibid). This establishes a public connection between the company's external webpage as well as its Facebook page, as was the case with the Fan button, and the Facebook user. It ensures that the links to the company's page will feature on the user's Facebook profile, while the company will be able to publish updates 'to the user' (ibid.), thus ensuring these are advertised to the user's Friends. This statement to companies is unclear, as it implies, but does not categorically state, that the updates will be published on the user's Wall and therefore be disseminated to their Friends. At the same time, the company's website is accessible through the search function on Facebook, and the company is able to target advertising at Facebook users who have indicated they Like the page.

Activity Feed

Further services available on Facebook to external companies include the availability of an Activity Feed plugin and a Login Button for embedding on their websites. The Activity Feed plugin displays new content posted on a company's external website on the Facebook pages of site users, regardless of whether the users

have logged into the company's site. It also ensures that any activity by a Facebook user on the external site is recorded and 'shared' (Facebook: 2011(b)) with their Friends. Should the user be simultaneously logged into Facebook, the Activity Feed plugin 'will be personalized to highlight content from their Friends' (ibid.). If the user is not logged into Facebook, the Activity Feed will display recommendations from the company's own website and provide the option to log into Facebook (ibid). The Login Button extends the personalisation of services made available to external websites. Once embedded on a company's website, it publishes on the external Web page the profile photographs of the user's Friends who have already indicated they Like it (Facebook 2011(c)) whenever they access the page. The development encourages page visitors to also Like the page, in order to be included in a group of their Friends.

These developments signify both the commercial dependence of Facebook on users' actions, and the company's power to deploy these on-site actions as they consider appropriate. The company requires users to be active on the site to ensure that user-generated content is continuously being renewed. But its position as a commercial entity is being strengthened as by these means Facebook extends it reach towards other companies on the Web and employs users' actions to enhance its commercial appeal. The social network is simultaneously ensuring that the need for its users to leave the site to visit other websites is reduced, and encouraging more external companies into its social web by employing users' content as an incentive. As Meikle and Young note 'Facebook's users are not its customers – the users are the product' (Meikle and Young 2012 forthcoming).

General Information

When an individual connects with a third party application or website via a Facebook page, their own and their Friends' names, profile photographs, gender, user

IDs and networks, (collectively labelled General Information by Facebook) are provided to the external company by Facebook; in addition, device location and any page content which is not restricted by privacy settings are also supplied (Facebook: 2011(d)). This information is provided automatically without users' consent. Pre-approved third party websites are those which have successfully undergone Facebook's vetting system. When a user engages with a company on Facebook Platform, such as an advertiser, said company is granted access to their Friends' names, profile photograph, gender, user ID and any information which is not subject to privacy restrictions (ibid). This is more extensive information than is made available by Facebook to anyone conducting site or Internet searches. What is categorised as Basic Directory Information by Facebook contains only users' names, usernames, profile photographs, gender, and networks and is not subject to privacy restrictions.

Users who wish to avoid more of their information being made available to external companies may choose from a very small number of alternative courses of action, as Facebook's default setting is to make this information available. Firstly, they can impose privacy settings to restrict access by applications and websites to the remainder of their personal content on the network; they may log out of Facebook before visiting a pre-approved application or website; or they can disconnect from Platform and Connect services if they object to any of their personal content being made automatically available. This last option restricts their own ability to make full use of Facebook services, while the efficacy of logging off Facebook before interacting with an external website may be reduced if the company has embedded the Activity Feed. As boyd has remarked 'it used to take effort to be public. Today, it often takes effort to be private' (boyd 2010(a)).

Product or Service

In June 2011, the page which is titled Facebook, and through which the company communicates with its users, designated the platform as a 'Product/service' (Facebook 2011e). The company's own definition of the site thus makes no reference to its role as a social network and foregrounds it commercial imperative. The labelling of Facebook as a service, rather than a website, was signalled in December 2009, when its Privacy Policy stated that it was 'not just a website' – it was a 'service' (Facebook 2009/2011(l)) that allowed users to 'share' their information on 'Facebook-enhanced applications and websites' (ibid). This phrasing held the presupposition that users' purpose in interacting with these external companies was to provide personal information rather than to avail themselves of the services being offered.

The emphasis of the site as a 'service' rather than a website highlights the distinction between a website which functions to enable interaction and communication between small groups of individuals – boyd and Ellison's 'private, intimate community' (2007: unpaginated) - and the multi-function platform which Facebook has become. At the same time it holds obvious connotations, since services are seldom delivered free of charge. In 2011, however, Facebook continues to provide a nominally free service to its registered users and the free provision of services by the company has been enshrined in its Principles; 'people should be able to use Facebook for free to establish a presence, connect with others, and share information with them' (Facebook: 2011(f)). The social network is instead financed through advertising.

Expansion of services

The continuing development of the Facebook platform has allowed the site to expand the range of services it offers users, and not only to private individual users. The term 'Facebook-enhanced applications and websites' (ibid) further indicates that while

Facebook provides the platform on which applications and websites are operated, it does not as a company own or control them. These are owned and controlled by outside interests, described in Facebook's own communication with users as third parties whose contribution to the Facebook platform has further extended the range of actions available to users. The affordances of applications and their deployment by external companies are examined in the following chapter. But as indicated above, Facebook exerts considerable control over the extent of users' personal information that is made available to these commercial companies, despite claiming in its Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (Facebook 2011(g)) that users 'own all of the content and information' that they post on Facebook, and 'can control how it is shared' through the application of privacy settings. Users officially own their content and information, but on using Facebook automatically grant the company 'a non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide license to use any IP content that you post on or in connection with Facebook ("IP License")' (Facebook 2011(g)). However, the company pledges to adhere to users' privacy settings.

Communication

Communication is a vital component of Facebook; without the means to communicate there would be no participation, interactivity and social networking, and it is irredeemably, but not solely, linked with individual users. Facebook relies not only on private individuals registering with the site, but on them communicating regularly and thus generating content on the platform. The platform provides various communication tools in order to encourage its users to be active, rather than passive consumers of its services. Interpersonal computer-mediated communication, however, existed before the launch of social networking in the form of person-to-person email and one-to-many communication on newsgroup sites, and in the formation of groups

based around particular interests. These means of online interactivity are still available, as is the slightly newer form of communication provided by instant messaging and Internet telephone calls. While these communication forms do accommodate the 'irresistible urge … to communicate more effectively, more quickly and with more people' (Hassan 2004:5), it is the harnessing and linking of a variety of digital communication tools on the one platform that makes social platforms such as Facebook significant.

Castells defines communication as 'the sharing of meaning through the exchange of information' (2009:54), and divides the process of communication between 'interpersonal communication' and 'societal communication' (ibid: 54). Interpersonal communication takes place between two identifiable people: the sender of the message and its recipient – the traditional one-to-one form of communication which often allows for a response. Societal communication, he argues, is the traditional form of broadcast communication: one-to-many which flows in one direction only, such as television, books and radio, and which has only in the past few years allowed recipients a means of response; it is directed at no-one in particular. Communication on Facebook therefore incorporates many communication formats: the broadcast, one-to-many process; many-to- one; many-to-many, few to few; or a one-to-one process, either in real time or asynchronously.

Mass self-communication

This new kind of communication as evidenced on Facebook has been labelled by Castells as 'mass self-communication' (ibid: 55). It is a blend of these forms because it is self-generated, the recipients may be defined by the sender who retrieves it at will, but the communication also holds the potential of global reach. Facebook enables users to communicate on each of these levels: on a one-to-one basis through its email and

instant chat services; on a one-to-many broadcast basis through the creation of individual profiles and Wall posts, access to which can be restricted to selected users; on a many-to-one basis as users register their details with Facebook; and on a mass self-communication basis by enabling them to broadcast this communication more widely by making it available to everyone on the site, and, by 2011, both on the Web and on the Internet.

The broadcast element of Facebook is evident in several ways. Companies that previously relied upon traditional broadcast media such as newspapers, radio and television, have moved on to the platform for the scope it presents for self promotion and for the access it offers to private individuals' information. Politicians, commercial enterprises and traditional media outlets such as television and film companies can now also be found on the site, while aspiring musical artistes have found a new way to publicise their talent. The platform's format allows them to create public pages which closely resemble the pages of private individuals, eliding the distinction between the two categories of users and blurring the boundary between them. Like individuals, the first action performed by companies, political parties and entertainment artistes is to create a profile – providing often personal details about their identity. Politicians can broadcast their attitudes to particular issues; advertisers can publicise their services and goods; entertainers can publicise their talents and upload links to examples of their work; individuals can create a narrative of their lives and publish it. Facebook provides the opportunity for all of them to reflect upon their identities and to decide how they want others to see them. The personal information users choose to provide while compiling their profile may be supplemented or changed at any time but the opportunity to publish their details is always available.

Multi-media

Communication on Facebook also takes place in a variety of formats, the number of which has grown over the past seven years, and it is no longer confined to written text. The site enables users to communicate through the uploading of photographs and compiling of numerous photograph albums; by uploading links to other forms of media, such as favourite clips from YouTube and to music and podcasts they have enjoyed, for example. These actions illustrate Thompson's claim that 'individuals are constantly engaged in the activity of expressing themselves in symbolic forms' (Thompson 1995: 167) and 'fabricating webs of significance for themselves' (ibid: 11). His notion of self expression as an activity that never ends is particularly relevant to Facebook, as users are able to continually update their personal profiles, express themselves, and communicate their preferences in various ways in an unending display of personal revelation. Many of those who originally registered with the site as teenagers will be, in 2011, young adults publishing revised versions of their self-identity as their off-site lives change.

Individuals can also broadcast special events in their lives: change of status, in a relationship, married, single again, and the birth of their children. This replicates the broadcast model of communication previously seen in newspapers; in many national newspapers and particularly in local newspapers, the public announcements of births, marriages and deaths have long been a popular feature with readers and a stable source of income for newspaper publishers. On Facebook, users can make these announcements free of charge, simultaneously informing friends far and near – who can respond immediately they receive the message. The site thus renders temporal and spatial boundaries irrelevant.

Communication is not restricted to site users, however, as Facebook Inc. maintains a constant stream of communication with users through its blogs to educate, inform and entertain users. It uses a personal, casual mode of address to communicate with them. This is best exemplified by two question which heads users' landing page, and personal space, on the website; '[W]hat's on your mind? and '[W]hat's the event?' The questions are posed informally, and couched in the same language that a friend would use in the off line world. They invite confidences and information from users in a manner which carefully avoids any implication of intrusion of privacy. This can be seen to illustrate Althusser's theory of interpellation (1984); the mode of address hails users, encouraging them to respond by the manner in which they are being addressed and, by responding, users become subjects in their relationship with Facebook. But it is also illustrative of Foucault's theory of power (1978/98), with users constantly being encouraged to reveal their thoughts and actions.

Facebook communication

Facebook Inc also communicates extensively with both private and commercial users of the social platform. As indicated above, the company communicates with individuals on their Home pages, but also has several public pages on a variety of different subjects. One form of communication takes the form of a company blog, Bloggers at Facebook, to which its employees post. While the blog is described as presenting the opinions of the company's employees, it provides a stream of information about the latest developments to the network's programming, such as new ways of operating the photograph tagging system (Facebook: 2011h). It therefore operates as a form of self-advertisement to keep users informed of new developments, although the mode of address remains informal and personal. The company has also launched a Privacy Page on the network, which blends communication from users and

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from the company. This page provides advice on how to implement privacy settings, answers users' questions about privacy setting details, and offers scenarios featuring difficult situations which may arise on the network and suggests ways of dealing with these issues (Facebook: 2011(i)).

These pages are some examples of the way Facebook Inc. can be seen to encourage the development of a relationship with its users. The company also has a well established and very active home page of its own. Through these public pages it posts service updates, changes and blogs and also interacts with users, who can and do respond, and 'Like' the pages. Again, many of these communication pages resemble users' own pages, follow the same structure and maintain a personal, informal mode of address. The company and its employees not only use the first person mode of address when communicating with users, but also the language of inclusion, through the use of 'you' and 'we', 'yours' and ours' as they interact with users. If a user posts a question, it is promptly answered by a Facebook employee, ensuring that interaction between the company and its users is reciprocal. The company employs an official register only in the pages communicating legal information such as the Privacy Policy and Statement of Rights and Responsibilities.

The visual appearance of the majority of its pages and the mode of address adopted by the company are significant, as they encourage users to regard Facebook as a friend or equal. These features work to apparently elide any hierarchical distance between Facebook and its users, or in Bourdieu's terms to 'elide the social distance' (Bourdieu 1989:16) between the two parties. Rather than asserting its position as the provider and controller of the services offered by the network, Facebook seeks to align itself with users. By establishing a relationship with them, Facebook can be seen as striving to forge close ties with the individual users whose uploaded content is so

important to the network. Despite the informal mode of address, however, which lends the impression that it is addressing each user individually and personally, the company employs the broadcast model of communication: its posts are directed at everyone in general and no-one in particular.

Facebook's own page also features stories about individual users who allow the company to publish their personal stories and photographs to a much wider audience. Posts by the company also feature video links to interviews and presentations by Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg and staff, and in 2011 is featuring a live video streaming channel, offering users 'a deeper look into our features, partners and employees' (Facebook:2011(j)). This strategy ensures that Zuckerberg and his staff are far from being anonymous figures, and it encourages users to feel they play an important role in the company's development. Like other businesses which use the site, Facebook benefits from the interactivity by being able to gauge users' feelings on developments, and again may be seen as endeavouring to strengthen their links and forge close bonds with private individuals.

Interactivity

Interactivity and intercreativity are two key issues in Web 2.0 discussions (Flew 2008; Holmes 2005; Meikle 2002). Websites such as Flickr, the photo sharing site, and YouTube, the video sharing platform, can be seen to foster both intercreativity and interactivity by enabling like-minded people to share their creative efforts. Facebook has also been built on offering predominantly identifiable individuals the opportunity to communicate and interact with each other in various ways. The company's mission is recorded as 'to make the world more open and connected' (Facebook 2011(k)), which was contrary to Facebook's *modus operandi* in the years when the network's boundary with the Web was strictly maintained. While the growth in the range of services

provided by Facebook has extended the opportunities for users to be 'more open and connected' (ibid) in line with the company's dual emphasis on 'social' and 'sharing', the process of dismantling the network's boundary has been initiated and has progressed on the company's terms.

On logging on to the site, users land on what is known as their home pages. This description is widely used in the online environment, but in social network terms emphasises that these pages are users' own online space. The implication is that these pages resemble their home in the offline environment – personal space under their control and where they can express themselves. The informal and apparently casual questions posed by Facebook on users' home pages are used by the company to initiate communication and interaction; they are prompts to encourage users to participate on the social network by uploading content, publishing their thoughts, and details of off-site activities; a process which mirrors Foucault's description of Church and State urging private individuals to talk about sex (1978).

News Feed

Users' comments may then be 'shared' with everyone who has access to their profile page, and be published on the News Feeds of everyone in their on-site network, or with selected Friends following the 2010 introduction of a selection of more refined controls. Their Friends or casual browsers are then prompted to publish a response, again illustrating the deployment of interpellation and encouragement to communicate. Friends can indicate whether they 'Like' the sentiments expressed in the box, or they can comment on it, and each reaction is logged for viewing by others with access to the page, while their Friends are notified of their actions.

This log of Friends' actions and interactions which is now known as the News Feed is prominently displayed on individuals' Walls, and is continually updated, as the

name suggests, in a live stream of information. The format of this information stream has been revised since its introduction in 2006 when it was known as the Live Feed and again in October 2009 when the stream was split into two; the News Feed provided individuals with a stream of 'popular content' (Facebook: 2010 (Facebook2011(i)) which was calculated by an algorithm and based on the level of interest shown in each story and by the number of times the poster's Facebook Friends responded. The Live Feed listed all recent stories from users' Friends (ibid). In February 2010, a revision of individuals' home pages led to the disappearance of the Live Feed, but in 2011 the News Feed remains to keep users informed of their friends' activities and status and to encourage interactivity; it is now split into 'top news story' and 'recent' streams.

The concept of a News Feed may be traced to the already long-standing online practice of RSS feeds, or news feeds, which has its roots in the offline Request for Comments (RFC) system. This began in 1969 among a defined group of Internet researchers (Cerf et al, 2011). Originally on paper, these RFCs were subsequently distributed as files on the Internet following the development of the File Transfer Protocol, enabling the distribution of research developments and sharing of information. This practice spread across the Internet with the development of email as a form of communication and sharing, and the subsequent formation of email lists, (ibid), and then RSS Feeds.

These developments established the practice of news and information dissemination, but the distinction between RSS feeds and the Facebook News Feed is the way in which users receive the information streams. Internet users choose from which source they wish to receive updated news via RSS feeds; on Facebook, however, users were initially given control over neither the distribution of their own content, nor the news about Friends which they wished to receive. Facebook's programming

determined what information should be published and distributed it according to the privacy settings users had imposed; again the default setting was originally unrestricted. This changed in 2011, and Facebook users may identify which items of the content they upload is to be shared, and with which group of Friends. The default setting remains distribution to all their Friends

Broadcast

Users can also communicate and interact with others via either email or participation in synchronous online chat with Friends who are logged into Facebook at the same time. They can also send 'gifts' to their Friends and interact with a wide range of Facebook users by playing what are described as social games such as poker and scrabble. These actions may also be broadcast to either Friends or to casual browsers via the News Stream. The feature has proved problematic on several fronts since its introduction in 2006, as pointed out by boyd when she described it as 'Facebook's Privacy Trainwreck' (boyd 2008:13), principally as friendship can be ambiguous on Facebook as many users accept offers of Friendship not just from close and more casual friends, but also from casual acquaintances and unknown Friends of Friends. Users may be quite happy to share personal information with a close Friend, but may not want to share it with Friends of Friends in the same way they may share information with a close friend in the offline environment, but would not expect them to tell mutual friends. Users on the website may have hundreds of Friends with whom they are seldom in contact offline. But on Facebook, 'all Friends are treated equally and updates come from all Friends, not just those that an individual deems to be close friends' (ibid:17). This changed with the introduction in 2010 of more detailed privacy settings.

Facebook prompts

The company is careful to distance itself from suggestions of surveillance on the network, and explains to users that the details included in the News Feed are determined by an algorithm. This attempt to elide responsibility for the technical tracking system that enables Facebook to function as an efficient surveillance operation implies that not only is the algorithm outside Facebook control, but also that it is somehow a lesser form of monitoring than that carried out by human beings. This may be considered akin to shop loyalty cards, which, for marketing purposes, automatically record at the checkout the items that individual shoppers buy.

On Facebook, the information is used to prompt users to upload more content. If Facebook's records show that a user has not emailed, contacted or interacted with a Friend recently, it prompts them to 'reconnect' with the neglected Friend; it also urges users to beFriend those who are Friends of Friends, based on the presupposition that a number of mutually recorded Friends denotes a strong offline connection. Again, the prompts are phrased in an informal mode of address, and hail users (Althusser 1984), urging them to take the suggested course of action, thus creating more content on the platform. The site encourages interaction in other ways, including the group function; individuals can establish group pages on the site based on causes they support, personal beliefs or just for fun, thus creating communities of shared interest. This system reverses the 'pull technology' that was previously predominant on the Web. 'Pull' technology meant that websites were reliant on users actively seeking them through Web searches. While 'pull' technology is evident on Facebook through site searches, the social network has also adopted and refined the 'push technology' developed through RSS Feeds, in order to encourage users to take certain courses of action.

Information published on users' pages via the Like Button, which will be discussed in Chapter Five, and the News Feed, for example, advertises groups or Facebook public pages to their Friends. Should a user create or join a Facebook Group, their Friends are notified in an online version of world-of-mouth in the offline environment. Groups can be established by individuals or groups of people who share common beliefs and interests; the members of the group can post photographs which can be shared with Friends and strangers, and members and Facebook users can post comments on the page dependent upon the privacy restrictions imposed by the originator and monitor. The public notice given of the act of forming or joining a group is further evidence of the broadcast nature of Facebook, while interaction is facilitated between both Friends and like-minded strangers.

Participation

Similar to off-line communities, Facebook's success depends upon high levels of participation for its existence, as reflected above. Facebook's efforts to ensure that users 'participate' are indefatigable. The platform offers private individuals new opportunities in a forum which seems, like life, to offer a variety of realms: there is the private domain – the home page; there is the semi-public domain of Friends, a term that can be restricted to family and Friends of varying degrees of closeness; and the public realm of public figures, institutions and commercial entities, as well as the entire network and the Internet in general. Flew (2008) suggests that the more users a network has, the greater its success, while Castells proposes that the importance to the network of each node is determined by the contribution it makes to the network's success (Castells 2009). Castell's theory is reflected in Facebook's continuous calls to action on users' pages. It seems obvious that each time a user performs an action on the platform, thereby participating in some way in the community that is the network, they impart

information about themselves or other users which can be added to their digital footprint on the platform.

As indicated above, participation can take many forms on Facebook: users can show their support for groups; arrange events; send invitations to Friends to attend; Friends can indicate acceptance of said invitations; Like the pages of public figures, institutions and commercial entities; and play online games that are mounted on Facebook by external companies. Users can share their scores and acquisitions with their Friends through the News Stream, and equally they can support charities through Liking the associated public pages.

In January 2010, a new way of participating was launched on the platform; the Global Disaster Relief on Facebook was launched by the company in response to the earthquake which struck Haiti. The page urges individuals to 'get involved and make a difference' and aims to provide information on major global disasters and how private individuals may help. The earthquake on Haiti brought a new dimension to the participatory nature of the social network platform, when groups were launched immediately after the disaster. The principal group was aimed at providing a central point of information for the relief agencies working in Haiti, and enabled individuals to contact organisations to trace relatives who had been feared missing.

Public figures

While the social network's initial growth beyond educational establishments took place in the business sector, by 2010 it was also being used by: commercial companies; media conglomerates; political and public figures and state 'apparatuses' such as the North American Central Investigations Agency (CIA); the police; health and education bodies; advocacy groups; and non-government organisations. The early format of these pages established by businesses and organisations ensured they were

clearly distinguishable from the 'profiles' of private individuals, but this changed in November 2007 and they were re-designated as public profiles although still commonly referred to as pages. Their appearance, in 2011, closely resembles the profile and home pages of private individual users. These pages generally have unrestricted access, enabling any Facebook user to post comments on them and to publicise their support for these public figures and organisations through use of the Facebook Like button discussed earlier. Again, this action is published on their profile page, and becomes public knowledge to their Friends via the News Feed. The change in the appearance of these public pages signifies a further drive to elide 'social distance' (Bourdieu 1989: 16), in this instance between public figures and organisations and private individuals, 'a distance which does not thereby cease to exist' (ibid: 16).

This issue is considered in greater detail in Chapter Six. Facebook facilitates interaction between private individuals and these organisations and public figures; users can let politicians know if they approve of their latest announcements, comment on their actions, and discuss how they feel about a storyline in a television programme simply by clicking on the Like button. The public page established by ITV's *Britain's Got Talent* (2009), for example, enabled viewers to simultaneously watch the show on television and post comments to its Facebook page. This deployment of Facebook by television companies will be examined in Chapter Seven.

The new access to public figures and organisations differs widely from the previous *modus operandi* of such bodies. Before social networking, individuals could write to representatives of media corporations, commercial organisations and to their MP, and the correspondence essentially remained private, while access by telephone was at best limited. In all instances, correspondence from private individuals had to negotiate gatekeepers. These gatekeepers then decided who should be granted access to

the respective public figures. The Facebook services enable individuals to comment publicly and at their own convenience, although interaction implies a two way process which is not necessarily evidenced in digital communication. At best, the Facebook platform offers individuals access to, and a greater level of interaction with these bodies than they might achieve off-line, but private users' expectations are unlikely to be always met. As Thompson observes, this 'mediated quasi-interaction is largely monological … it does not have the degree of reciprocity and interpersonal specificity of other forms of interaction' (2005:33). Thompson's theory is further discussed in regard to political figures on Facebook in Chapter Six.

These public figures and organisations also benefit from the interactive element of Facebook, as the feedback direct from individuals may provide valuable information for politicians, commercial, media, business and institutional users alike. The interactivity provided by the platform therefore holds the possibility of improving the relationship between these public figures and institutions and private individuals, engendering a loyalty to each brand. While Facebook offers them another platform from which to broadcast their services, it also offers a way of interacting with their target market on a more personal level with the potential for off-line benefits. These may include the development of 'non-reciprocal mediated intimacy at a distance' (Thompson 2005: 34), a one-way process in which a private individual may form a feeling of intimacy with a public figure or brand which is unreciprocated; a concept recognised in terms of actors and musicians. Facebook can also be seen as an illustration of the notion of social convergence, whereby 'all aspects of institutional activity and social life' (Flew 2008:22) seem to be moving on to the social network.

Individual reach

As this summary of the services available through the Facebook platform indicates, the site has greatly extended the scope of individual reach: Castells notes that the ability to mass self-communicate 'increases the autonomy and freedom of communicating actors' (Castells, 2009:73), while at the same time it has greatly extended the diversity of its users. Private individuals have the means to apparently communicate with public figures, from politicians to multi-national corporations, whenever they wish, as often as they wish and without having to negotiate gatekeepers who may restrict access. The definition of 'social' therefore, would appear to have been extended far beyond its initial application on the Facebook platform, which related to friends and acquaintances within individuals' own geographic area. The continuing development of the Facebook platform, the rise in the number of its users, and its adoption by major public figures and organisations, have led to increasing emphasis on interaction within a much wider context. The platform has also developed programmes which overturn the previously dominant 'pull' technology of the Internet through the use of the issuing of prompts and the introduction and extension of the Like button to the Web.

While individual users can, and obviously do, take advantage of the services provided on the social platform, they are aware that details of their actions on the site are 'shared' with their Facebook Friends, or, if less restrictive privacy settings have been applied, with casual browsers on the site and the Web. 'Share' is the description repeatedly given by the company to the revelatory nature of the way in which information about individuals is exchanged on and via Facebook. The use of 'share' however implies avoidance tactics, with the company using the verb as a euphemism for 'telling' or 'informing' others. Simultaneously, it echoes the perpetual admonition

by parents during the socialization of their children that it is good to share – toys or sweets for example – with their siblings and friends. Sharing is therefore seen as a sociable action, as being good, and in the online environment can be traced back to the practice of file sharing, for example, of music.

Facebook records

The converse of the benefits implicit in the extension of personal reach in this new communication utopia are the consequences for individual privacy and all actions performed on the Facebook platform are recorded. Social media tools such as Facebook have been described as 'vast archives of information about their users' (Beers: 2008:522). The logging of personal information begins when individuals join the social network. As indicated above, on registering with Facebook, individuals are requested to provide few personal details. Once they have completed the registration process, they are then invited to record a significant amount of personal information.

While the provision of most of this information is not obligatory, countless users accept the invitation to share some, or all, of these personal details not just with their Facebook Friends and site browsers, but also primarily with Facebook the website and the company. Beers' description, in relation to the content posted on users' pages, is apt in more ways than one. Trawling through individual users' pages that have no privacy restrictions applied can provide a wealth of information to casual browsers, Facebook Friends, or anyone conducting a search on any of the Internet search engines. But regardless of the privacy settings applied by individual users, all of the information which is posted on all pages is not only available to, but also recorded and stored by Facebook itself.

The company records all actions which users perform, such as: beFriending other users; sending messages; performing searches; organising or attending events;

adding applications. This is also clear from the personally addressed prompts, described as suggestions, to users urging them to 'reconnect' with Facebook Friends – indicating that the platform has not recorded a recent communication between Friends – and prompting individuals to beFriend site users with whom they have common acquaintances – an indication of the minutiae of users' content which is gathered and analysed. Facebook's Privacy Policy explains that the company uses the information it collects in order to provide 'our services and features' to users, and to protect users from abusive or illegal activities (Facebook 2011(l)).

Data collection

While this statement details some of Facebook Inc.'s reasoning behind the collection of so much information, the company warns in its Privacy Policy (Facebook: 2010/2011(l)) that it 'may also' collect and record information about users from other sources: the pages of their Facebook Friends and other users and the external companies with which users interact such as online gaming companies and advertisers, for example. The use of the hedge 'may', discussed in further detail in the following chapter, implies the information may or may not be recorded, and fails to provide a clear indication of whether Facebook is taking this course of action. The act of registering with Facebook therefore appears to grant the company *carte-blanche* to harvest as much information about users as possible both on the platform, and from a wide range of other sources. It is clear that the company seeks further information to supplement that provided by users on-site in order to build up its database. While the company indicates its actions in its Privacy Policy, it fails to offer Facebook users the opportunity to grant or withhold consent to this data gathering and recording process.

This information can be used in various ways. Facebook emphasises that the site's *raison d'etre* is about enabling individuals to share their information with other

people, including their friends and people within their networks. But it reserves the right to use this information or 'share' it with third parties when the company 'believe[s] sharing is permitted' by the individual user, or sharing is 'reasonably necessary to offer our [Facebook] services' or when Facebook is 'legally required to do so' (Facebook: 2011(l)). These statements are indicative of the power relationship between Facebook and its users. Users' interaction with advertisers and external websites through Facebook itself and users' access of Facebook from mobile phones is also recorded. All the information gathered is then processed in the United States of America and may be 'shared' with outside organisations, 'companies, lawyers, agents or government agencies' either to comply with legislation or to protect Facebook itself (ibid). Again, the use of the hedge 'may' fails to clearly inform users of the fate of their personal information or the precise circumstances in which it will be provided.

In the United Kingdom in 2009, fears were raised that all actions undertaken by users on Facebook would be monitored by Government agencies, with the information stored on a national database (Morris: 2009), although this was subsequently denied by a Home Office spokeswoman (ibid). There is little doubt that the extent of the personal information held by Facebook Inc. through the social network must prove tempting to governments in times when national security is considered to be under threat. Additionally, while users can impose strict privacy settings and delete information posted on the site, the Facebook Privacy Policy also warns that these may still be available through pages which have been either cached and archived, or copied and stored.

Facebook's Privacy Policy

The company's Privacy Policy was, in October 2009, prefaced by three highlights, one of which stressed that Facebook was 'not just a website. It is also a

service for sharing your information on Facebook enhanced applications and websites'
(Facebook 2011(l): 2009). The statement was significant, as it foregrounded the fact
that Facebook sought to stress the 'sharing' of personal information with external
companies, while simultaneously presupposing that it was meeting a desire by users to
make their information more easily and publicly available. The manner in which the
statement was framed failed to acknowledge that the company had already experienced
users' disquiet over privacy on the site, and indeed throughout 2009 and 2010 users'
unease over privacy issues resulted in Facebook altering its privacy policy several times
in attempt to placate them. Although the privacy options then, and until October 2011,
offer users the opportunity to control, to a certain extent, the degree of access these
external companies have to users' personal information, the statement signifies the
company's emphasis on the dissemination of such information. It further presupposes
that users join Facebook and use the services available on the network specifically to
divulge personal information to these companies, so eliding Facebook's own role in the
distribution process.

Privacy has been a contentious issue for the social network. Zuckerberg himself
acknowledged in his open letter that Facebook's rapid expansion had changed the ethos
of the site over the years since its inception (Zuckerberg: 2009). In the intervening
years, much academic interest has been focused on the revelatory culture of these sites.
To date, much of this has been based around the personal information which individual
users, particularly young people, post on their pages (boyd 2008; Livingstone, 2008;
Lange, 2007; Gross and Acquisti 2005). Firstly, there is the extensive range of personal
details which are listed, as identified above, and which are available not only to their
Facebook Friends, but to all casual browsers unless restrictive privacy settings have
been applied. In 2009, the Facebook Privacy Policy, however, warned that 'certain

categories of information such as your name, profile photo, list of friends and pages you are a fan of, gender, and networks you belong to are considered publicly available, and therefore do not have privacy settings' (Facebook: 2009/2011(l)). By 2011, the amount of information about individuals placed automatically within the public domain had been restricted to users' names, profile photographs, gender, usernames, and networks (Facebook 2011(l)). This clearly indicates the inability of users to totally secure the extent of their online visibility as Facebook decides what information is controlled by users.

Facebook developments also contributed to privacy concerns, particularly, as boyd claimed in 2008, with the 2006 introduction of its 'News Feeds' feature. This was the year when Facebook opened up registration to anyone who wished to join. As indicated above, the News Feed feature introduced a new landing page for users – a list of every action performed within the system by their Facebook Friends. While the system has undergone two changes since then, individuals are still greeted by a list of 'who beFriended whom, who commented on whose wall, who altered their relationship status to 'single', who joined what group' (boyd 2008:13).

The introduction of the News Feed infuriated many Facebook users, and groups were formed to protest (ibid:13). Zuckerberg defended the move, claiming that all the information was already in the public domain on Facebook anyway, and that the News Feeds allowed users to keep track of their Friends only (ibid: 13). His response is rejected by boyd, who argues that his case did not 'capture how the feature alters the social dynamic of Facebook' (ibid:14). In 2010, Zuckerberg acknowledged users' concerns, and introduced the means by which users may decide who, amongst their Friends, should see each post they upload. Privacy with regard to the content of private users' pages on social media can be seen, therefore, to have been contentious for some

time and Lange (2008:361) has suggested that Social Network usage and content, particularly with regard to YouTube, may best be regarded as 'publicly private and privately public' rather than be defined by the public/private dichotomy.

Privacy Settings

The platform offers users a range of privacy settings, although the default setting allows everyone on the site and now the Web to view individuals' pages without restriction. Alternative privacy settings were, until the end of 2009, based around users' networks of education, company or regional communities (Zuckerberg 2009). Users could choose to make their personal information and the activities publicised on their Walls (or communication boards) visible to their 'Friends and networks', 'Friends of Friends' or 'Friends' only. In December 2009, Facebook founder and Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg announced that, due to the growth in the site's membership and the commensurate growth in the number of users in the wide range of networks, privacy options would be changed and networks were taken out of the equation (Zuckerberg 2009). The new policy allowed users to select who should see each item they post on their Walls, while general privacy settings governing all information were to be 'simplified' (Zuckerberg 2009) by offering users a choice of three privacy settings, 'Friends', 'Friends of Friends' and 'Everyone'.

This policy was designed, said Zuckerberg in an open letter to site users, to give users 'even more control of their information' (Zuckerberg 2009(b)). The statement was followed by Facebook's recommended use of the settings, which suggested that extensive personal information including political and religious beliefs, photographs and albums should be made publicly available through the Friends of Friends and Everyone settings. At the same time, a Facebook blog told users 'you can still hide yourself from Facebook search results' (Facebook: 2009). The language implied that

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'hiding' was not desirable – those who wanted to hide themselves were not part of the 'ingroup' (Benwell and Stokoe 2006:25) on Facebook but belonged to the 'outgroups' (ibid). The provision of more finely tuned privacy settings may be seen as offering users more control over their content, but the company was simultaneously recommending that users place a substantial amount of information within the public domain. Similarly, in 2011, the platform issues constant nudges for users to share information, but simultaneously warns in its documents that users are responsible for the information they post.

Changes

Between 2009 and June 2011, Facebook's Privacy Policy changed several times amid continuing concern expressed by users about privacy on the site. But Facebook (Facebook: 2011(m)) continues to recommend that users place a substantial amount of personal information within the public domain. The company recommends that the Everyone setting should be imposed on the site search facility, which would include general Web and Internet searches; the acceptance of Friend requests; and the receipt of emails. The rationale behind the recommendations was that by agreeing to become visible on Facebook searches, users would be contactable by friends and family; that by enabling Everyone to send Friend requests, users would avoid missing out on chances to connect with people they knew; and while enabling Everyone to send messages to them, would ensure users could know people before adding them as Friends (ibid).

The application of the Everyone privacy setting is thus framed as being in users' best interests, despite the fact that the label Everyone in this context is interchangeable with Anyone on the Internet. This lends the recommendation a less beneficial definition. The recommendation to impose the Friends Only setting on users' Friends List is, meanwhile, accompanied by the warning that users' Friends Lists are

'always available to applications and your connections to Friends may be visible elsewhere' (ibid). While Facebook is keen to reassure users that they control how publicly available their content and activities on the site is, this information reinforces the fact that users only have the level of power that is granted to them by the company. However, the statement is phrased to avoid acknowledgement of Facebook's role in providing this information and fails to attribute transitivity to the company. The second half of the statement, meanwhile, uses the hedge 'may' and fails to define 'elsewhere', therefore, the company does not clearly state exactly what information is available, to whom and in what context.

In its Privacy Guide (Facebook 2011(d)) the company offers information about how users may control the visibility of their personal information on the site and on the Internet. The Guide begins with the introduction 'Facebook is about sharing. Our privacy controls give you the power to decide what and how much you share' (ibid), which is not strictly accurate, but again the mode of address is personal and informal. Facebook continues to address users personally, but when referring to the provision of information to third parties it fails to acknowledge that it assumes the right to decide what and how much of users' information is made available to external companies. The following examples illustrate Facebook's failure to acknowledge its agency: 'Your name, profile picture, gender, networks and username are available to everyone … other information in this section, including hometown, activities and experiences, is open to everyone by default … apps and websites you and your friends use already have access to' (ibid). Individuals are therefore able to control the level of visibility of their personal information only beyond the boundary set by Facebook itself.

Commercial users

The established emphasis on individual users of Facebook implies that they are the sole beneficiaries of the network's services and that they are the network's clients but they are not the sole beneficiaries of the new horizontal connections offered through Facebook services. Commercial users are also vitally important not only to the continuing success of the social network, but also to its continuing existence. Facebook Inc. cannot continue to expand the range of services it offers to individual users without the means to finance the continuous development of the platform and the facilities for storing the extensive archives of data it records about its users.

The recording of personal information provided by users on the social network is particularly relevant to the financial success of Facebook as a company. In September 2011, Facebook remains a free online service. Users register free, pay no monthly charge, and the company remains dependent upon generating revenue from advertising. But for a social platform with hundreds of millions of users world-wide, raising revenue from traditional online advertisements initially proved difficult, with rates lower than on more commercial online sites. It was suggested that this was because marketing companies believed that Facebook users ignore advertisements (Hempel 2009). In September 2009, the company announced it was financially sound and in December of that year, Facebook board member Marc Andreessen reported that the social network was at that time on target to generate income of $500 million for the year .With the rise in the popularity of the social network and its ever growing number of subscribers, all of whom record personal information on the website, Facebook has since proved extremely attractive to advertisers. In January 2011, the *Wall Street Journal* speculated that Facebook's market value was at least $50 billion (Das and Fowler 2011) and it was

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reported that, in the first quarter of 2011, 31% of all online display adverts in the United States of America appeared on Facebook (ibid).

The problem is that Facebook has to find a way of marrying users' demands to have their privacy respected with its own commercial imperative to generate income. Its most valuable asset is, obviously, its vast reserves of personal information supplied by private individuals. The company has tried to solve the problem by targeting advertisements, using comments posted by users on their walls, or by noting changes in individuals' recorded status. 'The running lists of online interactions on Facebook, known as ''feeds' are what make Facebook different from other social networking sites – and they are precisely what make corporations salivate' says (Hempel 2009). This list of users' interactions, the News Feed, has been supplemented by the introduction to the platform of the extended Like button, the Activity Feed and the Login Button programmes as discussed above.

Advertising on the platform takes many forms: an online version of display advertising, which runs down the side of each page viewed by users, advertising on Facebook Marketplace, which allows Facebook users and companies to advertise items for sale and job vacancies in the site's version of traditional newspaper classified advertising; 'social adverts' promoting Facebook services. These social adverts have always publicised the individuals who have used the relevant service, and this feature has been extended to external companies through the introduction of the Login Button as described above; and the public pages and applications, the appearance of which now closely resemble the profiles of individual users.

While classified and small display adverts are obviously geared towards promoting and selling goods and services, the advertisers' pages, which must adhere to the Facebook format, can be seen as a less obvious form of advertising. By allowing

private individuals to write on their 'Walls', inviting them to 'Like' the company, providing photographs, discussion pages and profile pages these pages may in some way indicate they have been mounted by commercial entities, but fail to explicitly state they are a form of advertising. Advertising features in newspapers, which have the appearance of news articles, are clearly labelled as promotional/advertising features to indicate that their content has been paid for, and advertising on television is again clearly distinguishable from programme content.

The Facebook version of these features may indicate a more subliminal way of delivering promotional messages to potential customers by engendering a sense of relationship with them, through the participatory and interactive means of discussion forums on Facebook advertising pages and profiles. The forums seek to encourage the forging of close ties with individual users, and the participatory and interactive nature of these discussion forums on commercial pages cannot be viewed in a solely altruistic light. Facebook's guide to advertisers urges companies to 'deepen your relationships' (Facebook: 2011(n)) with customers, an indication of the emphasis placed on the formation and publication of relationship ties on the social network and their adoption in the commercial environment. As a digital platform Facebook, can be seen to have created new advertising opportunities and innovative ways of extending the capabilities of promotional aides. These break down the restrictions experienced in other forms of advertising, i.e. advertising on offline platforms such as newspapers, television and broadcasting while also enabling advertisers to reach their target markets.

Targeted advertising

Potential advertisers are invited to 'Reach your exact audience and connect real customers to your business' (Facebook 2011(n)) and to 'create different versions of the advert to appeal to different customer groups.' (Facebook 2011(o)). As indicated,

commercial companies can select from different forms of advertising on Facebook: premium advertising and marketplace advertising. The guide to potential advertisers focuses on their ability to promote their pages on Facebook, or an event, such as a sale, by linking an advert with the Friends' List of Facebook users who have accessed the promotional page, event, application or advert (ibid). Advertisers are also encouraged to track the progress of their adverts on the site and to 'gain insight about who's clicking on your advert' (Facebook 2011(p)). This statement apparently contradicts Facebook's assurances to individual users that those whose information is passed to advertisers are not personally identifiable. 'We do not give your content or information to advertisers without your consent' (Facebook 2011(g)) insisting it does not offer advertisers access to personal information recorded on the site, and that they are required to respect the privacy settings imposed by individual users. This latter statement contradicts the former; if advertisers cannot access the personal information of people who interact with their adverts, they have no need to respect privacy settings.

Transparency

The Statement of Rights and Responsibilities makes it clear, however, that unless users implement privacy settings on their name and profile photograph, these may be used to promote adverts with which they have interacted, by clicking on an advert for example. It simultaneously states that the company 'may not always identify paid services and communications as such' (ibid), which again indicates a lack of transparency as users therefore may not always be aware that they are interacting with an advertisement or commercial entity. Statements in Facebook's Privacy Policy, such as those discussed above, emphasise those of its actions which are likely to find favour with private individuals, but rarely attributes agency to its role in making information available to third parties. The Like button, for example, was developed and

implemented by Facebook, and the company has made it available to external

companies and websites which advertise on the social platform. Facebook tells users in

the Privacy Guide

> 1. When you click Like on a company's Facebook Page, advert
> or products you create a connection to that company and you'll
> receive updates from it in your News Feed.
>
> 2. The story of your connection will appear on your Wall.
>
> 3. Your friends may also see the story of your liking the company
> in their News Feeds. You can always review and manage your
> likes, activities and connections by editing your Profile
> (Facebook 2011(d)).

The Guide can be seen to emphasise the consequences of clicking the Like button, but

Facebook fails to acknowledge transitivity for the way it has programmed the process,

which is devised to ensure that users' application of the Like Button reaches a wide

audience. By clicking on the Like button, therefore, users are performing the role of

unpaid marketers for commercial companies and political organisations amongst other

categories which employ the Like button. The extension of the Like button to other

websites has ensured that it can be encountered and used across the Web. And while

users are able to manage how visible their activities on the site are to their Facebook

Friends, their ability to determine how much of their information is made available to

businesses is restricted due to Facebook's programming algorithms.

Facebook also uses the information it harvests from private individuals in its

own advertising on the platform, which promotes its services and products. While

Facebook assures users that it does not share any of the data with third parties, and that

users' applied privacy settings are always adhered to, the information is used to prompt

individual users' Friends to register and use its services. The company insists that this use of personal information is no different to their Friends discovering their activities on the platform by means of the News Feed. As noted above, the company defended the introduction of the News Feed on a similar principle – the information was already in the public domain. The company further reserves the right to use the profile photographs of individuals in the same adverts, but issues assurances that photographs posted on Walls and in photograph albums cannot be used in this way. 'You only appear in Facebook Ads to your confirmed Friends. If a photograph is used, it is your profile photograph only. Facebook does not sell your information to advertisers' (Facebook 2010/2011(l)). The company claims that these 'social ads' are designed 'to make advertisements more interesting to you and your friends' (ibid) Again, this deployment of individual users as unpaid promoters and marketers for commercial companies is represented as being to their own benefit. Users can, however, opt out of social ads through the application of appropriate privacy settings.

Conclusion

The Facebook platform offers an illustration of the power of social media and diffusion theory. Having first been adopted by a pre-determined cohort of users, it has grown exponentially through its use by growing numbers of private individuals. They have subsequently led to the social network's adoption by diverse categories of users which include representatives of broadcast media platforms such as television, newspapers and radio, global conglomerates, politicians and lay people. The platform offers a wide range of services and boasts most of the features seen as key components in Web 2.0 platforms. It is easily accessible, provides the online means to communicate, interact and participate with others in a variety of ways and has become a powerful and major player in digital communication.

With the continuing development of digital technologies, the Facebook boundary has been eroded as it becomes accessible from other websites and forms of media, integrating content and users. Zuckerberg's stated aim is that Facebook should become a 'gateway to the digital world' (Zuckerberg (2009(a)) in Hempel 2009: unpaginated), where a user's Facebook identity acts as a passport to access boundless information and to locate individuals far and near. At the biennial F8 conference for developers in 2010, Zuckerberg signalled his determination to put 'people at the centre of the Web' (Zuckerberg 2010a). While the Internet has been much lauded for operating without central controls and for freeing up the flow of information, including that which may have been difficult to access for various reasons or to which access was barred, the Facebook platform functions in a different fashion. The company controls the type and the extent to which users' personal information may become publicly visible through its programming. The personal information provided by users, much of which would have been difficult to access, is freely given on the platform which, as a gravitational core, gathers it together in one digital centre point that other organisations must join in order to gain access to the archive of information. The volume of information that has been uploaded and stored on the Facebook platform is such that the company has needed ever increasing storage space for its servers. Facebook announced in January 2010 its intention to open a purpose built facility to house the servers on which all the data is stored, creating not just a digital centre point, but also a physical one.

While the social network allows individuals to spin 'webs of significance for themselves' (Thompson 1995: 11), this 'mediated visibility' (Thompson 2005: 35) is asymmetrical: like the prisoner in the Panopticon, the individual Facebook user can be seen by others, but cannot see them and does not know who is looking at them or when they are looking (Foucault 1991). The platform also functions as a synopticon

(Mathiesen 1997) since it equally enables the many to watch the few – peers, potentially other unknown Facebook users and browsers, and simultaneously allows peer-to-peer surveillance, few to few surveillance and many to many surveillance. This surveillance aspect to the platform may present a negative perspective, but the benefits are equally extensive. Castells (2007) has suggested that new forms of digital media, including social media, have created new, horizontal flows of information based not simply on local or national networks, but also on global networks. The information society, he argues, is a natural successor to the industrialised, individual nation, due to the networks' global, political and social reach (2007). One of its major features, he contends, is the 'new pattern of sociability based on networked individualism' (ibid: 240) through the 'global web of horizontal communication networks' (ibid: 246). This web, however, requires a centre from which to extend, and Facebook offers an example of Castell's new template of 'sociability' (ibid.) based on 'horizontal communication networks' (ibid) which stretch across a large section of the developed world.

While the services available through Facebook have been extended, offering users greater flexibility and access to communication tools, the boundary between users' on-site lives and off-line lives has been eroded. Simultaneously, the company has been steadily dismantling the boundary between itself and the rest of the Web while it has expanded the services it makes available to external Web companies. The access to users' information granted to these companies incentivises them to use Facebook for commercial purposes due to the network's store of users' personal information and the social network's practice of encouraging users to constantly upload content. Much of this is enabled by changes the company has initiated in the programming of the network that ensures that users must be proactive in imposing privacy settings. The changes have also expanded the amount of users' personal information that is automatically

made available by Facebook whenever private individuals interact with commercial and hierarchical organisations. These developments appear to advance Zuckerberg's aim to position Facebook at the centre of the Web**.**

In the following chapter, I examine the role of applications on the Facebook social platform. The number of applications mounted on the Facebook platform has grown, and their usage, particularly in the form of online games and quizzes in which users may participate, has become increasingly popular.

Chapter Five

Application Developers

The launch of Facebook Platform and Facebook Connect, in 2007 and 2008 respectively, signalled the company's integration with external companies and websites. These developments saw Facebook both draw other commercial web companies into the social network, then a year later extend its own reach beyond private individuals on its social networking site into the wider commercial field online.

The moves led to an expansion and consolidation of Facebook's influence on the Web. They extended the reach of platform users, increasing the opportunities available to users to participate, interact and socialise not just within the confines of the Facebook social network boundary but also on the wider Web while remaining logged onto the social media platform. Many of these new opportunities were provided as external companies and web developers took advantage of the opportunities provided to mount applications on Facebook Platform, or to embed links to Facebook on their own websites, an arrangement which was mutually beneficial as it encouraged a two-way flow of traffic. Facebook benefited as users no longer needed to leave the site, but could use it as a conduit to a range of gaming; leisure or commercial sites elsewhere on the Web and new users could be attracted to the social platform from these external websites. External Web companies could benefit from the constantly increasing Facebook traffic as users became aware of, and connected to, their sites from the social network.

Applications

These developments have obviously proved popular with Facebook users. Applications, or apps as they are commonly referred to, are computer software programmes designed to enable users to perform specific activities online, although Facebook foregrounds the requirement in its Platform Policies that these should provide users with enjoyable and social experiences (Facebook: 2011(q)). In September 2011, Facebook reported there were more than seven million applications and websites available on Platform which were used by more than 500 million people every month (Facebook 2011(r)). The applications and websites offer users the opportunity to perform a wide range of activities through the social network, such as participating in online games and quizzes; sending virtual gifts to Friends; interacting with international broadcast media, recruitment companies and business directories. They also provide links to websites that allow users to interact with other Facebook users with similar interests and to publish which books they are reading, publish their book reviews, and to list their favourite books, films, television shows, participate in online polls and share favourite holiday destinations with Friends and/or other Facebook users of the same application. As the figures reveal, external companies and Facebook users have proved enthusiastic about the increasing opportunities offered for interactivity and participation on a far wider scale than communication with Friends, and for the development and publication of self-identity. External companies benefit from the promotional opportunities available.

This chapter examines the services which Facebook provides to applications developers, how applications operate on Facebook, and the impact on individuals' privacy of such interaction between private users and developers. It begins by examining the changes introduced by Facebook during 2010 to its policies for

companies which mount applications on the website. The chapter then considers how these changes have impacted upon the extent of users' information that is made available by the company to these third party companies. It moves on to examine the guidelines provided by Facebook to application developers, both in terms of the development of applications and in regard to users' privacy. The chapter then compares how the changes were represented to each party – developers and users - and progresses to examine how six application developer companies use Facebook, and finally to consider the privacy policies of each. The empirical research examines the three companies which operate some of the most popular games applications on Facebook, as gauged by the number of monthly users recorded by Inside Network (2010(a)). This company provides market research to the Facebook Platform and the 'social gaming ecosystem' (Inside Network 2010(b)). The privacy policies are examined of three other companies which have mounted non-gaming applications on the Facebook platform, specifically based around geospatial technologies, travel and polls.

Policy Changes

Facebook' creator and Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg announced significant changes to the social network's *modus operandi* at Facebook's F8 conferences for web developers in 2010. These introduced new technical and policy changes to the social platform's procedures and guidelines for applications and website developers. Zuckerberg claimed that Facebook was to take the World Wide Web in a new direction. The Web currently existed 'as unstructured links between pages' (Zuckerberg 2010a), he observed as he announced the launch of the Open Graph on Facebook. This new development would establish a structure on the Web, and replace its longstanding 'unstructured' (ibid) system with a web of sophisticated and interlinking maps of connections based around individuals' usage (ibid).

The Open Graph would situate 'people at the centre of Web' (ibid.) which would, as a result, become 'a set of personally and semantically meaningful connections' (ibid). Individual Facebook users, their real identities, their friends, their social connections, preferences and web activities both on and off the Facebook platform would all be brought together with the connections among them becoming clearly visible to those with access to the information. While this implies a large scale surveillance operation, the move was described by Zuckerberg as enabling applications and website developers to build and offer 'personalised social experiences' (ibid) for individual users. The result would be 'instantly social', with 'personalised experiences wherever you go, whichever website, mobile app and product you use' he added (ibid.).

This notion was not new, as Berners-Lee suggested in 1998 that the future of the Web lay in the development of a semantic web. He envisaged this structured Web as one which would see the formation of a global database in which the information held by separate databases would be combined through the identification and application of semantic links (Berners-Lee 1998). Flew (2008c), also signalled the development of the semantic web, which would be marked by the digital tracking of individuals' paths through the World Wide Web, producing individualised results each time a user searched the Web (Flew 2008c:). Zuckerberg's announcement of three major changes to Facebook programming can be seen to not only follow the core of the Semantic Web concept, but to ensure that the social network would have a major role to play in the new Web. It furthermore impacted on Facebook users' privacy. The main changes were:

> 1. the introduction of a new way in which applications developers both requested permission to access Facebook users' personal information and changes to the way they stored this data

2. the extension of the Facebook 'Like' button to external companies

3. the development of new social plug-ins which are made available to

third party companies which embed the 'Like' button in their

websites.

Further changes were introduced at Facebook's 2011 F8 Conference for developers

(Facebook 2011(z)), namely the introduction of the Timeline and Ticker features which

function as additional news streams of users' actions on the social platform.

Personal Information

Facebook's bid to create a map of individuals' connections across the World

Wide Web resulted in two changes to simplify the process of building applications to be

mounted on Facebook Platform. The impact on users' privacy is difficult to assess,

however, as the company provides contradictory advice about the extent of users'

information made available to applications developers. Facebook's Privacy Policy

states that when a user connects with an app or a website, 'it will have access to General

Information about you' (Facebook 2011(l)); the modality of the statement is high.

General Information is defined by: users' names, profile photograph, gender, networks,

user IDs, connections, Friends List and any content that users have made publicly

available (ibid), and that this information is provided to an external company simply by

a user clicking on a link to their application or page (Facebook 2011(l)). On users'

Privacy Settings page however, they are informed that their names, profile photographs,

gender and networks are available to everyone on Facebook, and that when a user

downloads an application to their Facebebook account, the apps developer is, by

default, provided with their Friends List and any content they have shared with

everyone (Facebook 2011(m)).

In its guide to developers, however, Facebook informs application developers that Facebook provides a limited amount of undefined information about a user. In order to access all of the user's information that is provided by default, the developers must submit a dialogue request to users requesting consent to access further information. Developers are instructed to request access to users' Basic Information, the definition of which correlates to the definition of General Information in the Privacy Guide (Facebook 2011(s)). They may also request access to further information, but on gaining consent, are automatically able to access users' Friends List as explained above.

The Dialogue Box

Permission requests to access users' information are submitted in the form of a Dialogue Box, which was also subject to revision in 2010. Previously, users could immediately access certain apps by clicking on the appropriate link on Facebook, with their General Information provided automatically by the social platform, representing a form of technical 'passport'. If further personal information was sought, users were presented with a request from the developers for permission to access the relevant information by means of a dialogue box. The applications developers could subsequently seek to access further personal information in the same manner. Following the 2010 changes, application developers must seek users' consent to access all other personal information they may require or wish in the initial Dialogue Box, and Facebook no longer permits them to subsequently present a second dialogue box. In the box, application developers request access to users' Basic Information and all other information they either need in order for Facebook users to use the application and to information which they may subsequently need and that they want.

The box offers users only one option if they wish to use the application; they must consent to grant access to all the requested personal information. If they refuse,

they are denied access to the application. This procedure appears to simplify the consent process and give users more control over their information. In reality it applies pressure on users to grant consent in order to use the relevant application while denying them the opportunity of deciding to which categories of information they are prepared to provide access. Although the company warns developers and external websites that demands for access to too much personal information deters users, and recommends that developers request access only to information it needs, it does not restrict the number of access requests third party companies can make (Facebook 2011(s)) as they begin the process of embedding the dialogue box into their application programme. Platform Policies and Statement of Rights and Responsibilities documents, however, both warned developers in 2010 that they should request access only to the information they need for their application to work.

Contact details

Amongst the access requests contained within the dialogue box may be one to contact users at email addresses other than their Facebook account. This request is often the one exception to the access to all information requested in the dialogue box, as certain companies enable users to specifically refuse it in line with Facebook's assurance 'you do not have to share your email address with anyone' (Facebook 2011(t)). The company does however allow developers to request an alternative email address and users' access to the application may depend on them granting consent. Some developers' dialogue boxes are presented with the user's alternative, personal email addresses in place, indicating that it has already been provided by Facebook, despite the assurance quoted above. If users are not offered the opportunity to refuse access to their personal, off Facebook email account, and wish to use the application, they must agree; a situation which contradicts Facebook's reassurance.

This further demonstrates that the terms on which users may access applications is determined principally by Facebook; this is clear by the implementation of the change which enables developers to request access to a substantial amount of users' information which may not be strictly necessary. Further conditions of use are determined by the application developer, which decides which information it needs and wants from users. Although users may withhold consent from developers they are then excluded from using the relevant applications.

Privacy Settings

Facebook also provides a range of privacy settings in order that users may limit developers' access to their personal information that is available when their Friends access applications, although again the default setting is to make the required information automatically available. Facebook's Privacy Policy indicates that when a user's Friend connects with an external website or application 'it will be able to access your name, profile picture, gender, user ID and information you have shared with 'everyone'. It will also be able to access your connections, except it will not be able to access your Friends List' (Facebook 2011(l)). When a Facebook user chooses to access an application, they are simultaneously providing not only their own personal information to the developers, but also, by default, a certain amount of their Friends'.

Individuals may, through their privacy settings, control access to certain categories of information which may made available to apps developers when a Friend embeds an app. This includes details such as their hometown, and religious and political views, but they are unable to block the developer accessing the personal information outlined above without disabling the Platform programme. This course of action initially blocked all Platform applications and meant they were excluded from the entire range of apps offered on Facebook. But the process can be seen to follow Zuckerberg's

imperative to record links between individual users and reduces users' ability to decide who has access to all of their personal information. By ensuring that Facebook users' Friends Lists, are available to apps developers, more information about Facebook users becomes available to a wider audience in a process which reflects a rolling snowball effect.

These policy changes mean that should users agree to allow developers to access all of the information sought, which may include the photographs and videos they have uploaded, they may in fact be granting developers more extensive access to their personal content than they had originally been given automatically by Facebook. This process may also take place before users have had an opportunity to peruse the parent company's privacy policy, if the necessary link is not provided in the dialogue box, and before they access the app. In these circumstances they are expected to grant access to their personal information without knowing how it will be used, how much is needed in order for them to use the application or if they wish to continue using it. In these circumstances, users cannot be viewed as giving informed consent.

Control

Users may technically have been given more control over their profile information, but the price of accessing applications has risen as access to their personal information has become potentially more invasive at the initial contact. If they refuse to pay this price, they are excluded from the application. Personal information is therefore the currency of online applications, contrary to the 'free to play' discourse which surrounds the online games available on Facebook. Applications developers who mount gaming applications on Facebook allow their use free of charge by social network members. As users progress in the games, or fail to maintain a level of free gaming credits provided by the developer, they are then required to buy Facebook Credits in

order to continue playing. By mounting free-to-play games on the social network, gaming companies also hope to encourage users to pay in order to access other games within their stable.

In 2010, users who objected to access to their personal information being provided to applications developers and websites were advised in the Privacy Policy that they could turn off Platform and Connect services which would ensure that their information would not be shared with any applications developers, but that the user would be unable to access any Platform services. In December 2010, the Privacy Policy was amended to allow users to block specific applications, therefore extending their power to control to a certain extent those who may have access to their personal information. However, should a developer withdraw from Facebook Platform, or if Facebook social network disables the application, the social network allows these external companies to retain users' Basic Information. Facebook does, however, require the developer to either delete all other details or to request users' consent to store all of their information as archived. This may provide reassurance to users who are concerned over potential use of their personal information, but in reality operates in the developers' favour and not in the users'. There is also no requirement that users should be informed when a developer has withdrawn from Platform. Consent to access personal information is provided with the click of a button, but the future use of this information is uncertain.

Responsibility

Facebook's Privacy Policy makes clear that these applications and websites are owned and operated by external companies outside of its control and advises Facebook users to review the privacy policy of each company they interact with. In this way it elides responsibility for the transfer of users' information to external companies, despite

indicating it 'occasionally need[s] to provide users' General Information' (Facebook 2011(l)) to its pre-approved third party websites and applications. The company provides this information either when a user connects with one of the relevant websites while logged on to Facebook, or if one of their Friends connects with it. While placing the onus on individual users to impose privacy restrictions on the information they are unwilling to allow developers to access when their Friends use an application, as indicated above, users do not have complete control over this process. Once more, Facebook employs language which distances the company from its actions and the network's programming and fails to clearly elaborate on the necessity or circumstances for providing these details.

The changes have also created further privacy implications for users, since Facebook requires developers, and indeed places a responsibility on them, to ensure that the information they have stored on individuals is up-to-date. This requirement grants consent to developers to repeatedly access individuals' information as recorded on their Facebook pages. Users may agree to an apps developer accessing some of the personal information they have uploaded to Facebook in the belief that they are consenting to a single access, but one-off use of an application ensures that the developer is granted the right to repeatedly access and record the information. The changes introduced in 2010 simplified this process for developers.

Previously, developers were allowed to store users' information for only twenty-four hours from their last interaction with the application. This required developers to delete the data, and subsequently pursue the access process once more when the user paid a return visit to their site. Since 2010, developers have been allowed to store users' information indefinitely and the process of keeping their records up to date has been simplified by the introduction of a new software programme by Facebook which

constantly updates users' information. The new programme, Real-time Updates, is discussed in the following section on Social Plugins. The changes have simplified the process of accessing the personal information of Facebook users who use the applications, while denying users the opportunity to agree to the automatic provision of information on any changes they have made to their status on Facebook.

Social plugins

The launch by Facebook in 2010 of Social Plugins has extended the availability of users' information to external companies. Posting updates to individuals' News Streams was 'ephemeral' said Zuckerberg (2010a), as posts were soon and at times rapidly pushed down the News Feed and out of sight. The introduction of social plugins, as discussed in Chapter Four in relation to the Like Button, would ensure that individuals' connections with a wide range of applications and websites would be more prominent, longer lasting, and would enable Facebook, applications developers and website designers to build 'a connections map across services' (ibid) through the social platform's Open Graph. Coupled with the affordances offered to external companies, the phrase marries inclusion and the construction of a new Web horizon. It invites these companies to share in the creation something new.

The implementation of Social Plugins has substantially increased the use of Facebook users' information and again reflects the theory that users are Facebook's products, not its customers (Meikle and Young forthcoming; Jhally amd Livant 1986; Smythe 1977). The Social Plugins offer a range of software programmes to developers in order for them to deploy users' information and activities as marketing tools. Firstly, there is the Like Button, as discussed in Chapter Four. It is one of a range of programmes developed by Facebook which features: Comments, enabling users to comment on any piece of content on an application or website page and which are

subsequently posted on their Walls; an Activity Feed, which shows users what actions their Facebook Friends are performing on third party websites; Recommendations, which gives users personalised suggestions on external Web pages for pages they might like; the Like Button, which enables users to like a company's Facebook page and view its News Stream from the external website; the Login Button, which shows profile photographs of users' friends who have already signed up to the external site; Registration, enabling users to sign up to external Web pages through their Facebook account; Facepile, which displays the Facebook profile photographs of users who have either liked or signed up with the external website; Live Stream, a plugin which enables users to share activity and comments in real-time as they interact during a live event; and Real-time Updates (Facebook 2011(p)). Each of these programmes makes visible the actions of private individuals as they participate on Facebook - actions which may previously have been invisible. They thus facilitate peer-to-peer surveillance, but also work to benefit the commercial companies behind the apps.

F8 2011

These affordances were extended in 2011, when Facebook announced at its F8 Conference that the actions of apps users would be displayed on each application page in a live ticker tape of app-specific updates from the users' Friends. This would publish 'stories about the user and their Friends interacting with the app or game currently being used' (Facebook 2011(u)). The ticker also provides a stream of information about Friends' activities on other applications and is automatically updated each time an apps user lands on an application page. The marketing implications of this new development are clear and made explicit to apps developers.

Facebook informs application developers that the ticker is fed with information automatically in order 'to help users discover new apps and games, and that Facebook

generates 'playing' and 'using' stories by default' (ibid). The social network records users' interaction with applications every fifteen minutes and adjusts the language accordingly – that is users are either 'using' an application or 'have used' an application with the timeline published. Developers are also able to add their own content to the Ticker, and publish stories about the user and their Friends' achievements in the games. The emphasis on application users' Friends is clear, as is their deployment at a marketing tool. In addition, during September 2011, Facebook introduced a new affordance for developers that enables them to access a list of mutual Friends between two users. This move extends the marketing potential for application developers, while simultaneously boosting Facebook's aim to create the Semantic Web.

Personalised Web

Simultaneously, Facebook announced the development of Timeline for individual users, which enables them to record not simply their current thoughts, actions, preferences, and photographs but also to record significant events and favourite photographs throughout their lives. Facebook Inc. recommends it to individual users as an archive of their lives' events which, unlike their Wall comments and posts, will not slip down Friends' News Feeds and be forgotten. To application developers, however, it represented the development as an additional new way to ensure that users could publish their activities and preferences for applications which would also remain in a prominent position in this public record of users' lives. The different ways in which Facebook addresses its individual users and apps developers is considered later in this chapter.

These programmes enable external companies to offer Facebook users a more personal Web experience in line with Facebook's invitation to developers to 'Build the social and personalised Web. Facebook's powerful APIs enable you to create social

experiences to drive growth and engagement on your Web site' (Facebook 2011(v)). Again, the language indicates the development of something new, while foregrounding Facebook's role in creating the opportunities which will bring success to the external companies, and positions its users as products. Gillespie's description of Facebook as an 'intermediary' (Gillespie 2010) is further supported as the company positions itself between its users and external companies with users' information as an incentive to third parties.

The benefits of Social Plugins to developers, meanwhile, illustrate not only the extent of the access developers may have to users' personal information, but also the extent to which they can use it. Developers may be advised by Facebook to restrict the access requests in their Dialogue Boxes, but these programmes offer developers substantial access to users' on platform behaviour. This can then be used to publicise applications and external websites to their Friends, and to establish a feeling of familiarity with external websites as Friends' photographs may greet them when they visit these sites. This may encourage users to engage more deeply and regularly with the developers' applications.

Ingroups

This development offers a variation on the established marketing practice of celebrity endorsement, but on a personal, perhaps more influential, level. It categories users and differentiates between Friends using an application as the 'ingroup' (Benwell and Stokoe 2007) and non-users as the 'outgroup (ibid). Benwell and Stokoe's description of ingroups and outgroups is based on Social Identity Theory (SIT) which has its roots in Hegel's argument (1807) that individual identity is not purely an internal construction, but is influenced by external factors. From his argument, the later theory of group identity and social identity theory arose (Benwell and Stokoe 2007: 25). SIT is

based on 'difference'; 'the ingroup is the one to which an individual 'belongs' and the 'outgroup' is seen as 'outside' and separate from this group' (ibid: 25). In relation to Facebook, the ingroup may be the group of Friends playing a certain game, while the outgroup comprises those Friends who do not. This process may encourage the latter to join the former, extending the reach of the application.

Social plugins also initiate an online version of the offline 'word of mouth' recommendation, but with agency being assumed by Facebook and commercial entities. While the company's new programmes may not result in the disclosure of any information which would necessarily be regarded as confidential, they do represent an infringement of individuals' privacy in that they make visible many more actions that users perform both online and offline, and both on Facebook and off Facebook. Any simple action, whether or not it holds significance, thus becomes available to an audience greater perhaps than users' have anticipated. The programmes also signify the development of the means to overcome the pull technology of the Internet, as Facebook and applications developers can deliver information to users by using their Friends as intermediaries. The discourse of 'social' in connection with the applications serves to elide the association with marketing and advertising.

Real-time Updates

The obligation placed on application and website developers to ensure that the information they hold on Facebook users is up to date, meanwhile, has been made simpler by the introduction of the Real-time Updates programme. Introduced in June 2011, the programme provides external companies and developers with information whenever users who have linked to their Web pages make changes to the privacy settings on their Facebook pages or application settings and perform actions on Facebook, such as change their status, which may relate to the company's target market

(Facebook 2011(u)). It also provides them with a direct stream of information regarding users' News Feeds; Friends; activities; interests; music; books; movies; television; likes; and checkins. While this offers external companies access to extensive information about users' activities as recorded on Facebook, the company indicates that further information may be made available to them in future (ibid). This may include access to users' home pages; tagging activity; posts; photographic albums; videos; groups users have joined; notes; events; their onsite email accounts, updates and accounts (ibid). The expansion would result in developers having access to almost all of users' activities on and via Facebook, similar to users' News Feeds which inform them of the activities of their Friends.

Simultaneously, it would further reduce Facebook users' power over their personal information and ensure that the majority of their actions on the site would be far more visible than they possibly anticipated. Should users be granted the ability to grant or refuse developers access to this information, this control may be only nominal if developers continue to impose exclusion from their apps as the penalty for refusal. For Zuckerberg, however, the moves represent a shift to a more social online environment. 'We are going to connect all of the graphs. The web is going to get a whole lot better,' claimed Zuckerberg (2010a). It was going to provide 'an instantly social and personal experience', a statement which presupposes that Web and Facebook users desire this development and that it is to their benefit. Zuckerberg also foregrounds Facebook's role in this development; the social network is taking a leading role in improving the Web.

Archive

The changes introduced by Facebook indicate that the social network has already begun the process, and with more than 750 million users across the globe, it has

a large archive which stores this new online currency – personal information. The changes may offer users the promised social and personal experience, but they simultaneously represent a shift towards an online life lived publicly and hold the possibility that people may be unable to opt out of this new experience without opting out of the Web entirely. These developments ensure that even the least significant action by an individual on a site associated with Facebook becomes visible, including those that individuals may have considered too trivial to share with friends. However, the actions are not trivial to the commercial companies or state hierarchical organisations accessing the information 'within the developed world, most politicians and corporate leaders believe that the future of capitalism lies in the commodification of information' (Barbrook 1997/2007).

Applications developers can also receive detailed analysis of their users' demographics and how they are passing on information from or about each website or application. As a result, this 'produced rich data about users sharing content from your site within Facebook, no matter where those shares originated' (Zuckerberg 2010a). This can be integrated with results from Facebook's own analytical systems. The result is that information and content posted by Facebook users, and their actions, pass amongst Facebook and external companies on the Web. Facebook's role in enabling this new Web offers a further illustration of the social network's definition as an aggregator of content (Burgess and Green 2009) and as an intermediary (Gillespie 2010) – between private individuals and marketing companies.

Representation

The language used in the company's communication with developers can also be seen to differ substantially from that which it adopts with users, reflecting that Goffman's (1959) theories on the representation of self are not relevant to only private

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individuals. Goffman argues that individuals perform identity, amending their performance in accordance with the circumstances in which they find themselves. Facebook can be seen to address private individuals as Friends with whom they have a close bond, and communicates new developments as beneficial to them for the personal experiences they offer. Meanwhile, the company addresses applications developers and marketing companies as business associates. Developments which make visible more of users' information are presented as commercial incentives. Increasing personalisation on external websites is therefore presented as being beneficial to Facebook users, but is the consequence of the increasing visibility of their own, and their Friends, social network content.

The rationale behind the provision of these facilities being made available to external website developers is to enable them to personalize the content on their site through the application of the personal information. In order to facilitate the whole process, Facebook has also removed any need for its users to register with these external sites. A user logged on to Facebook may move smoothly to these external sites since Facebook supplies the necessary information from their Facebook account. While developers have to specifically request access in the dialogue boxes to personal information on which users have imposed privacy restrictions, they are also told by Facebook that 'once a user logs in to your site through his or her Facebook account, you can access the user's account information from Facebook, and the user is logged in to your site as long as he or she is logged in to Facebook' (Facebook 2010(x)). Information can thus be continuously harvested from the user's Facebook account, a process simplified by the introduction of the Social Plugins, and the link between individuals and external companies remains open even if the user leaves the external site and moves on to another while logged onto Facebook.

These changes advance Facebook's existing process of facilitating personalised advertising in order to offer users a more personal and relevant platform experience. The new dialogue boxes restrict Facebook's users' ability to choose which information to make available to external companies, and while they have the choice over whether to click on the 'Like' plugin, they have no control over how their information is then used, or how visible their online actions may be to those on their Friends List. The changes may provide 'a map of connections' (Zuckerberg 2009b) for each of Facebook's hundreds of millions of users, but the result is that a substantial number of their actions on the Web become visible to their Friends when they visit sites linked to Facebook, whether or not they are logged into the SNS. They also make users' activities more visible to commercial organisations. This complies with the stated aim of Zuckerberg at the 2010 F8 Live conference. Talking of the Open Graph and the 'Social Plugins', he said Facebook was 'building towards a web where the default is social' (Zuckerberg 2010a), where people were registered under their 'real ID' (ibid) and where they took their friends with them. Zuckerberg's use of the 'social' continues to develop a positive discourse around the high visibility culture of the Open Graph, one that is more likely to be embraced by individuals and less likely to concern them. If he referred to 'a web where the default is *public*', that is available to all, users may be concerned that their every action on the site would become public knowledge.

Games

Games applications are a particularly popular category of application, with more than two hundred million users gaming on the website (Morgenstern, 2010b). Also referred to as social games, again with the emphasis on shared experiences with Friends, their popularity has not gone unnoticed by Facebook, and the changes introduced by the company are aimed at simplifying the process of developing

applications for its social platform. Facebook set out to ease some of the restrictions

which it decided had hampered companies seeking to develop all types of apps for

mounting on the Facebook platform (ibid.). At the same time, it established a special

team to work on the development of gaming apps for Facebook because 'it is clear that

games have been one of the most successful categories of Platform applications' said

Jared Morgenstern, Product Manager for Games for Facebook on the site's Developer

Blog (Morgenstern 2010(a)). While this new team was created to help games

developers 'maximise the potential' (ibid) of their games, it must also be seen as a

measure of how important games had become to the site, and as representative of

Facebook's new drive to extend the spread of the games culture on the social platform.

While acknowledging that not every Facebook user likes online games, the

company began to develop its gaming base so that game developers can expand their

operations on Facebook; those who enjoy games may continue to do so, while

simultaneously the company set out to offer 'a great user experience' (ibid.) for non-

gamers. This latter statement appears something of a paradox – if people don't game,

how can they benefit from 'a greater user experience? – but it emphasises Facebook's

drive to attract more of its users into the gaming community by deploying users'

Friends in marketing games and other applications.

> *App discovery is an important part of the Open Graph philosophy. As*
>
> *people add apps to their Timeline, Friends will be able to easily*
>
> *discover and connect to your app in just a few clicks, as they see it on*
>
> *not only each other's Timelines, but in News Feed, or the newly*
>
> *launched Ticker* (Taylor 2011).

In September 2010, Facebook began work on a new infrastructure for its Platform and

new software which would provide a base for developers to 'reach and engage the

growing numbers of people who play games, and drive discovery among their friends' (Morgenstern 2010(a)). Facebook's clear objective was to raise the profile of games on the platform, using gamers to attract more Facebook users to games applications. Morgenstern highlighted the main ways in which Facebook was striving to increase games usage, without alienating non-gamers. The first move was to target games application stories only at those of gamers' Friends who were already using the respective applications rather than at all gamers' Friends indiscriminately. Previously, if gamers gave their consent for their game achievements to be posted on their Walls, these were seen by all of their Friends. Invitations by games developers for users' games successes to be shared with their Friends would, from 2010, only apply to the Friends who also play the relevant application. A further change, however, resulted in application stories being displayed in greater detail on users' Friends' News Feeds, thereby giving developers 'more real estate to reach [your] users with more relevant content' (ibid.) – a phrase which clearly foregrounds the marketing value placed upon users' News Feeds by both Facebook and the companies behind the applications.

The moves were aimed at driving 'new user growth for games' (ibid) by also ensuring that although fewer games stories were posted on News Feeds, those that were had more impact. This reasoning may again be attributed to the Social Identity Theory (Benwell and Stokoe, 2007:25) since the change was accompanied by a suggestion from Morgenstern that these stories should also include the names of those people on the user's Friends List who were also playing a certain game, and when they were playing it. This appears to be aimed at the development of an 'outgroup' and 'ingroup' environment (ibid: 25) where users who do not play games played by their Friends are excluding themselves from the 'ingroup' and who may therefore feel pressured to begin playing the game.

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The marketing of games applications was further extended, with the automatic bookmarking on users' Facebook pages of applications which they most used and recorded in order of those most frequently accessed. This move eradicated the need for applications' operators to ask users to bookmark their games, and ensured that all individuals' Friends were automatically informed which games individuals were playing. A further change ensured that notable achievements or invitations within a game would be displayed beside the relevant bookmark, and, simultaneously, the names of applications used by individuals and indicators of games moves or invitations were moved to the 'high visibility' (ibid.) left hand side of the Games Dashboard on users' pages. At the same time, Morgenstern informed apps developers that Facebook's platform policies were to be 'dramatically' simplified (ibid.) in recognition of the fact that specific policies had made the process of building applications on Facebook more difficult (ibid.).

Change of tone

Morgenstern adopted a noticeably different tone when explaining the changes in the Facebook Blog for users (2010(b)). Stressing the sociability of game playing, he foregrounded family and friend relationships, referring to 'family game night… playing console games with siblings… card games with friends' and highlighted the ease with which people would be able to game with Friends. The change to the posting of gaming stories on people's Walls was explained as beneficial to both gamers and those of their Friends who were not, but there was no association between people's News Feeds and real estate value. Morgenstern introduced the other changes as 'some improvements we're excited to be launching today' (ibid.) Users were informed that 'full stories' in News Feeds would ensure that they would not miss any significant actions by or requests for help from gaming Friends.

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Bookmarks on Home pages would become 'smarter' (ibid.) by automatically appearing and changing order based on the games individuals were playing. Users would no longer have to do the work of bookmarking applications, as the Facebook algorithms would do it for them, with the result that their favourite applications would be easier to access. The accompanying requests or tasks would be 'clearer' (ibid.) by being highlighted, while the positioning of requests on the Games Dashboard would allow gamers to 'manage all their game activity and discover new games' (ibid.). These changes were presented to users as beneficial – removing arduous chores, predominantly by clicking on a button in response to a question – and making the task of gaming far easier. There was no mention of the fact that they also reduced the level of choice and control over the visibility of this information, which was the end result of the changes.

The company's description of the process being performed by 'the Facebook algorithms' simultaneously distances it from the resulting publication of users' actions on the social network, and allows it to elide responsibility for the impact of the changes. Morgenstern's change in emphasis while explaining the new developments to developers and to Facebook users offers a further illustration of Goffman's (1959) theory of the performance of identity as explained above. Morgenstern addresses the developers as business associates and identifies the changes as business developments with Facebook users and their information as the product; he addresses users as friends to whom Facebook is offering new help and support.

Privacy Policies

Facebook makes it clear to website and applications developers that they are required to 'be trustworthy' and to 'respect privacy' and to provide users with a good experience (Facebook 2011(w)). The company's Developer Principles and Policies

document (ibid) foregrounds the issue of users' privacy and, in 2011, required the developers of applications and websites connected to Facebook Platform to provide a link to their own privacy policy and any other applicable policies on every page of their application. These privacy policies should clearly set out what data the developer will collect from users' Facebook pages, and how they will 'use, store, and/or transfer their data' (ibid.). The use of 'data' to describe users' information and content is significant in this context. In Facebook's Privacy Policy for its users, the company is careful to describe these as 'personal information' (Facebook 2011(l)) – re-enforcing its message of personal service to users. Facebook can also be seen to attribute transitivity to the developers who would be 'collecting' the data while eliding its own role in determining the ways in which users can maintain control over their information, and the ways in which developers would be able to access it.

Data, however, denotes detailed information and statistics, while also indicating that the information is part of a business arrangement and that it is used for analysis. While this may appear to be an issue of semantics, it exemplifies the clear distinction between the way that Facebook addresses its users, and how it addresses its business partners. Users are encouraged to regard Facebook as 'personal' by the way in which the company communicates with them – and are constantly assured by the company that it makes every attempt to personalise the services it provides. It places its users at the heart of the website. Zuckerberg's speech at the 2010 F8 Live conference, however, presented the flipside of this emphasis, by placing Facebook users at the centre of their own data graph – represented as a clearly visible chart of their online connections and actions (Zuckerberg 2010(a)). Despite his announcement that he was taking not just Facebook, but also the Web, in new direction – that is providing an operational structure for it - the description of the formation of the 'Open Graph' must be regarded

as a euphemism for the tracking and compilation of a detailed list of the actions performed on the World Wide Web by private individuals, and the implied but unmarked surveillance and dataveillance procedures.

Applications

As indicated above, millions of applications have been mounted on Facebook Platform since its launch and they provide an extensive range of online activities in which Facebook users may participate. For the purpose of this thesis, a study has been conducted of six companies which have mounted applications on Facebook Platform, in order to examine both their privacy policies and the ways in which they interact with individual users. This can by no means be described as comprehensive, but offers an insight into the way application companies operate on the social network and how they interact with users. The empirical research begins by examining how three gaming companies use Facebook to promote their online games, and then considers the use of the social network by three other applications companies. It ends with a study of their privacy policies to establish how they use the information they gather about their users.

Due to the number of Facebook users who access the gaming applications online these applications companies play a major role in the Facebook community. Their operational practices impact upon millions of Facebook users, which is why three gaming companies are included in the study. These companies offer access to a selection of online games using Facebook as a portal; they have each created a public page on the social network which features links to the gaming apps. By uploading an app to their Facebook pages, users establish a permanent link to the games of their choice. Other applications studied include KREMSA Design, an apps company which holds Facebook Preferred Developer Consultant status indicating it has successfully

progressed through an assessment process, travel application Trip Advisor and a geospatial application, Foursquare.

Gaming apps

Zynga, Playdom and CrowdStar are the companies behind some of the most popular free to access online games available on Facebook Platform (InsideNetwork Apps Data 2011). These ratings change constantly with the introduction of new games but in June 2011 they were amongst the top ranked gaming companies on the social network (Inside Network 2011). Zynga was the leading company for online gaming on Facebook, having developed games such as Cityville (88,242,770 million monthly users); Empires and Allies (41,057,173 million monthly users), Farmville (38,708,675 million monthly users); Texas HoldEm Poker (35,438,995million monthly users) (Inside Network App Data 2011(a)). These games operate on an initial free-to-play basis; users accessing the games via Facebook may play free of charge, but if they want to progress in a game, they must buy Facebook Credits in order to pay through the social network. The companies' Facebook pages supply links to all the apps they mount on Facebook, but also advertise other gaming apps which are only available from their own websites and for which payment is required.

Zynga Inc

As indicated above, Zynga operates a number of very successful gaming apps which are accessed through Facebook. Although the company operates individual pages for each of its games, this study concentrates on its official Facebook page Zynga Inc (Zynga 2011a). The company makes constant use of its official page in order to promote new game releases, new developments in existing games and to encourage users to take certain courses of action, many of which require payment. It also works to encourage users to participate on its pages and games, offering free incentives and

organising special events such as the City of the Week competition for users of CityVille, which took place during the spring of 2011.

Zynga uses an informal mode of address when communicating with users, one which closely resembles that adopted by Facebook;

> *Hey Cityville Fans! Last chance to complete the limited time Spring Fling goal and get rewarded with the Cherry Hill! Hurry up and finish this goal before it's too late Citizens* (Zynga 2011(a)).

The post begins casually and addresses Cityville fans as friends, as indicated through the use 'hey'. The informal style of communication continues by the lack of complete sentences, the second of which begins in the imperative to prompt users into action, and which is reinforced by referring to them in terms appropriate to the game.

> *The Raven and his sinister Dark Alliance have invaded our peaceful island home, and only you can save us! Defend your homeland in Zynga's new game: Empires & Allies!* (Zynga 2011(a)).

This second post is also directing users to take a particular course of action, but is promoting a new game. Zynga introduces the game by setting the scene and can be seen to place gamers in the game before they have accessed it, through the use of inclusive language such as 'our peaceful island', 'only you' and 'defend your homeland' (ibid). Again, the company uses the imperative to prompt users into action, while simultaneously working to develop and strengthen users' ties to its games.

Each post on the Zynga wall is accompanied by a picture, either of the reward offered for completing a specific task, or a scene from a competition or from a game. These pictures work as visual prompts to gaming fans. In the midst of the promotional posts, however, are those aimed at encouraging users to spend money, such as

> *Hey CityVille Fans! Increase your payout by upgrading your Toy*
>
> *Store! Visit the Build Menu to get started today!* (ibid 24/6/2011)

 and

> *I want YOU! Collect resources, build an army and defeat the Dark*
>
> *Alliance in Zynga's latest game: Empires and Allies!* (ibid).

These posts can be seen to mirror the style and language of the promotional posts with the result that they disguise the commercial imperative for users to spend money.

CrowdStar

CrowdStar employs different strategies in order to encourage user participation. Firstly, it posts less frequently than Zynga, and makes less use of visual aids to attract gamers. Secondly, its mode of address is more formal, while the company's use of the imperative is quite clear, for example:

> *CrowdStar added 5 new photos to the album LIMITED EDITION*
>
> *kittens that GLOW. Get.One.Today.* (CrowdStar(a) (13/5/ 2011)

 and

> *Build a DINO DEN in Happy Pets. Raise cute dinos* (ibid:10/5/2011).

 Rather than take the form of communication between the gaming company and its users, CrowdStar's posts take the explicit form of advertising. There is little attempt at providing an inclusive environment for users and less communication with them than evident on the Zynga page. The majority of the posts use the imperative to direct gamers to take certain courses of action, which is not always to participate in a game or to buy goods. CrowdStar also makes significant use of published articles which reflect favourably on the company and its games. It regularly directs gamers to the links it has uploaded to those articles it wants gamers to read, with particular emphasis on articles about the company in gaming or Internet magazines. This form of promotion differs

from that employed by either Zynga or Playdom, who promote themselves and their products on their official Facebook pages. CrowdStar's promotional strategy is to direct its users, in a more formal style, to read material by external companies. In this way, these companies are being used by CrowdStar as validation of the company and its services, as CrowdStar decides that these external assessments are likely to have more influence over its users than its own promotional efforts.

Playdom

Playdom uses its official page on Facebook more regularly, posting constantly to keep gamers informed of new developments in its games, and new games releases (Playdom 2011(a)). Like Zynga, Playdom adopts an informal mode of address with its users, and sets out to create an inclusive environment while using the imperative to direct gamers into action.

> *We know you've been waiting for this! Check out the latest update in*
> *Sorority Life! (ibid 15/6/2011)*
> *Check out the Playdom Community Blog for the latest Sneak Peaks in*
> *Mobsters 2!* (ibid 13/6/2011).

 The vast majority of Playdom's posts direct users to its off Facebook community blog (2011(b)), which closely resembles its official promotional page on Facebook. The company uses the blog to publicise the latest developments in its games, and makes extensive use of pictures in order to encourage gamers to become deeper involved in its apps. The blog entries are posted by company employees, mainly under pseudonyms, and most of them continue to use the informal mode of address and inclusive vocabulary that is adopted on Playdom's Facebook page.

> *Attention All Time Travelers! Chapter 11 is now available in*
> *Gardens of Time. There remain numerous disturbances in the*

timeline, which you must help us correct. Travel to India and the

Old West to find more objects lost in time. The Time Society

needs you, so embark on this quest today! (ibid:21/6/2011).

As is clear in this blog entry, however, much use of the imperative is made to prompt gamers into action and its modality is high. The Blog reflects Playdom's strategy to strengthen users' ties with the game, and that the new release is a continuation of an existing game. It is inclusive as exemplified by the phrase 'which you must help us correct', while referring to the game as 'this quest'. What is significant about the Playdom Blog is that despite its description as a community blog, and despite the inclusive language used, there are no posts from gamers. Instead, the Blog is simply used as another promotional tool for the company's games.

User-generated content

The three other applications companies studied are Trip Advisor, Foursquare and Kremsa Design; these provide different forms of applications on Facebook. The gaming companies enable users to play online games initially free of monetary charge in the hope of encouraging users to move on to paid services. They provide content in the form of entertainment, but applications such as Trip Advisor, Kremsa Design and Foursquare rely on user-generated-content, that is content which is uploaded by users rather than by the companies. Like Facebook, these companies provide the software programmes, but their success is dependent on a growing number of active users constantly uploading content to their apps in order to attract both advertisers and other users.

TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor is a company which encourages users to share travel experiences with Facebook Friends and application users. When a Facebook user logs into

TripAdvisor via the social media platform, in 2010 they could not only interact with people they don't know and share their travel experiences, but they could also see a list of their Friends who had visited the page courtesy of Facebook's instant personalisation programme (TripAdvisor 2010/2011a). This engenders a feeling of familiarity, but can also be seen as encouragement to users to join the 'in-group' (Benwell and Stokoe 2007:25). This changed in 2011, and the company's Facebook page simply directs visitors to its external website (TripAdvisor 2011(b)), where these activities are available.

Based around the notion of word-of-mouth recommendations, visitors to the company's page are invited to publish their personalised travel history and compile a map of destinations they have visited, which they can then share with Friends. Communication with page visitors is focused on encouraging them to upload information about their personal experiences and preferences. Similar to Facebook, TripAdvisor asks questions in an informal mode of address, in the manner of a friend or acquaintance, and this initial contact is aimed at encouraging users to develop their travel profile. To participate further, however, they must download the application and register their personal details with the company.

The company gathers information from users' Facebook accounts and through the registration process. Once users have registered to use the app, the company then asks them to submit further information, such as their travel plans; their style of travel; their preferences; (including meal requests, seat selection; frequent flyer/hotel/car rental information); as well as flight class; luggage; and ticketing options. Significantly, this information resembles that usually requested by travel agents when individuals are booking a holiday and makes clear the financial and marketing imperative behind the application.

Membership of the app allows users to participate in a number of travel related activities online which predominantly take the form of producing content for the website. They are able to publish post travel reviews of cities they have visited; take part in discussion forums; email TripAdvisor content to themselves and others; access membership-only newsletters and travel planning content; and enter surveys, contests and sweepstakes (TripAdvisor 2011(a)). The company's external website highlights that it features '45+ million candid reviews and opinions from real travellers around the world … 6,000,000+ candid traveller photos … 23 new opinions posted every minute' (TripAdvisor 2011(a)).

By means of user content, therefore, TripAdvisor's website is 'kept alive through their labor, the cumulative hours of accessing the site, writing messages, participation in conversations and sometimes making the jump to collaborators' (Terranvoa 2000:49). It is the work users do on the app that enables the company to attract other users – as exemplified by the company's promotional material on the front page of its external website. It stresses that the reviews and photographs it publishes are 'candid', and that they are provided by 'real travellers' in order to emphasise the difference between itself and high street travel companies and their holiday brochures. The implication is that TripAdvisor's website provides the whole truth about holiday destinations and accommodation because it is supplied by 'real travellers' and not holiday company representatives. It also emphasises that fresh information is being constantly uploaded – '23 new opinions posted every minute' (TripAdviser 2011(a)). Users' labour on TripAdvisor is not completely unrewarded, however, as the company, or its commercial associates, offer travel and accommodation discounts by way of payment for their participation. These encourage the website's users to 'collaborate' (Terranova 2000:49) in its success, and to provide their personal information to

TripAdvisor, information that enables the company and its associate companies to target them with marketing material relevant to the information they have supplied.

Foursquare

Foursquare is a geospatial application which has been specifically developed for use from mobile devices. As mobile phones became more sophisticated, Facebook created an application to provide access to the social network from smartphones with Internet access, as indicated in the previous chapter. The development has enabled Facebook users to access the social platform, update their status, browse their News Feeds, check out their Friends' Profiles and also to upload email and to send photographs and videos straight to their profiles from wherever they are. Facebook developed a geospatial app of its own, called Places, but this was not particularly successful and is no longer available. The information provided by those who joined, however, remains in use, and their geospatial information is still published when they upload content to Facebook.

The Foursquare app was, in 2010, described on its Facebook page as 'part friend finder, part social city guide, part nightlife game!' (foursquare 2010/ 2011a) and encouraged Facebook users to 'come and sign up' (ibid.). In 2011, the company's apps page on Facebook makes no mention of the app being a game, but focuses instead on friendships, tips, and 'unlocking discounts and rewards' (ibid) The app was launched in 2009, and, by August 2010, had around three million users worldwide, which by autumn 2011 had grown to over ten million (foursquare 2011c). One of the company's listed investors is O'Reilly AlphaTech Ventures (Foursquare 2011©) – an off shoot of established media company O'Reilly Media. Like other apps, the Foursquare application is accessed through a link on the company's Facebook page, which enables individuals to download it to their phones.

While areas of the application are publicly available on Facebook, again access to all of its services is dependent upon a registration process. The company's information page on Facebook, in 2010, described the application as 'a game that challenges users to experience new things, and rewards them for doing so' (ibid.) but the emphasis on the gaming aspect changed and in 2011 Foursquare focuses on its information sharing and marketing potential (Foursquare 2011(b)). TripAdvisor allows Facebook users to say where they have *been*, (emphasis mine), Foursquare enables them to say where they *are* (emphasis mine) with the use of geospatial technology.

Foursquare tracks app users' locations through their mobile phones and sends them a list of nearby 'venues' (ibid.). In reality, the app is able to target advertising for these venues to users when they are flagged as being within relevant areas. The app also identifies friends who are registered with Foursquare and who are in the same area, and offers 'tips' (ibid.) about the areas in which users are tagged. Amongst the services offered by the company is 'Topguest', a loyalty programme which allows users to gather points and travel rewards for checking-in – that is, recording their location - on Foursquare, as a reward for contributing to the community. In this way, users advertise these venues to their Friends and other app users, and the loyalty programme, which is supported by some of the major hotel chains, provides rewards for their efforts. While it has a games function, Foursquare's application primarily functions as a marketing and advertising tool which allows users to participate in an online, free-to-play game as a reward. It acts as an intermediary between users and the companies which are linked with Foursquare; the app advertises the companies to users who can be tracked to specific geographic areas; the companies provide rewards to users check-in at a specific location and thus advertise the venue.

The Foursquare page on Facebook (Foursquare 2011b) functions as a promotions page with the communication on its Wall used to direct users to other games and to companies with which it is linked. Communication is in the broadcast, one-to-many form and directed to an amorphous audience. Like Facebook, Foursquare adopts an informal mode of address with users, while using the imperative to direct users to take suggested courses of action. Foursquare tells Facebook users that by downloading the app, Foursquare 'helps you explore the world around you, meet up with friends, discover new places and save money with specials' (Facebook 2011(b)) thereby establishing a discourse of benefit to users.

Many posts direct users to its off Facebook Blog (Foursquare 2011(d)) where more information is provided about the subject of the post. Communication on the Blog, too, however, is in the broadcast, one-to-many form. 'Foursquare is not just about check-in, or recommendations, or points, or badges. It's about making the world easier to use. It's about discovering new places, connecting with friends and forging new relationships with the places you visit' (Foursquare 2011(d) 24/6/2011). While the blog post is illustrative of Benwell and Stokoes' point that online communication may be viewed 'as a medium with strong oral qualities' (2007:255) it is not indicative of a two way conversation. Instead, it takes the form of a marketing text which encourages users to look beyond the commercial imperatives of the app.

The commercial imperative is clear on the majority of foursquare blog posts however. For example, On June 23rd 2010, one blog post on 23rd June 2010 began

> *Last March, we rolled out a small test with American Express: link*
> *your AmEx and foursquare accounts, spend at least $5 at a local*
> *merchant in Austin, and get a $5 savings applied directly to your*
> *monthly statement* (foursquare 2011(d): 23.6.2911),

Foursquare operations are based on the principle that the app advertises venues and companies to its users, and by checking in at these venues, the users are in turn advertising it to their Friends. Foursquare foregrounds the commercial value of the personal information users upload to its app by describing it, in its Privacy Policy (2010/2011(a)), as 'one of the business assets that are transferred' should the company be bought over. The statement indicates the power relationship between users and the company, since Foursquare obtained the information free of charge.

Polls

The final form of online applications offered on Facebook to be examined in this chapter is polls. Kremsa Design is an American company that mounts applications on Facebook, and which holds Facebook Preferred Developer Consultant status, a programme in which Facebook annually registers specially selected companies. The status of the companies accepted on the programme is unclear, as it appears to promote development companies which have both technical skills and lengthy experience in mounting applications on Facebook (Facebook 2011(y)). Facebook describes them as 'experienced developers' which have 'built numerous Facebook integrations' and which offer 'solutions ranging from contests, polls and campaigns to deeply integrated experiences' (ibid.). Companies must apply to be admitted to the programme and meet the criteria set down by Facebook. Admission permits them to display the programme logo on their Facebook pages and on the programme pages.

Facebook Inc. informs companies 'these vendors can help enhance your brand on Facebook' (ibid.). The social network however categorically denies that Preferred Developer Program status is an endorsement of these companies. It states that their inclusion in the programme is based on information provided by an associated company which is 'responsible for its accuracy' (ibid) Facebook appears to elide responsibility for the selection of the companies to which it accords the status and to distance itself

from the way they operate on Facebook, while simultaneously promoting them to other applications developers. Kremsa Design develops poll applications, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven as well as a number of games. Similar to Trip Advisor, Kremsa's polls applications on Facebook are dependent upon user-generated content, but this is generally not published on its social network pages. Its self-designation as a polling company seems based on status since polls are usually a form of survey linked to politics and public opinion, while surveys are associated with the commercial domain.

When users take part in polls on Facebook, they must first give Kremsa Design consent to collect their Basic Information from Facebook, including their name, profile photograph, gender, networks, user ID, Friends List, and any other information they have made available to everyone. The company also demands access to users' profile information including their birthdays and their preferences in: music; TV; movies; books and quotes. It seeks to collect a substantial amount of detailed personal information, which is further supplemented by information from other sources, a practice which will be discussed later in this chapter. Users' personal information is further linked to their participation in the polls, which include those of the political variety.

While Kremsa's privacy policy (2011(a)) warns that voting on its polls is not anonymous, the company does not publish this warning on all of its polls. Users therefore may be under the impression they are completing the surveys anonymously in the absence of any indication to the contrary. The company uses the information and feedback for marketing purposes or to improve its services, but warns this is done without Kremsa paying any royalties or other compensation to users. The company therefore sets the terms of use, collects and utilises users' personal information and may

adopt their suggestions and ideas without reward. While users' labour is provided 'really free' (Terranova 2000:48), in line with her theory, it is 'willingly conceded in exchange for the pleasures of communication and exchange' (ibid).

Kremsa's communication on Facebook is directed at its existing clients and at attracting new clients. It promotes its own services, those of its clients, and of Facebook itself on its Facebook page.

> *Find out how your pages rank and add your page rating.* (June 14th 2011)
>
> *Over 70 thousand votes in 24 hours ... and still counting on one of the most successful polls via our Poll app'* (June 20th) (Kremsa 2010/2011(b))

These posts are representative of the company's communications on its Facebook page. Its client companies may also post comments, but these are in the form of requests for help with a poll app and Kremsa quickly posts a response. The indication that Kremsa Design is a marketing company with Facebook expertise, and uses its Facebook page to communicate with business associates and to advertise its services is supported by the statement on Kremsa's Facebook information page, which states

> *we are a crew of experienced strategists, designers, developers and marketers who know how to make your company stand out from the competition* (Kremsa 2011(b)).

The company emphasises its role as 'Facebook marketing solutions' (Kremsa 2010/2011(c)) and communication with private individuals using its polls and games is very brief, taking the form of a question or set of questions asking users for their opinions. The lack of communication indicates that the company's emphasis is on the information it may gather from users.

Privacy concerns

In 2010, Zynga stated in its privacy policy that individuals' 'privacy is important to us … we have designed the Service to protect information about you from unauthorised disclosure to others' (Zynga 2010/ 2011(b)). The statement may be regarded as disingenuous, given that later in the year the company was discovered to have been disclosing the UID identifying information of not just users, but also, in some cases, of users' Friends, to advertisers and Web tracking companies.

In a special statement on the Facebook Developer blog, Facebook's Mike Vernal stated that several applications built on Platform had been passing user ID identifiers 'in a manner which violated' the company's privacy policy.

In most cases, developers did not intend to pass on this information,

but did so because of the technical details of how browsers work

he added (Vernal 2010). The first three words of the statement clearly indicate that in some (unidentified) instances, the information had been passed on deliberately, but implied that other companies involved had supplied the information accidently, due to technical issues. While Facebook therefore informed users that the breach had taken place, it did not identify the companies involved and did not inform users if their information had been disclosed. Zynga made no mention of the issue on its website in the days following publication of the security failure but, in 2011, prominently displays the logo of the TRUSTe programme. This indicates that Zynga has met with the programme's requirements which include 'transparency, accountability and choice regarding the collection and use of users' personal information (Zynga 2010/ 2011(b)). The programme's aim is to generate 'online trust among consumers and organisations globally' (ibid).

Privacy Policies

Facebook requires each application company to publish a privacy policy, but until 2011 imposed no conditions about their accessibility. The companies' privacy and conditions of use statements are important to users, since they are considered to have a quasi-legal status; many Internet companies, particularly software companies, provide special dialogue boxes and do not allow users to download the software unless users indicate they have read their policy and conditions of use statements. The applications companies do not operate in this way on Facebook, and the social network places no requirement on them to do so. Neither did Facebook require the companies to provide access to these statements in a clearly defined place. Until 2011, some apps companies provided a hyperlink on their Facebook pages to the documents; others placed them in the Facebook dialogue box, while the documents of some companies were only available on their external websites.

Each company, however, takes the use of their apps as users' acceptance of their conditions of use and privacy documents, a situation in which users cannot be considered to have given informed consent.

> *By accessing or otherwise using our application, you agree to the terms and conditions of this Privacy Policy you expressly consent to the processing of your Personal Information and Anonymous Information according to this Privacy Policy* (Kremsa 2010/2011(a)).

Kremsa Design's statement is representative of similar clauses which are included in the privacy statements of the companies featured in this research. The companies also clearly state that their policies may change, but again there is a lack of uniformity about how users will be informed about these changes. Foursquare, for example, states

> *if we make material changes in the way we use Personal Information,*
>
> *we will notify you by posting an announcement on our Service or*
>
> *sending you an email'* (foursquare 2011(c)).

Zynga and Trip Advisor policies also include this statement, while Playdom advises users 'to consult this policy regularly for changes' (Playdom 2011©) and Crowdstar warns users that it

> *may update this Privacy Policy from time to time. You are responsible*
>
> *for periodically reading this Privacy Policy* (Crowdstar2011(b)
>
> 27/6/2011).

This statement moves from using the hedge 'may' about possible changes, to high modality in its personal address to users as the company elides responsibility for informing users of changes, and places responsibility on them to seek out the information. Foursquare's combined Privacy Policy and Terms of Use also tell users

> *it is your responsibility to check … for changes* (2011(c)).

Hedges

The use of hedges is common in the Privacy Policies of each of the companies, introducing an element of uncertainty about the ways in which the personal information, uploaded by private individuals at the behest of the companies, will be used. As previously indicated, if users reject the request, they are excluded from the app they want to access. The apps companies categorise users' information as either Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or Non-Identifiable Information and in their privacy policies establish their right to determine how they deploy both categories. As examined in the previous chapter, the companies are able to access a range of personal information about users who access their applications through Facebook; this includes

the information to which they grant access through the dialogue box and the information which Facebook provides automatically.

The apps companies also collect information from a range of other sources and by various means. Their policies, however, exhibit different levels of modality in the information they provide to users with regard to the collection and dissemination of their information, and the application of the hedge 'may' is frequent. Zynga, for example, states that it 'may also gather or receive' information from a number of other sources, including other Zynga users and through external companies (Zynga 2011(b)). Similar to Facebook, Kremsa and Trip Advisor collect information about their applications' users from other users with whom they are linked on the websites. Both also collect information from a wide range of other, unspecified sources. Kremsa Design indicates that it

> *may receive Personal Information from other sources with which you have registered, companies who we have partnered with ... or other third parties. We may associate this information with the other Personal Information we have collected about you* (Kremsa 2011(a)).

The companies each demonstrate a lack of transparency by failing to inform users about the sources of information, the extent and type of the information collected. They frequently use the hedge 'may', which introduces a lack of clarity and uncertainty about the process. Simultaneously, the companies seek to elide agency in the collection process by allocating transitivity to other companies, and implying that they play no active role in the process.

Data collection

The companies' privacy policies also foreground the voluntary nature of the provision of personal information by users. Crowdstar, for example, informs users that its Privacy Policy

> *describes the ways we collect, store, use, and manage the information you provide* (Crowdstar 2011(b), emphasis mine).

In their policies, the companies attribute agency to the individuals who use their services and those of Facebook, and imply that the companies are managing the information provided solely by the users themselves. As indicated above, these statements are neither true nor comprehensive. Each of the companies' policies subsequently makes it plain that they gather information about users from various sources. Users may choose what information they upload to the applications but they have no control over the information which the companies collect on them by various means.

The companies also employ numerous technical tracking devices, including cookies – small data files which they transfer to users' computers' hard disk in order to keep records of their actions. They adopt persistent cookies to save registration and login information, but use session ID cookies to track the activities which users perform while logged in, and technical information about users' computer systems. The use of tracking devices is common in the online environment, and supplies information about which pages users visit, whether emails have been opened and users' reactions to advertising on the application.

These devices are not solely used in order to track users' activities within the companies' own domains. Trip Advisor also uses cookies to record users' activity online, although again the company uses the hedge 'may' about its collection of

information from the websites users have visited, and the content they have viewed. A discourse of benefit surrounds this collection of user information, as the apps companies describe it as beneficial to users since the information can be used to provide a personalised, customised experience to each user.

> *One of our goals in collecting automatic information is to help us understand the interests of our users and customize your user experience* (Trip Adviser 2011(c));

Automatic information is not defined. Kremsa Design adopts a similar tone in its Privacy Policy. The information

> *is collected to make our application and solutions more useful to you and to tailor the experience with our application to meet your special interests and needs* (Kremsa 2011(a)).

The companies elide the fact that users are subject to what is in fact an extensive surveillance procedure, without their consent, and that the information is collected for commercial reasons. The Playdom Privacy Policy, however, explicitly links the use of tracking devices

> *in order to serve advertisements and other information appropriate to your interests* (2011(c)).

Third party companies

The apps companies further employ the hedge 'may' in regard to linked websites and companies which advertise on their applications. Playdom's policy states that

> *these other websites may place their own cookies ... we may share aggregated information that includes your Personal Information ... we may also provide Personal Information to our business partners or*

> *other trusted entities ... third party advertisers on the Services may*
>
> *also place or read cookies on your browser* (2011(c)).

Versions of this statement, including extensive use of the hedge 'may', are included in the other companies' privacy policies, which demonstrate higher modality in their advice to users to check the policies of these third party businesses. They indicate that by clicking on an advertisement contained within an application, users are subjecting themselves to further technical monitoring. The practices of the apps companies in their encouragement to users to participate and in then tracking their Web activities reflect Andrejevic's theory of private individuals 'being recruited to participate in the labor of being watched to an unprecedented degree by subjecting the details of their daily lives to increasingly pervasive and comprehensive forms of high-tech monitoring' (Andrejevic 2002:231). The result of these practices is a 'concentration of private information like no other' (Halavais 2009:149). There is, however, a further lack of transparency about how exactly users' information is disseminated.

Information dissemination

Users' information is subject to a two-way flow. The apps companies not only collect users' information from a range of unidentified sources, but also provide information to external companies with which they are linked: statistical analysts, marketing companies and advertisers. The companies foreground 'sharing', a euphemism with favourable connotations, to describe the process of information dissemination. Any companies associated with the apps companies may receive personal and non-identifiable information about users. Crowdstar and Zynga state that users' consent is required before they provide personally identifiable information to external companies, but Playdom indicates that it 'may' also give users' Personal Information to its business partners 'or other trusted entities' (Playdom 2011(c)) for

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marketing purposes. 'Certain Personal Information' (Foursquare Policy 2011(c)) may be made available to third party applications, not just of individual users, but also of the friends with whom they are linked on Foursquare. Foursquare's statement fails to indicate precisely what personal information is passed to other apps companies, while the use of the hedge 'may' again introduces further uncertainty over the process, and the company simultaneously seeks to elide responsibility for the process by failing to acknowledge transitivity.

Opt out option

Users can reject the surveillance measures only by completely opting out of applications use. While each of the companies informs users how they may disable the technical tracking, they warn that this will either prevent or detrimentally affect their use of the application. The statements suggest that the applications are dependent on the tracking devices in order to operate, as the companies elide responsibility for the automatic inclusion of said tracking devices in their applications. In preventing users from being able to use the applications without deployment of these devices, the developers are establishing their dominance in the balance of power between themselves and their users (Bourdieu 1989). This signifies a shift in the traditional power balance between a company and clients who pay for their services, and suggests that access to personal information is considered as payment for the services the apps companies provide free of monetary charge.

As indicted in the previous chapter, the 2010 changes imposed by Facebook allowed apps developers and web developers to store users' information indefinitely. As a result, even if users are unhappy with subsequent changes to an application's privacy policy, their personal information will be retained by the company. If users decide to stop using a game, they may delete the information they have uploaded and de-activate

their account but are required to take further action before their personal information is deleted from company records. They are advised to contact the company and request that their information is deleted, but there are no assurances that this will done.

Playdom tells users that if they completely delete the information they have uploaded to their profile page, their account will be de-activated, but the company offers no assurances that their information will be deleted from its records.

> *If you would like us to delete your record in our system, please contact us and we will attempt to accommodate your request if we do not have any legal obligation to retain the record* (Playdom 2011(c)).

Zynga states that if users

> *no longer want Zynga to make active use of your information* (Zynga 2011(b))

they should email the company and include their full name, e-mail address and user ID from the social network from which they accessed the game. It also warns that certain records,

> *for example those pertaining to payments or customer service matters will be retained for legal and accounting purposes* (ibid)

and that the company may be unable to delete content sent or posted on the game. This statement contains the hedge 'for example' indicating that the information retained may be more extensive, and also indicates that certain information may remain in the public domain of the game. Crowdstar's policy makes no reference to the fate of users' information if they request it to be deleted from the company's records and merely informs users to contact the company, while TripAdvisor indicates it retains

certain information associated with your account in our archives, including for analytical purposes as well as for recordkeeping integrity (Trip Advisor 2011(c)).

It is significant that the act of registering to use the services of these companies requires just one or two clicks of a computer mouse, the act of de-activating an account is relatively simple, but the deletion of the personal information held by the companies is much more complicated. Unless users have meticulously read the privacy policies, they may be unaware that the act of de-activating their accounts does not automatically result in the deletion of their personal information in the companies' possession. The issue of control is also foregrounded. Despite assurances from Facebook that its users control their personal information and the content they post on the website, these games developers exert extensive control over users' data. Users may delete their account, but the deletion of their personal information from commercial registers rests in the control of the companies, none of whom give any assurances that they will erase the information.

Conclusion

Facebook's development of the Open Graph signifies the company's drive to extend its sphere of influence in the online environment. The 2007 and 2008 developments drew external websites onto the SNS, and subsequently saw the social network begin to demolish the previous boundary between itself and the rest of the Web. The Open Graph continues what may be determined as a move to position the social platform at the heart of Web activity. Zuckerberg's statement that he wanted to reform the Web by providing a supposedly hitherto missing structure by creating maps of connections, was, significantly, announced to the Facebook conference for developers. This indicates that the development is primarily aimed at benefiting

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commercial organisations, since it offers them the means to access users' personal information by mounting applications on the social network. The changes introduced by Facebook to the way apps developers request access to the information married with the information that Facebook automatically makes available to the developers can be seen to offer significant incentives to companies to link to the network. The development of maps of connections based on private individuals signifies the operation of a sophisticated surveillance project which tracks and records every action conducted on the Web by Internet users.

The changes introduced by Facebook in 2010 have accelerated the process, as the social network establishes itself at the heart of the web of information. By uploading apps to the social network, commercial companies can access its vast archives of personal information of hundreds of millions of users and the links among them. The designation of the graph as 'open' is appropriate, as the move has ensured that by accessing applications through the social network, Facebook users' actions on the Web, not just on Facebook, have become 'open' books to be read by apps development companies. This represents a momentous shift from Facebook's original designation as a private, enclosed community.

The extent of the information gathered by the various applications developers considered in this chapter demonstrates that an impressive tracking system already functions with Facebook at its centre. The technological means to track Web traffic, particularly in the form of Web Beacons and Cookies, have existed for some time. But as Zuckerberg himself noted, these were operated by individual companies and websites. Facebook has now positioned itself at the centre of the web of information, gathering personal details of hundreds of millions of individuals, and providing the means by which commercial entities can access the information. The provision of a

clear structure on which to aggregate all the information gathered will result in an extremely comprehensive and visible map of Facebook users' online activities. It will create the means to identify individuals, not just by name but by photograph, and an inventory of their preferences and relationships. The information can then be stored and categorised in order to make it available for commercial purposes. Access to the links among Facebook users is the key to the imposition of this new structure for the Web as envisaged by Zuckerberg, and it is significant that Facebook has ensured that individuals' Friends List is available by default to apps developers.

This access will simultaneously place the social platform in an extremely privileged position amongst Web companies, since it has been constructed on the visibility of users' network of friends and acquaintances. The extensive information collected may not be particularly private, or sensitive, but ensures that every action users of these applications make while linked to the companies through Facebook becomes visible and logged. As boyd comments 'just because we can leverage PII [Personally Identifiable Information], should we? Just because we can aggregate and redistribute data, should we? … the answers to these questions aren't clear.' (boyd 2010 unpaginated).

Users have to make considerable effort to control their privacy; that is the visibility of activities and information to acquaintances, Friends, everyone on Facebook, and on the Internet. Facebook provides the privacy settings which allow them to adjust the level of visibility they choose. But in order to access apps on Facebook, they must cede control. The information may not be publicly visible, but by giving the apps companies access to the personal details they have uploaded to Facebook, their Web activities are tracked and much of their information is passed among unknown companies in a two way flow. The developers' privacy policies fail to

provide transparency and clarity over exactly how they use the information, seek to elide responsibility from their role in the collection and dissemination of all the user information they collect, and seek to establish a beneficial discourse around their practices. Simultaneously, the developers use the threat of exclusion from the apps to coerce users into granting access to the information they seek.

It is clear that while Facebook publicises the Privacy Settings they offer individuals to control access by Friends, acquaintances and other Web users to the personal information and content they upload, this is eroded when they, or a Friend, accesses applications through Facebook. While the network introduces new privacy settings for users, it simultaneously increases the means by which apps developers may access this information. Users' ability and power to control is therefore ultimately determined by the technical programming of Facebook and the companies which use the social platform, while subtle pressure is exerted to encourage participation through the establishment and publication of webs of relationships; and to join the 'ingroups' (Benwell and Stokoe 2007). Less subtle pressure is exerted by the threat of exclusion if users fail to grant consent to access to the desired information. As Castells warns, surveillance is increasingly conducted not just by state agencies, but by commercial companies, 'Big Brother['s] little sisters' (2004: 342).

Boyd notes 'too many people working with Big Data assume that people who give out PII [Personally Identifiable Information], want their data to be aggregated and shared widely. But this isn't remotely true' (boyd 2010: 11). While Facebook could inform users of 'all the services that have accessed your data through their APSs, and all of the accounts that have actually looked at any particular item of content' it does not because 'it is more likely to stifle participation than encourage it' (ibid.). This would impact on Facebook's existence since, without participation by users, the social

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network would lose its appeal and success. Such disclosures would also impact upon its

attraction for commercial companies.

Chapter Six

Television broadcasters and fans

For the past seventy years, the field of mass communication has been dominated by radio and television, as well as their predecessor, the newspaper. These media platforms have operated on the few-to-many communication model, with communication and information flowing from the centre outwards to individuals, as was the case with institutions, government and businesses. The development of digital technologies in the past twenty years has undoubtedly had a significant impact on these established broadcast media platforms. The film, newspaper and television industries have each been forced to adapt to a new media environment and to the knowledge that consumers have been empowered to choose when and how they access media content, which can now flow across a variety of delivery platforms. This new media landscape has been labelled convergence, but Jenkins (2006a) emphasises that the term means more than just the technological developments, and is actually:

> a process, not an endpoint …. convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audience … [it] alters the logic by which media industries operate and by which media consumers process news and entertainment. (2006a: 15)

Traditional media platforms have already begun to harness the potential of digital media by ensuring that many of their services can now be accessed online; many newspapers ensure they simultaneously produce digital editions which enable them to transcend regional and national boundaries and reach new readers. Television organisations and companies offer viewers a wealth of content on their websites, and

have adopted digital technologies to extend the services they offer to viewers. 'Entertainment is no longer linear … you have to think in terms of a broader life cycle of a show- how it will play on TV or computer, in a game, on a phone – and you have to embrace a new kind of creative partnership with your audience' said Jana Bennet while BBC Director of Television (cited in Hilmes 2011: 52 and Faroohar 2005: 48).

With the increasing popularity of social networks, broadcast media platforms have established a presence on Facebook. Given the opportunities for self-promotion on the social network, the answer to the question as to why traditional broadcast institutions have adopted Facebook appears self-evident. It presents itself as an ideal medium for promoting their programmes – as another advertising platform – while both the BBC and ITV offer simultaneous extensive online content, which is interactive and participatory, on their own websites.This chapter examines the Facebook pages of two television series which are annual events in the television calendar. It considers how these traditional broadcasters are using the interactive and participatory elements of Facebook to communicate with the audiences of the celebrity based BBC 1 show *Strictly Come Dancing* (2003-) and ITV 1's talent show *The X Factor* (2002-). The chapter seeks to establish what the social platform offers the broadcasters that their own websites cannot and considers how the relationship between broadcasters and viewers is expressed. It deliberates on the implications for viewers' privacy as they embrace the invitation to participate in and interact with representatives of a traditional media platform which had previously been remote, and questions whether television audiences can be considered to be empowered by these new developments.

Television under threat?

There is no doubt that ongoing developments in the entertainment media have challenged television's ability to capture audience attention. The introduction of video and DVD recorders loosened the grip of broadcasters' schedules on their audiences. In addition, the multiplication of channels following the introduction of satellite and cable technologies followed by the development of digital technologies which allow television content to be viewed online, have all raised questions about the implications for the future of television. Each development has offered audiences more power over their viewing through new ways to access television content, enabling them to do so at a time and place which suits them.

No longer tied to the television viewing schedule decided by the broadcasters, audiences became fragmented. The traditional view of families sitting together to watch television programmes when they were broadcast has been overtaken by the reality of different family members each being able to access content individually and at their own convenience – evidence of technological developments enabling television audiences to overcome initially the temporal restrictions on television viewing, and subsequently, in the 21st century, both temporal and spatial restrictions of television schedules. Parents may sit in the living room watching a programme at its scheduled broadcast time, or may record it while watching another programme on another channel, while their children may watch the same programme hours, days or weeks later on their pcs or laptops – each in separate rooms.

Disruption

In 2006, in his Royal Television Society Fleming Memorial Lecture, Mark Thompson, Director of the BBC, signalled his recognition that future digital developments would be 'fundamentally disruptive, and that the foundations on which

much traditional media is built may be swept away entirely' (Thompson 2006: 3).

Growing awareness of the impact of these new technologies on traditional media platforms has been noted by media scholars around the world (Hilmes, 2011; Lotz 2010; Turner and Tay 2009; Meikle and Young, 2008). Hilmes argues 'clearly, the digital revolution is still in progress, and television remains one if its main battlefields' (2011: 54); Green (2008) questions the future of television, claiming that the affordances of digital media provide an 'environment where the viability of the broadcast form of television is once again being questioned' (p. 95); Meikle and Young conclude that the development of increasing numbers and forms of platforms for the distribution of content, coupled with the ability offered to audiences to create their own content, would '*displace* television' (2008: 70) but 'are unlikely to *replace* it' (ibid: emphases original).

The ways in which television companies can and have been addressing the issues raised by greater audience expectations of participation and interactivity and the development of alternative delivery platforms, have also been examined by Doyle (2010), Ytreberg (2009), Perryman (2008) and Castells (2009). Doyle considers the financial implications for television broadcasters as they provide content online, signalling the importance to companies of establishing a revenue model 'that is fully adapted to characteristics of digitization' (Doyle 2010: 446). The financial implications result in a narrowing of diversity and choice, as companies focus on 'safe and popular themes and brands' (ibid). Ytreberg, (2009) examines how media companies have adopted digital technologies to encourage audience participation as an extension of 'liveness' and 'presence' (p.467), as they seek to strengthen their products both financially and strategically. Perryman considers how the BBC adopted a variety of digital technologies to boost the appeal of *Dr. Who*, the popular science fiction drama,

and its two spin-off series *Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. The public service broadcaster produced mini-episodes for mobile phones, podcasts, video blogs, interactive red-button services and websites. The short episodes for mobile phones proved unsuccessful, due to phone users' fears over costs, low awareness, confusion over access and fear of technology, in addition to limited content and incompatibility with certain devices (Creasey 2006 cited in Perryman 2008: 32).

Audience Fragmentation

With the introduction of digital media, fears have been expressed about the future of television as the new technologies have been held responsible for the fragmentation of audiences. Viewers have been released from the restrictions imposed upon their viewing habits by television schedules and granted the ability to watch the content of their choice at a time which suits them. Hilmes notes that the affordances of the Internet have led to major television broadcasting corporations and institutions 'providing a wealth of additional information and entertainment in an online form' (Hilmes 2011: 52), and she warns 'such venues pose a considerable threat to the economic and public service functions of established broadcasters' (ibid.). Lotz however claims that fears over the future of television have proved groundless.

> *Rather than causing the death of television* … [they have] *ultimately reasserted the medium's significance* (Lotz 2007: 49) … *we may keep watching television, but the new technologies involve new rituals of use* (ibid: 241).

Lotz's argument, that access to television content from a variety of digital devices has boosted television usage, is supported by Ofcom's report on media usage in the United Kingdom, 'The Consumer's Digital Day'. It found that television is the dominant form of media consumption in the evening (2010: 12), and watching

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scheduled television was still the predominant media activity. The report published

statistics which show that consuming scheduled television content accounted for 82%

of all video content watched, with each viewer spending an average of 173 minutes a

day. In the 16-24 age bracket 70% of all video content is consumed via scheduled

television, with only 11% arising from consumption via a computer. Figures revealed

that while 14% of video content watched by 25-44 year olds was consumed via

recorded material, the figure for all UK adults was only 10% (Ofcom.org 2010).

Television developments

Before the digital environment's rapid development in the past ten years,

television had already begun to adapt to new technologies, and became a portal to a

variety of services such as Ceefax and Teletext. These services, available by the click of

a button on the television remote control, took viewers away from the television content

being broadcast and offered them instant access to a wide range of further information.

These services, however, mirrored the traditional one-to-many form of communication

of television productions themselves, reflecting Bordewijk and van Kaam's description

of the allocution pattern of communication (1986: 576) in which information flowed

predominantly in one direction. This pattern was again reflected in the further

interactive opportunities subsequently offered by the introduction of Red Button

services on television screens, the clicking on which diverted audiences away from the

content being broadcast to supplementary and more detailed programme information.

While Thompson in 2006 described the BBC's Red Button service as 'only half a step

from passive viewing', by 2011, the service had been expanded in line with digital

affordances and also invited viewers to 'join in programmes and have your say' (BBC

2011). ITV's red button also offers viewers interaction with their favourite programmes

(ITV 2010). These developments transformed the existing one way flow of information

from television companies to their audiences, shifting from the 'allocation' mode of communication (Bordewijk and van Kaam 1985: 578) into a 'conversation' (ibid.).

The subsequent development and popularisation of DVD, satellite and cable television offers viewers the means by which to record programmes and watch them when it suits them. In addition to an ever increasing number of channels from which to choose, the development of on-demand services offers viewers a library of previously broadcast programmes enabling them to watch programmes which they have missed when they were broadcast. Broadcasters such as the BBC and ITV also launched new digital channels and text-based websites and further experimented with convergence by making available television content in specially constructed episodes for mobile telephones, as previously indicated.

Raised expectations

Traditional television broadcasting companies have therefore been attempting to utilise the latest developments in digital technology in order to vastly increase the range of services available to audiences. These new technologies have simultaneously raised viewers' expectations about service delivery and, as Hilmes (2011) notes, increased pressure on broadcasters to meet these expectations. Television companies are fighting for the broadcast media's 'place in a media environment optimised for individual and household personal taste' (Thompson 2006: 4), rather than continuing to focus on 'amorphous and invisible' audiences (Deuze 2006: 691). Their battle tactics now include Facebook, which is based on the very elements of 'personalisation and peer-to-peer communication and dialogue' (Thompson 2006: 4) that have posed such a challenge to the traditional broadcast media, whose content had been previously aimed indiscriminately at large anonymous audiences.

Interaction and participation

The availability of content online, an example of the flow of content produced for one medium on to other media platforms, is only one way in which digital technologies have impacted on traditional broadcast platforms. While Web 2.0 platforms offer their audiences various means by which they can interact with each other and participate in social commentary, broadcast media platforms have enabled only minimal audience/reader participation which has always been subject to a selective process. Thousands of people may write, email or telephone a broadcasting company to express their views, but only a few will be selected to be aired in the public domain. Broadcasters have had to come to terms with the ability of audiences to make their views known on a far wider scale due to a multiplicity of websites which grant private individuals a voice in the public domain.

Deuze has observed that 'the media industry … is arguably the most directly affected by the consequences of interactivity' (2006: 691). By introducing websites to complement their existing delivery broadcast platforms, traditional media companies now offer their audiences new opportunities – an online space for the communication of their views, for interactivity and participation. Viewers can take part in quizzes based on their favourite shows, comment on articles and email photographs and stories which will feature in the public domain via the broadcasters' websites. Both ITV and BBC therefore already have a substantial online presence through public forums on which audiences may participate in public discussion and activities surrounding television content.

But as they fight for viewers' attention on two fronts, both broadcasters have turned to Facebook and have mounted pages on the social platform for several of their programmes. ITV has pages for its News programme, for ITV1, ITV Football and ITV

Central News. The BBC has pages for its News service, Breakfast Show, World News, Radio 5, Arabic service, and Radio 2. Each broadcaster also has a Facebook page for their respective annual major events – *Strictly Come Dancing* in the case of BBC 1 and *The X Factor* in respect of ITV 1. Each of these programmes is an annual television event, with a series of each broadcast once a year, beginning in the autumn and running until the Christmas period. Each series has a strong following and attracts a bumper audience, while the timing of the series ensures that the climax to each is broadcast during the Christmas festivities – emphasising their status as major television events

The broadcasters each have pages for these programmes on their own websites, and channel the same content on them, but these do not attract the same level of audience participation as their Facebook pages. The broadcasters' own websites and programme pages also prominently display a link to their Facebook pages and have embedded the Facebook Like button, publicising their presence on and links with the social network. As indicated in Chapter 4, this ensures that when a user clicks on the Like button, their action and the page is advertised to their Facebook Friends accompanied by a link back to the company's website – it establishes a public connection between individuals and organisations and companies. If the button is accompanied by the Open Graph protocol, the company or public organisation can deliver updates to the user's News Feed, ensuring the connection between the user and the company is published and has longevity.

Hybrid shows

Talent shows are a longstanding staple of television, dating as far back as the 1960s, and which 'peaked in the 1970s and 1980s with *New Faces* and *Opportunity Knocks* (Redden 2008: 130). It is a genre which 'has been made over' (ibid: 130) by combining the search for talent with elements of lifestyle and reality formats to provide

high entertainment value (ibid: 130). These hybrid shows, which supplement the key theme of talent with lifestyle, work ethics and personal behaviour (ibid: 131) and aspects of transformative reality shows, were developed to appeal to broader audiences. The 'new era of talent TV' (ibid: 31) began in New Zealand in 1999, with the programme *Popstars*, a style of programming which proved increasingly popular with audiences around the world. Less than ten years later, similar talent shows such as *X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing* were topping television ratings and 'capturing 80 per cent of the viewing audience between them during finals' (ibid: 131). As Redden points out, however, designating these programmes as talent shows is reductive, as they extend beyond the variety show boundaries. To categorise them as entertainment shows, meanwhile, is to distance them from the talent competition genre.

A key element of the talent shows of the 1960s was audience participation, as viewers were encouraged to vote by postcard for their favourite contestant. This enhanced audience figures, as viewers were able to influence the final result. Telephone voting was introduced in the 1980s, offering viewers a new way of voting and, in 2011, remains one of the standard methods by which television viewers can cast their votes in audience-participatory game shows and television competitions. But telephone voting, along with other methods enabled by new technologies such as voting by text or by the digital interactive capabilities of television, simply records that a vote has been lodged and for whom. This participation also comes at a price as voters have to pay for the privilege of voting, a practice which provides substantial income for the broadcasters.

Media commentators such as television reviewers in newspapers and magazines have always perforce enjoyed a public forum in which to discuss the performances of participants in televised talent shows. The thoughts, opinions and comments of audiences at home, until recently remained essentially within individuals' private

circles of family, friends and work colleagues. There were few avenues open to them to broadcast their opinions on the content of any television programme in the public domain, the principle ones being correspondence to the letters pages of newspapers and viewers' programmes such as *Points of View* (BBC 1 1961 -). Access to these conventional avenues has always been determined by the media personnel who act as gatekeepers – deciding which letters should be published or aired on television. Those whose contributions were accepted for inclusion had to wait until publication or broadcast dates were reached; there was no immediacy and little spontaneity. The Internet, however, offers 21st century audiences the opportunity to immediately publish their opinions on various forums – individuals can choose on which sites they will publicise their opinions whenever they want without the need to negotiate media gatekeepers. Within the last five years new technologies have given audiences the ability to interact with television programmes from their homes.

Jenkins has argued that reality television series such as *Survivor* (2000) and *American Idol* (2002) were 'the first killer application of media convergence' (2006: 59). The second season, in 2003, of American talent show *American Idol* broadcast by FOX Broadcasting Company attracted more than 20 million telephone calls or texts messages per episode as viewers embraced digital technologies. Previously, attempts in the United States in the 1990s to encourage television audiences to interact with certain programmes by inviting viewers to buy clothes worn by the actors or to take part in quizzes proved unsuccessful (ibid: 59) 'Critics argued that most of us simply wanted to sit back and watch television rather than interact with it' (ibid: 59). What is significant is that one of these first attempts at encouraging audience participation was built on commercialism, something which is considered later in this chapter.

Three years later, Ytreberg noted that in the U.K. 'the success of *Pop Idol* and *Big Brother* marked the rise of a working formula for combining broadcasting with digital platforms' (2009: 467). He observed that the hype generated before the launch of each series 'specifically points toward the format as a (pseudo)-event – something planned to stand out as different from the everyday stream of media output' (2009: 474). The entertainment/talent programmes *The X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing* are, by the same token, similarly identified as special television events. By 2010, however, television audiences were able to simultaneously watch television and interact with their favourite shows online while broadcasters had moved on to Facebook to offer audiences a new way of interacting with their shows in a more expansive way, rather than simply registering a vote for a certain participant.

Strictly Come Dancing (BBC1 2004 -)

Strictly Come Dancing (*SCD* or *Strictly*) is the BBC's principal contribution to the entertainment/ talent show genre of television. The 2010 series was its eighth, and television audiences rose from an average of 9.7 million in its first month, to 14 million for the series finale (BARB 2011). The show's Facebook page recorded 177,686 fans. Its status as a major, annual live television event was consolidated by the show's red carpet launch following the official announcement of the identity of the celebrity participants– establishing it as a show which stood out from 'the everyday stream of media output' (Ytreberg 2009: 474).

Unlike many other entertainment/talent shows, *SCD* does not tour the UK seeking contestants. It invites a number of people who are established and well known figures in their own field to take part. Contestants may include politicians, newsreaders, actors, singers and sportsmen and women, but all are described as celebrity participants. As a result, the competitors are usually known to television audiences before they join

the series and may have an established fan base due to their professional attainments to date.This serves to distinguish the show from talent/entertainment shows on other channels, including *The X Factor*. None of the contestants on *SCD* are dancers by profession and they are partnered with professional ballroom dancers for the competition. They are required to devote a number of hours each week to dance training before the televised shows begin, and throughout the duration of their stay in the competition. If *The X Factor* offers an opportunity for fame and pop success to people who think they have the potential but have not had the opportunity to become singing stars, *SCD* challenges already successful people to learn a new skill and to attain a high level of proficiency. Contestants face two judgements: during the live show, professional dance judges give their opinion of contestants' performances and a score, but the decision about which couples remain in the competition to reach the finals is made by television viewers through the voting system.

Cross platform thinking

Director General of the BBC, Mark Thompson, used the Royal Television Society Fleming Memorial Lecture in 2006 to acknowledge the importance to the broadcaster of adapting to the new digital environment. 'The BBC,' he said, 'should no longer think of itself as a broadcaster of TV and radio with some new media on the side'. Rather the BBC was required to 'think cross-platform' and '360º' he said. A year later, however, at The Future of Creative Content Conference, he indicated that this would not 'necessarily mean more content – it means extracting more value from content' (2007) while audiences would become 'participants and partners' (ibid.). This would be achieved as the BBC operated 'integrated cross-platform strategies' (ibid.) in its bid to reach out to television viewers.

The BBC's *SCD* page on Facebook can be seen to illustrate Thompson's remarks. Not only does it enable the corporation to extract 'more value' from the live televised show, and its midweek subsidiary show for fans on BBC 2 *It Takes Two*, but the show's content is deployed on the Corporation's own website. This is further supported by its Facebook page where a variety of treats are offered to ensure that *Strictly* fans continue to visit the page between television broadcasts. Material from the live shows is formatted for on-line access. Additionally, supplementary material such as previews of dresses, for example, and photographs of the 2010 series' red carpet launch, which may receive only minimal attention on traditional media platforms such as newspapers, are put to good use. In essence, the *Strictly Come Dancing* Facebook page can be seen to represent Thompson's 'more value from content'. Moreover, while *Strictly*'s Facebook wall is officially closed to fans' comments during the months between January and August, it is used by the BBC for promotional purposes such as the sale of tickets for the *SCD* live tour. Communication during this period may be for promotional purposes, but the BBC ensures that fans are rewarded for continuing to visit the page during these months.

Once the 2010 season began, communication from the BBC on the *Strictly* Facebook page increased dramatically as fans were offered a range of activities which allowed them to interact with the show. It was through viewers' engagement with the interactive opportunities that the BBC could be seen to gather personal information about *Strictly* fans on Facebook. To tie in with the series, the broadcaster launched two interactive projects on its *SCD* Facebook page, the *Strictly* Dance Badge project in which Facebook fans were encouraged to 'invite' their Friends to dance and to 'Be a *Strictly* Judge'. Fans on Facebook were rewarded for participating in the schemes, but these were programmed as applications.

Conditions

In order to join the *Strictly* Get Dancing card scheme, fans had to agree to the substantial number of conditions listed in the Facebook application dialogue box. They had to allow *Strictly* to access their personal information as detailed on their Facebook profiles: name, profile photograph, gender, networks, user ID, List of Friends, and any other information they had shared with everyone. As well as consenting to the BBC accessing this comprehensive range of personal information, fans had also to give *Strictly* consent to post to their Wall. These posts, which could include status, messages, notes, photographs and videos, again operated as a promotional tool for the corporation, particularly as the BBC requested access to users' Friends List. The BBC can be seen to have taken advantage of Facebook's policy in regard to the dialogue box, (as explained in Chapter Five) by asking for access to as much personal information as possible in just one request. Like the applications mounted by gaming companies, access to the apps was dependent upon the BBC being granted access to the information it sought.

The application, through which fans could acquire rewards such as weekly dance badges by inviting Friends to 'Get Dancing'; these dance badges were posted on their Walls. By earning a sufficient number of badges, fans could receive a 'personal message' from one of the programme's celebrities. Both the dance badges and the personal messages encouraged fans to participate, since they enabled fans to acquire social capital (Bourdieu 1986). They may also be regarded as rewards for promoting *SCD* to their Friends. The BBC offered Facebook fans another opportunity to feel further involved with *Strictly* by means of an application that took the form of a role play game which offered them the chance 'to be a *Strictly* judge'

> *Ever fancied sitting in Len's seat? Now's your chance. Take the chair*
>
> *and exercise your paddle power*. (*SCD* on Facebook 2010).

The mode of address is, like that employed by Facebook itself, simultaneously informal, personal, inviting and imperative in the way it 'hails' page users (Althusser 1984: 48). An answer in the affirmative resulted in fans who wanted to 'get rating' (*SCD* on Facebook) being presented with the Facebook dialogue box and they could only participate if they agreed to the same conditions which applied to the Dance Badge application. The BBC's decision to restrict access to these treats, by the imposition of conditions, appears to reflect the statements made by Mark Thompson in 2006

> We need a new relationship with our audiences. They won't just be audiences anymore, but participants and partners. We need to get to know them as individuals and communities and let them configure our services in ways that work best for them. Our vision should be that we have a direct one-to-one relationship with every individual household in this country (Thompson 2006).

What is significant about these statements is the repetition of 'need' in terms of the personalisation of the BBC services and the drive to the form close links with its audiences at a personal level.

By offering these opportunities on the Facebook page as applications, the corporation can be seen to have taken advantage of Facebook algorithms which enabled it to gather an extensive amount of personal information on viewers, an indication it was casting its net wider than the individual fans themselves. The affordances of the social network can be seen to have enabled the BBC's drive to personalise its own services and offer an explanation as to why the BBC decided to launch a Facebook page for *Strictly Come Dancing* and its fans, when it already had an official webpage for the series on its own website. Facebook provides an established social environment in which extensive personal information can be obtained from fans through their

interaction and participation on the fan page, and in which audiences feel comfortable. The social network offers personal social space as well as community space for those with shared interests while fans' participation in the applications ensures that they, and their circle of Friends, become visible to the Corporation.

Privacy Statement

The *Strictly* fan page on Facebook is subject to the corporation's privacy policy which governs the use of the personally identifiable information and personal information that is collected through interaction with the programme. Like most Internet companies, the BBC uses tracking cookies, so again interaction through Facebook also enables the BBC system to track the Internet activities of Facebook users who do not use its own website. The reasons provided were fairly standard, in that they governed the provision of requested services to users, but the corporation indicated it would use this information to also identify users' location, and to personalise services. Information in aggregate form is also used for marketing purposes. While the corporation 'proposed' (BBC Privacy Policy 2010) to use personally identifiable information 'for any other uses' (ibid), which are not specified, it assures users their consent would be sought and they would have the right to withhold this. By devising applications to operate on the Facebook social network, the BBC was able to acquire a substantial amount of personal information about its users for commercial purposes. This information, particularly of their circle of Friends, would not otherwise have been accessible to the corporation.

Disciplinary action

The BBC indicates it will also, however, use personal information in a more authoritative manner – to take action against anyone posting 'offensive, inappropriate or objectionable content' (ibid) on its websites. This disciplinary action is not restricted to

banning these individuals from the BBC website and its Facebook pages. The personal information of users who are suspected of legal defamation, is also likely to be used to contact a range of the user's associates, in order to 'inform relevant third parties such as your employer, school email/Internet provider and law enforcement agencies about the content and your behaviour' (ibid.). The statement not only indicates that the list is not exhaustive, but also that the personal information harvested from the Facebook platform, for example, may be used against the people who had provided it in order to access leisure and fan services.

This blurs the boundaries between users' private lives and public lives, between their personal, leisure, business and work lives. While the provision of personal information is therefore initially presented as being necessary for the BBC to provide and personalise services, it also enables the corporation to publicise any action which the corporation feels is objectionable. Significantly, users need only be suspected of breaching defamation laws, while the statement begs the question as to how the corporation would know how to contact users' employers and schools, other than through the information accessed from the users' Facebook pages.

The personal information of users who cancel their registration with any BBC website, meanwhile, is retained for a full year. If users seek to access the personal information which the BBC holds about them and to have corrections applied, they will be charged £10. This charge again blurs boundaries as it signifies that the balance of power over the information lies with the corporation, which does not accept responsibility for its accuracy. The BBC will 'use reasonable efforts to supply, correct or delete personal information about you on our files' (ibid); the use of the hedge 'reasonable' fails to offer any guarantee that the necessary action will be taken. Facebook, as noted in Chapter Five, requires applications developers to ensure that the

information they hold about users is kept up to date, while in Chapter Four it was noted that Facebook had introduced new programmes which enabled apps developers to track changes in users' profiles. As indicated above, the corporation uses cookies to track and record information about users' online preferences, and, like other websites, warns users that if their computing devices do not accept all cookies, they will be unable to 'take full advantage of all the website's features' (ibid). Finally, the BBC indicates that any updates to its privacy policy will be publicised on its privacy policy website, and places the onus on users to regularly check it.

SCD 2010 on Facebook

While the 2010 *SCD* television show did not begin until late September 2010, the BBC began to actively promote the autumn's forthcoming series in August by inviting applications for the tickets for the live shows and to encourage fans to sign up to Twitter to follow events and access photographs. This marked the beginning of a period of intense usage of its Facebook page by the BBC. On August 25, 2010, the BBC used the *Strictly* Facebook page to announce a revamp of the programme's 'official' pages on its own website, with the necessary link provided. By the end of the month, the BBC began to drip feed fans with information about the new series, with posts aimed at whipping up enthusiasm amongst avid fans.

At 10.30 p.m. on September 7th, *SCD* posted that the 2010 celebrity line-up would be revealed at one minute past midnight – and provided the link to the BBC's official *Strictly* webpage on its own site where the announcement would be made. This post gave fans short notice of the announcement, but indicated that not only was the BBC confident that fans would see the teaser, but that they were dedicated enough to remain online until that time. It also sought to drive fans to the programme's official page on the BBC. In the weeks between the announcement of the celebrity participants

and the beginning of the new series, *SCD* on Facebook began an ongoing conversation with fans asking for their favourite dances and seeking details of their worst dancing embarrassment. There were also announcements of future events and major news for the series, clips of backstage material, and re-runs of clips from previous series described as 'vintage'. Clearly, the BBC's use of the *SCD* Facebook page at this time was to generate more value from the show, raise anticipation amongst fans, to offer them treats and rewards in order to ensure fans continued to visit the page, and to maintain contact with them during preparations for the new series. The Corporation made certain that *SCD* fans were aware of how lucky they were to receive such treats, as one post illustrates

> *EXCLUSIVE video from the front line of the red carpet for all you*
> *fortunate fans* (9/9/2010).

This was accompanied by a link to the BBC's own *SCD* webpage, emphasising that the majority of the 'treats' for *Strictly* fans on Facebook were only available on the BBC's official website. All of the BBC's communication with fans on Facebook took place on the *SCD* Wall, the opening tab of the Facebook page, but mainly channelled them towards the broadcaster's own website, where there were opportunities for them to encounter information about other BBC programmes.

Involvement

As the beginning of the new series drew closer, *SCD*'s Facebook communication board was filled with backstage information, including the participants' training diaries as they prepared for the start of the live shows, as well as links to photographs. This not only raised interest in the new series, but ensured that fans on Facebook were encouraged to feel a level of involvement in pre-broadcast preparations. These were aspects of television programmes which were strictly 'backstage' – shows

were broadcast live, while the pre-broadcast events received no coverage on television. Through the stream of content accessible through Facebook, however, the BBC sought to strengthen the bonds between the show and its fans. This strategy was important for *SCD*, since it allowed preview material, which again would receive no press publicity, to operate a long campaign before the launch of a new series.

Strictly began posting early on the day of the first live show – at four minutes past midnight as important information was provided

> *So, who's dancing tonight…? Well, we've kept you waiting long*
> *enough* (1/10/2010)

followed by the information on which celebrities would take to the floor that evening. The BBC had until then withheld the identities of the celebrities who would be dancing in the first show until only a few hours before the live broadcast, a strategy that again confirmed the show's designation as a special event. During the hours between that first post and the beginning of the television show, *SCD* on Facebook posted eleven times – supplying links to the BBC website's *Strictly* pages containing the contestants' blogs, offering up to the minute news of the preparations for the show, and giving Facebook fans a preview of its new title sequence. Participation and interactivity on the part of the fans were invited, or rather demanded

> *Blog along with us during tonight's live show! Share your thoughts!*
> (1/10/2010)

The invitation to users to share their thoughts can be seen to echo the question 'what's on your mind' which greets all Facebook users when they log on, as it encourages users to publish their thoughts, uploading content and providing information. Again, it 'hails' (Althusser 1984: 48) Facebook *Strictly* fans, and encourages them to reveal their thoughts and emotions (Foucault 1978). The blog, however, featured on the show's

official BBC website and thus fans were again directed away from Facebook to the official website. At the end of the show, *SCD* posted a message that was both emotional and promotional

> *I can't believe the first show is over already! Thank goodness*
> *there's another seven dances tomorrow – PS don't forget 6p.m.*
> *on BBC One (1/10/2010)*

A video of the judges' first reactions was then uploaded, and backstage material was also posted.

This established the BBC's practice on Facebook during the course of the series; the Facebook fan page appeared to offer a substantial number of treats to keep followers engaged with both the page and the show. But these were only available on the BBC's website and iPlayer. The broadcaster also used the page extensively to promote *Strictly*'s supporting midweek show *It Takes Two;* its *So You Think You Can Dance?* talent show to be broadcast in 2011; quizzes which were mounted on the BBC's *SCD* webpages; the BBC's annual *Children in Need* programme; and tickets for the corporation's *Strictly Get Dancing* programme of public dance events held around the country.

The BBC therefore used the *Strictly* page on Facebook not only as a means to maintain audience and fans' engagement with the show, but to repeatedly drive them to its own web pages in order to access *Strictly* related treats and its other television content. The BBC was relying on Facebook's 'sharing' mechanism – the Like button, which was embedded in both its fan page on Facebook, and in reciprocal fashion on the official webpage. It is evident that despite its multi-platform promotion of the programme, and the fact that the BBC had an 'official' *Strictly* page on its own website, the *SCD* Facebook page with the Like Button embedded, was central to its promotions

strategy. It was used not purely for promotional purposes, but also to strengthen bonds between fans and the show on a social platform rather than on an official platform.

Interpellation

Liveness was also a significant feature of the *Strictly* fan page on Facebook. During transmission of the shows, fans were encouraged to remain online while simultaneously watching the live broadcast. This took the form of a stream of questions asked of fans which again illustrates the theory of interpellation. Posts often began by providing information and a prompt to users to watch the live broadcast on television, but ended with a question, for example

> *The Strictly stars are getting ready for their dress rehearsal at Television Centre.... how are you getting ready for tonight?* (6/11/10)
>
> *Just 15 minutes to go. Uplug the phone, grab yourself a drink or two and settle down for some top telly.* (6/11/10).
>
> *Here we go... How will your favourites fare tonight*? (6/11/10)

These posts indicate the BBC's strategy of building anticipation for each weekly broadcast on the day of transmission and are representative of the drive to represent liveness through deixic markers, of the 'now' of the televised event and the aim of delivering the impression to the fans in the 'absent audience' (Scannell 1996:84) that they were being included in the live event. This was extended by constant posts on the page after each couple had performed, with *Strictly* repeatedly asking fans to comment on each of the contestants' performances.

Strictly posted 'breaking news' (14/10/10), when celebrity contestant Tina O'Brien was unable to take part in the competition one week after being diagnosed with chickenpox – the prefix of 'breaking news' signifying that this was important

information – while indicating that the BBC was ensuring fans were being kept informed of, and involved in series developments. As the contestants left the dance floor after their dance, *Strictly* posted backstage photographs of them on the Facebook fan page, usually accompanied by a comment by either the professional dancer or the celebrity contestant to extend the liveness after their broadcast performance. More extensive comments were again available by clicking on the link to the BBC's own website. After the finals show on 18th December, *Strictly* posted

> *We'll have an interview with this year's winners Kara and Artem*
>
> *edited and up on the BBC Strictly website in about an hour*

And an hour later, the Facebook fan page offered

> *Reactions from the dance floor, chats with the judges and*
>
> *winners etc.*

Again the comments indicate the drive to extend the liveness and excitement of the show's grand finale beyond the broadcast itself, but while the treats were being advertised on the Facebook fan page, once more they were only available by switching to the BBC's own website. It serves, however, to illustrate Couldry's point that liveness could be viewed as 'a construction *across* a variety of media' (Couldry 2002: 286) – with the show broadcast live on television while fans online on Facebook were encouraged to share in the sense of liveness.

There was also the implication that watching the programme was recognised as a special event in viewers' lives. Weekly posts prior to the start of the show's transmission indicated that the BBC did not expect viewers to hold a party, unlike ITV1 and *The X Factor*. Rather the BBC's posts emphasised the vision of a close, almost intimate relationship between fans and the show and were expressed in an informal, if imperative mode of address

Just ONE HOUR til tonight's edition of Strictly Come Dancing!

Have you got all your shopping? Ordered that takeaway? Put a

bottle or two of something nice in the fridge to chill? No? Well

HURRY UP THEN! (2/10/10: 5p.m.)

Like a parent or teacher, the BBC prompted fans to ensure that all their preparations were in place before the start of the show, so there would be nothing to distract their attention during the broadcast. Again, the Corporation can be seen as 'hailing' fans (Althusser 1984: 48) in a manner which they would recognise as being directed at them.

Fans were also invited to don their dancing shoes. Firstly, the show's Facebook fan page featured links throughout the season to video dance lessons by the show's dance co-ordinator and former professional dancer. Fans could take advantage of these video lessons and feel a sense of affiliation with the contestants; they were sharing the same experience. Enthusiasts could also attend *Strictly Get Dancing* events at open air venues around the country, photographs of which were posted on the Facebook page. These events extended the televised experience, and invited fans to participate in the brand off line, simultaneously increasing the feeling of participation, further developing the bond between fans and the show, and enabling them to acquire further social capital.

***The X Factor* (ITV1 2004 -)**

The X Factor was launched in the U.K. in 2004 (The UK Gameshow 2011) and by 2010 was recognised as a major annual television event, a show identified as such by the substantial range of media content devoted to it on various media platforms. It is broadcast weekly each autumn, and before the launch of each broadcast season, the producers tour the U.K. to select a small group who will then go on to the finals from the thousands of unknown singers who auditioned. Like *SCD*, the final show in which the winner is decided is broadcast during the Christmas period. This schedule means

that the excitement generated by the show reaches its peak in the midst of the Festive period, in an attempt to gain chart and commercial success for the winning contestant during Christmas. The 2010 season saw viewing figures average at around 12.7 million in September for the early episode; this rose to 16.5 million viewers for the Finals show two weeks before Christmas (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board 2011). During the season, the show was consistently at the top of the weekly TV audience ratings.

The high production values for the set, the celebrity judges, and the guest appearances of major singing stars reinforced *The X Factor*'s designation not just as a major television event, but as a live television event, despite the fact that in each year the first broadcast episodes featured recordings of the qualifying heats. Once the finals began, television viewers were constantly reminded that their telephone, text or Internet votes were essential, and prompted to cast their vote for their favourite contestant. Fans wishing to vote online were directed to the ITV 1 website. Like the talent shows of the 1960s, viewers were encouraged to view their participation as essential.

The X Factor, like *SCD,* has its own web pages linked to the official web page of broadcaster ITV1. This page had much to offer the show's audiences including videos of the latest performances; latest news surrounding the series; the opportunity to download contestants' performances on iTunes; a backstage photograph gallery; online exclusives; a video of the final show; contestants' video diaries; videos of the X Factor's online show *The F Factor*; and much backstage material that had not been broadcast, in a similar fashion to the *SCD* page. It also featured the latest comments to be posted on *The X Factor*'s Facebook page, a link to Facebook, and the Facebook Like button was embedded on the page. As noted above and in Chapter Four, this establishes a public link between Facebook users and *The X Factor* and, coupled with social plugins, provides extensive benefits for commercial organisations such as Syco, the *X*

Factor's production company and *ITV 1*, a commercial television broadcast company. In return, the show's Facebook page also featured the platform's 'Like' button for the programme, and provided further links to *The X Factor*'s presence not only on ITV's webpage, but also on other digital platforms including Twitter, iTunes and in the print format, the *X Magazine*. The links provided clearly illustrated Doyle's comments regarding television broadcasters' 'migration' (Doyle 2010: 431) across multiple digital platforms in order to 'capitalise on popular content brands, not just linear television' (ibid: 431). *X Facto*r is no longer just a programme, but a brand which utilizes other media platforms to extend its reach in the market place.

Marketing

Developments in social media since the show's launch have also been harnessed in the marketing drive, with Facebook providing new opportunities for the producers, broadcasters and fans alike. The show's Facebook page encouraged fans to share their enthusiasm with their Facebook Friends for promotional purposes, to interact with *The X Factor*, other fans, and to participate both in the fan community and in the show's milieu in the online environment. The page opened on the show's Wall, and interaction on this front page was always led by *The X Factor*. Fans were constantly invited and urged to respond to posts on the Wall and encouraged to post not only their opinions, but their emotions. They were repeatedly 'hailed' (Althusser 1984) but were unable to initiate any dialogue themselves. The role of fans on this page was therefore restricted to that of being responsive. In order to launch any discussion, fans had to go to the discussion tab, and post their views on that page in the hope that other fans would seek out the page since discussion threads were not publicised on the Wall.

While the fan page could be expected to be particularly active during the months in which the series was being broadcast, there was little hiatus in the show's

communication with fans on Facebook during the months between the finale of one series and the beginning of the next. Posts may have been uploaded irregularly during this period, but sustained efforts were made by the producers to ensure that the page was never inactive for more than two to three weeks in order to maintain both the relationship with fans and some form of momentum for the brand. The months between series, during which nothing much of note was happening, would traditionally have been 'dead' months, as they would generate little content that would be judged as newsworthy on the traditional print and television platforms.

Pre-season posts

The X Factor therefore used its Facebook page to provide a flow of information, more pseudo news than actual news but which would be of interest to *X Factor* fans, for example the launch of the 'official *X Factor* Magazine' (23/7/2010), and three days later 'latest news from Bootcamp' (July 26th). By August, links to video footage of the auditions on the *X Factor*'s official page on the ITV website were posted – before the televised series began. The show's producers, therefore, took advantage of the promotional element of the social network in order to whet fans' appetites for the 2010 season and to ensure that this information may be seen by fans' Friends through Facebook algorithms such as the News Feed. This communication, similar to that on the *SCD* Facebook page, mainly switched between questions, which again in Althusser's terms 'hailed' fans and demanded answers from them and links which took fans to the programme's web page on the ITV1 website in order to access material such as photographs or videos. ITV 1 used its Facebook page to foster fans' engagement with the show throughout the year, not only during the broadcast season, complying with Ang's observation that audiences must be constantly 'seduced, attracted, lured' (1998: 18).

The broadcaster's use of the Facebook page increased greatly as the 2010 series began, with posts beginning early in the morning and marking off a countdown of the hours until the show began. The drive to raise excitement and anticipation became more intense as the series progressed; on December 4, 2010, for example, the first post directed at fans was made eleven hours before the start of the show with the question

who's watching the semi-final tonight. 19.40?

It was followed five hours later with the provision of a hyperlink by which fans could pre-order downloads of the songs to be sung by contestants that night. Five hours before the show was due to begin there was an invitation, or direction to

join the Live Chat just before the semi final

accompanied by a hyperlink to the Live Chat facility on the broadcaster's own webpage. Again, fans were being hailed; 'the one hailed always recognises that it is really him who is being hailed' (Althusser 1984: 48). Fans on Facebook were rewarded an hour later, with a 'sneak preview' of the 'amazing semi-final'. They were then invited to record with iTunes their favourite album 'songs of 2010' from the series. Two hours before the start of the broadcast, the show's fans on Facebook were asked

can't wait for the show to start? Unleash your tonsils on The X
Factor Karaoke.

Affective economics

As well as heightening pre-show anticipation for fans, the posts can be seen to blend opportunities for the fans to be social, participatory and interactive on *The X Factor* Facebook page. The mode of address was direct, personal, conversational and informal, mirroring that of Facebook's communication with individual users, while the questions demanded answers in order to encourage and increase interaction and participation. However, the redirection of fans to the official webpage was always given

in the imperative. Certain posts also directed fans to other commercial platforms, a

move aimed at linking their emotional commitment to the show and its contestants with

a financial one by spending money on *X Factor* merchandise. Jenkins has described this

process as 'affective economics' (Jenkins 2006a: 62) to identify the move by reality

television broadcasters to encourage fans to become 'the ideal consumer [who] is

active, emotionally engaged, and socially networked' (ibid.).

This can be seen during the *The X Factor* weekly broadcasts, when the

broadcaster became more active on Facebook, posting constantly in an effort to

encourage Facebook fans to interact and to maintain a high level of involvement in the

televised show.

Is tonight a good night for Cher or Will.i.am? (11/12/10) and

Wow! Round of applause for Rihanna! (ibid)

exemplify communication from *The X Factor* to its Facebook fans. They not only

served to maintain the liveness, the immediacy of the interaction, but to encourage it.

The use of deixic markers such as 'tonight' and 'round of applause' elide space and

time to intimate a co-presence, that fans and *X Factor* on Facebook are inhabiting the

same space and time. They can also be seen as persistent calls to action – illustrating

Foucault's incitement to discourse (1978) – and constantly prompting television

audiences to post comments and their reactions. After each performance had finished,

The X Factor immediately began posting, asking for Facebook fans' opinions on many

aspects of the performance, from the choice of song to whether the performance had

been good enough to win. During the broadcasts, fans could vote online, join Live Chat

and take part in quizzes and polls, but had to migrate to the show's official web page in

order to do so. This generally meant registering their personal details in order to fully

participate in each offered activity. Facebook's affordances ensured they could switch

easily between the show's Facebook pages and the ITV 1 webpages for *The X Factor*, as noted in Chapter Four without logging out of either.

Interactivity and opportunities to participate on the Facebook page were not solely restricted to week-ends, when the show was broadcast on television. On the weekdays between broadcast live shows, *The X Factor* on Facebook also worked tirelessly to maintain its links with fans on the social platform. It offered a wide variety of 'treats' for the fans such as a constantly upgraded gallery of backstage photographs; videos of beauty tips by the show's makeup artists showing them applying the contestants' makeup – offering fans the chance to learn how to achieve the looks of the female contestants as they appeared on stage and seeking to encourage fans to identify with contestants.

Again, this worked to tighten the bonds between the show, contestants and their Facebook fans. There were videos of backstage interviews with contestants; the opportunity to pose questions to be answered on video by the finalists which would be posted on their individual Facebook pages; a video of an exclusive interview with the final winner; and a 'sneak peek' at the series' last episode. *The X Factor* fans were therefore being offered enticements in order to keep them returning to the page to develop and reaffirm their strong affiliation with both the page and the programme - again illustrative of Ang's reflection of broadcasters' need to be continuously proactive in order to attract and keep their audiences.

Perpetual interaction

Fans were not only encouraged to feel a strong emotional attachment to *The X Factor,* but also its supporting television show, shown on ITV2 on weekday evenings, called *The Xtra Factor.* Launched to maintain television viewer involvement in the week-end showcase broadcasts, it too featured material not shown on the weekend

competition shows, including backstage chat, gossip and interviews with contestants and judges. It was linked not only to *The X Factor* on Facebook, but to an additional supporting Facebook page called *The F Factor,* which again was based on the ITV1 website. Facebook fans who wanted a wider audience than that offered on Facebook could post on *The F Factor* page in the knowledge that their comments might be used on *The Xtra Factor,* again strengthening the links between the television shows and the online Facebook pages, and between the show and its fans.

> *The Xtra Factor is on ITV 2 right now … did your comments*
>
> *make it on to the show?* (4/12/2010).

The distinction is clear, however, as fans' comments were restricted to the supporting television show, and not featured in *The X Factor*'s live broadcasts, despite the fact that a significant feature of *The X Factor*'s page on Facebook was its sense of immediacy during the show's television broadcasts. This was, however, restricted to online participation

> *Be part of The X Factor buzz by chatting, watching the acts and*
>
> *sharing your opinions to facebook … all from the comfort of your*
>
> *living room* (12/12/2010).

The posts also exemplify the encouragement to *X Factor* fans on Facebook to be simultaneously watching the show on television while participating and interacting online – thus engaging with two media platforms at the same time. This was extended in one comment on Facebook from *X Factor*

> *Respect to all of our fans braving the wind and rain outside the*
>
> *studio*. (4/12/2010).

This post indicated not only an acknowledgement of the fans' dedication, but that the producers knew those waiting outside the studios could also be online and on the

show's Facebook page simultaneously through their smartphones. Signifying both technical and social convergence, the post was inclusive, bringing together those who would comprise the studio audience and those who formed the audience at home. Discussing the liveness of a televised event, Scannell asserts that

> the liveness of broadcast coverage is the key to its impact, since it offers the real sense of access to an event in its moment-by-moment unfolding. This *presencing,* this re-presenting of a present occasion to an absent audience can powerfully produce the effect of being there, of being involved (caught up) in the here-and-now of the occasion. (Scannell 1996: 84).

Marriott has similarly defined the live event, saying it 'has the power to transport the audiences into this moment, a moment which is simultaneous with the *now* of viewing' (Marriott 2007: 70). The strategies employed to give the television broadcasts of *The X Factor* shows the sensation of liveness have therefore been strengthened by digital technologies. *The X Factor* can be seen to carry the audiences at home along on the same tide of drama, of 'being in the moment, especially in its unfolding' (Scannell 1996: 84). While the host of the *The X Factor* television show emphasised the liveness of the shows for television audiences, the broadcaster simultaneously posted on Facebook to similar effect. Ytreberg comments 'audience participation through digital return channels works to both extend and transform the conventions of liveness and eventfulness' (2009: 469).

The use of Facebook also indicates a significant new approach by traditional broadcasters. Rather than viewing the affordances of digital technologies as competitors or distractions for viewers, the producers of *The X Factor* can be seen to have employed these technologies as a means of not just attracting, but maintaining, viewers'

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involvement in their product. Pre-show and countdown posts whipped up anticipation and enthusiasm for the show throughout the day of the broadcast, trying to ensure that fans were both logged on to Facebook and sitting watching television at the scheduled time. Fans may have chosen to record the show, watch it at a later date online or on digital catch-up services – but the buzz created on Facebook around the live show as it was being broadcast would be missing. By watching the show as it was broadcast and simultaneously being on Facebook, fans could publish their thoughts and opinions on each of the contestants immediately – responding to the leading questions being posed by *The X Factor* on Facebook. The sense of liveness being created, the apparent elision of spatial differences, rewarded the television audience. By these means, the producers can be seen to present a challenge to the fragmentation of their audiences by use of the social platform.

The ongoing communication by *The X Factor* during the show's broadcast season and during the months it was off air indicate the construction and maintenance of a relationship with *the X Factor* fan community on Facebook. The communication also signified an intimacy with fans, while simultaneously functioning as a strategy for keeping fans engaged with the programme until the next series began in several months time. Much of the communication was based around fans' feelings, thoughts and judgements and fans' emotions play a significant factor in the relationship. This factor has important consequences for ITV 1.

> The emotions are a serious opportunity to get in touch with consumers. And best of all, emotion is an unlimited resource. It's always there – waiting to be tapped with new ideas, new inspirations and new experiences (Roberts in Jenkins 2006a: 70).

The emotions offer the broadcaster new commercial opportunities, therefore the dialogue from ITV 1 seeks to raise emotions in order to strengthen the ties between fans on Facebook and *The X Factor*. The commercial element which was highly visible during the televised live shows, such as sponsorship by a telecommunications company, and commercial breaks, was equally evident on *The X Factor*'s Facebook page. The show's Facebook page recorded 2,353,263 fans at the end of the 2010 series, a sizeable online market for various commercial promotions. Many of these were for cross platform content generated by *The X Factor* producers for programme merchandise, such as the opportunity to sign up for free use of *X Factor* Karaoke, a programme which 'turns your computer into the ultimate karaoke machine' (*X Factor* on Facebook 2011). This was available free of monetary charge, but access was conditional on users registering to use the programme, which involved the provision of personal information.

In an echo of the business strategies of gaming applications developers on Facebook, *The X Factor* enabled fans on Facebook to download a certain number of songs without charge, including those performed by show's contestants during the series. Fans could only access the full range of songs available if they were prepared to pay. They were invited to log in to *The X Factor* Karaoke 'straight after the show on a Saturday night to sing what your favourite contestants and guests have performed' – linking any emotional attachment by fans to a particular finalist with a commercial opportunity for the production company. The songs which were offered free of charge could be viewed as the bait to attract fans to the programme, and to encourage them to pay to make full use of the application.

Fans were also invited to buy an *X Factor* karaoke machine, named The *X Factor* Party Box, to which they could download the songs sung by the contestants on

the show. Further show 'merchandise' for sale to fans included: the downloading of the contestants' performances from The *X Factor* iTunes site; the pre-ordering and purchase of the winning contestant's final performance; and the purchase of tickets for the show's Live Tour around the UK. The show's Facebook page, therefore, operated as a substantial commercial outlet for *X Factor* merchandise in a similar vein to the show's own webpage.

Advertisers

The Facebook page also featured strong commercial links with external companies including Chicago Town Pizza. Facebook requires commercial organisations to ensure that page visitors and applications users are given 'a great social experience' (Facebook 2011). The Chicago Town Pizza Company, therefore, through the medium of *The X Factor* on Facebook, promised fans it would 'bring you … a gig in your gaffe [sic]!' (23/12/2010). As a reward for following the hyperlink to the Chicago Town Pizza page on Facebook, they were offered the opportunity to 'win the ultimate *X Factor* party', which would feature a personal appearance by a semi-finalist from the previous year's series. He would perform live, while fans could chat over 'free pizza, nibbles and drinks from Chicago Town Pizza'. Entry was by following the link, and required fans to register their personal details on the pizza company's Facebook page.

The promotion was part of a two-way arrangement between the *X Factor* and Chicago Town Pizza; the pizza company featured an opportunity to win tickets to the live *X Factor* show and *X Factor* merchandising on its supermarket pizza boxes. 'Get down to your nearest supermarket and pick up this delicious limited edition' urged the post on the *X Factor* on Facebook. Fans keen to take part in the promotion were, by necessity, providing personal information to both commercial enterprises. The implication was that watching *The X Factor* should not be viewed as a solitary pursuit,

but as an extremely social event and fans should invite their offline friends to become involved. By responding to the encouragement to arrange an offline social event, fans were *de facto* being employed to promote not only *X Factor*, but its commercial sponsor in return for the possible payment of free pizza and drinks. The move signifies the producers' belief that, in the words of Jenkins 'expression may start at the level of the individual consumer, but by definition it situates consumption within a larger social and cultural context. Consumers not only watch media; they also share media with one another' (Jenkins 2006b: 68).

The X Factor, therefore, was seeking to influence fans to share not only their favourite media with friends and acquaintances, but also any associated commercial organisation. Simultaneously, interactivity on Facebook between *X Factor* fans and external companies advertising on the fan page established a public link between the fans and the companies. While fans were invited to 'share' their experiences and thoughts with their Friends, *The X Factor* adopted a similar strategy with regard to its advertisers. It listed amongst its Favourite [Facebook] Pages, which took the form of hyperlinks, not only the Facebook pages of the series' finalists and other ITV1 programmes, but also to those of a number of major supermarket and cosmetic companies. The commercial elements of the page were highly visible – such as an advertisement for Tesco supermarkets accompanying the Wall post that the new *X Factor* magazine was available from supermarkets and newsagents.

The commercial status of *The X Factor* on television, with the programme's sponsorship by TalkTalk, and its positioning on a commercial channel with the concomitant frequent advertising breaks, can therefore be seen to be reinforced on its Facebook page. The *X Factor* had found a way to raise advertising revenue from its Facebook Wall, while simultaneously encouraging fans to associate what was possibly

their favourite television show with the advertisers. Combining the broadcast show with interactivity and participation online extended the commercial reach of *X Factor* further into the private domain on a platform on which it is difficult to avoid. Television audiences have the option of evading advertising during the commercial breaks – advertising on the show's Facebook fan page is almost impossible to avoid.

Extensive reach

The *X Factor*'s use of Facebook can be seen to present a wide ranging strategy to consolidate its television brand through the personal and social environment of the social network. The platform's Like button can be perceived as being a major attraction to the broadcaster – if just one Facebook user clicks on the button, all of their Facebook Friends and anyone online with access to their profile will be informed, and its reach is therefore extensive. If a fan commented on the *X Factor*'s or the *F Factor*'s pages on the ITV website, their comment was automatically posted onto their Facebook page unless they took care to 'untick' a box – they had to opt out rather than opt in. A comment on the *F Factor* Facebook page could be used on the television programme.

Full participation in the fan community, and full access to the benefits it offered, was dependent upon the provision of personal information to *X Factor* commercial arms and external companies, often alongside the requirement to spend money. Equally importantly, the Facebook page operated as a portal for not only driving fans to the ITV official website, but also for driving them to watch the show's live weekly broadcasts. By creating an environment of liveness, sociability, participation and interaction while watching the show as it was broadcast, the move can be seen as a strategy for addressing the issue of audience fragmentation, and pulling the audience back to the broadcasters' schedule. Meanwhile, fans, by interacting with the programme through the Facebook platform, became visible to broadcasters, in contrast to their use of the

broadcaster's own website where they would merely be anonymous contributors identifiable only by their name.

The X Factor **Privacy Policy**

The X Factor Fan page on Facebook is subject to the same privacy policy which governs ITV.com as a broadcaster. The policy, as is common with other companies with a Facebook presence, covers the use of user-content by the broadcaster only. While the fan page may host advertisements and links to other companies, ITV.com makes it plain that it is only responsible for its own use of personal information gathered through interaction on the site. ITV.com collects personal information when site users register for the services hosted by the website, and when that information is updated (itv.com 2011: Privacy Policy). This personal information is also collected when users participate on the Facebook page in any manner, including entering competitions and prize draws. The privacy policy, like those of the applications companies examined in the previous chapter, makes use of the hedge 'may' in regard to how users' personal information will be used. Users' personal information '*may* be used to monitor, develop and improve the website, services and your experience' (ibid), in the administration of services, process and to deal with inquiries and complaints by or about users. While this statement implies that the company's collection of personal information is to the users' benefit, use of the hedge suggests it will be put to other, unspecified use.

While the policy contains various standard clauses for the use of personal information, it further indicates that this includes the investigation of possible breach of the site's Terms of Use relating to users, and to 'monitor compliance … by way of checking postings or submission… retaining forum or chat room exchanges and using keyword triggers' (ibid) to investigate claims of inappropriate usage. Similar to the

BBC's privacy policy and Foucault's theory on Bentham's Panopticon, the many who participated on the page were constantly monitored to ensure that their contributions were appropriate at all times – with ITV deciding what was appropriate.

In common with other web companies, ITV also uses technical means such as cookies and 'other such devices' (ibid) which it fails to specify in order to track users across its own website and those of other companies, and this is used in aggregate form for marketing purposes. Similar to the gaming companies, ITV warns that if users set their computers to reject cookies, they will be unable to access some areas of the site. Again, users had to allow the use of cookies in order to access all areas of the site. The personal information gathered was shared with ITV employees and their contractors and suppliers. The policy provided no details about how long it would retain the information, however, or whether users could request that their information be deleted from the companies' files, indicating that the information could be retained indefinitely.

ITV's Privacy Statement, in 2010, and the broadcaster's strategies resembled those of many other companies, such as the requirement on users to register and provide personal information in order to access programmes which were provided free of monetary charge. This requirement also applied to external companies linked to *The X Factor* and extended access to private individuals' personal information. The encouragement to Facebook fans to forge emotional ties with *The X Factor* in order to advance the commercial imperative can be viewed as influencing both ITV1's and *The X Factor*'s use of Facebook. The adoption by the broadcaster and production company of the personal and informal mode of address employed by Facebook Inc. enabled both companies to elide the social and hierarchical differences between them and fans. In this way, the power relationship between fans and commercial companies, and the designation of fans as consumers, become invisible. Kavka (2011) comments that the

dissemination of adverts across technical devices used to access entertainment and information, 'increases audiences' exposure to brands, particularly amongst those viewers who are technologically knowledgeable enough to avoid traditional advertising' (p.78).

Conclusion

The decision of broadcasters to move on to the Facebook platform can be seen to have been influenced by many factors. The social network offers them the opportunity to establish a promotional resource on a website which is renowned for the services it offers individuals. Facebook has been recognised as a website built on identifiable individuals and sociability, and can therefore be seen to offer the broadcasters access on an informal platform to potentially millions of fans who would previously have been invisible, anonymous, and inaccessible in any direct way. By participating on the shows' Facebook fan pages, these enthusiasts became visible, identifiable and accessible, while the broadcasters could use the network's affordances to acquire a substantial amount of personal details.

The mode of address adopted by both broadcasters is significant and can be viewed in the context of three cultural theories. It is personal and informal and seeks to elide the hierarchical distance between broadcasting companies and television viewers (Bourdieu), while it aligns with Althusser's theory of interpellation as it 'hails' private individuals, demanding that each fan on Facebook recognises it is s/he who is being addressed. In this way, the broadcasters 'incite [viewers] to discourse' (Foucault) following the example set by Facebook itself. Althusser and Foucault both argue that by responding and submitting to these calls, individuals are acknowledging their roles as subjects to a more powerful entity. These calls to action, like those of Facebook, are perpetual, particularly for the duration of each broadcast series. Like those issued by

Facebook itself, they are delivered in an informal, personal mode of address and seek to encourage users to continually upload content. The aim ensures that *X Factor* and *SCD* are 'not only received as ... live media event[s] ... but also become embedded in the routine daily structures of the audience's everyday lives' as Turner remarked about *Big Brother* (Turner 2010: 13).

This level of engagement with television series can no longer be obtained only through enabling audiences to decide the winners of the shows, as in previous decades. The elision of hierarchical distance and the encouragement to audiences to participate in the series' milieu online through Facebook, works to engender a level of emotional attachment and intimacy with the series. It relates to Thompson's theory of non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance (2005), which develops through the constant communication between the broadcasters and viewers and encourages the formation of an attachment on the part of fans to a series and its contestants, whom the viewers are unlikely to meet.

Thompson describes this development as 'a new form of intimacy' (Thompson 2005: 38) – 'mediated intimacy' (ibid: 41) – an intimacy not only mediated by the technology, but by the concerted effort of the broadcasters' use of a social platform. The role of emotion and intimacy in regard to reality TV formats has been highlighted by Jenkins, who describes *American Idol*, as 'not simply a television program, but a transmedia franchise' (2006a) because of its flow across various media platforms. This is equally applicable to *X Factor*. The television show is broadcast, the winner produces a record, there is an *X Factor* magazine, and a webpage. All are brought together and promoted through the franchise's Facebook page. Similarly, the BBC has taken *SCD* out of the studios and around the UK in live tours with each season's celebrities

expected to join a national live tour at the end of each series, while fans are invited to attend special dancing sessions organised by the BBC around the country.

The moves indicate an acknowledgement by the broadcasting industries that they are operating within a different media environment, one which is influenced by 'the changed model of consumer behaviour shaping programming and marketing strategies' (Jenkins 2006a: 62). Labelling this new factor 'affective economics' (ibid:62), Jenkins observes the influence wrought by emotion on consumers' purchasing patterns and that marketers must not only recognise this factor, but seek to manipulate and guide consumers' emotions in economically beneficial directions. Loyal fans, says Jenkins, 'are more apt to watch series faithfully, more apt to pay attention to advertising and more apt to buy products' (2006a:63). Following Jenkins' argument, Kavka describes intimacy as 'the currency of reality programming' (2011: 88), and suggests that the successful flow of reality television across different digital platforms is not due to the technology available, but to 'an affective flow experienced by intimacy' (ibid: 89) which also raises the commercial value of associated marketable goods. Intimacy, she argues, is the currency which is adopted by the industries which associate themselves with reality TV programmes.

Both Jenkins' and Kavka's theories are evident in the adoption of Facebook by both the BBC and ITV in connection with *SCD* and *X Factor*, and the broadcasters' attempts to heighten audience anticipation before the shows begin, and their use of emotional language during the broadcasts. By using a social network, particularly one on which users are encouraged to continually upload content comprising personal preferences and opinions, the BBC and ITV1 can encourage the formation of intimacy, while simultaneously tapping into fans' emotions. This not only tightens the bonds between viewers and the shows, but influences' viewers' decisions regarding the

provision of access to personal information, and to purchasing decisions. 'Intimacy subtends and supports the exposure received by participants, extending from the screen to the people to the objects they make/wear/eat, etc.' (Kavka 2011: 88).

Interactivity and Participation

This intimacy is the result of the communication between broadcasters through the medium of Facebook. The mode of address and style of communication adopted by the broadcasters seek to encourage the development of a dialogue, 'conversation' (Bordewijk and Kaam 1986: 577) with the audiences. They are careful to avoid the allocution format of communication, from the centre outwards to a mass amorphous audience (ibid: 576). However this becomes evident when broadcasters adopt the imperative mode of address to direct fans to take a particular course of action. Through the use of Facebook, both broadcasting companies are able to create the illusion of intimacy with fans of their shows which is likely to overcome any concerns they may have about privacy. It also encourages users to spend money on show related items. But significantly, the use of the social platform ensures that fans become visible where previously they had been invisible. Fans interacting only on the broadcasters' own websites remained essentially anonymous, but fans interacting on Facebook have become very visible while the social platform offers the means by which users' personal information and circle of Friends become visible to the broadcasters.

Fan communities

Television programmes, like major films, have always engendered fan communities – the communities of shared interest which developed online through discussion forums and groups. But while the Internet enabled fans to create their own communities around films and programmes, this was not always to the benefit of broadcasters. 'Fandoms were virtual communities, 'imagined' and 'imagining'

communities long before the introduction of networked communities' (Jenkins 2006b: 137), but as he further notes, they were self-organising. As a result, they evaded the control of broadcasters and worked hard to overcome the broadcasters' timetable of revelations and secrecy. Examples of this can be seen in Perryman's work on *Dr Who* (2008), and Jenkins' (2006) discussion on *Survivor* fans. In both cases, fans took an element of control over the programmes they loved, and worked outside the regulated fandom established around them. ITV1's and the BBC's fan pages on Facebook, however, represent a reassertion of power in their creation of imagined communities constructed around their flagship programmes. In Meikle's words, the broadcasters worked 'to generate and sustain that sense of collective identity' (2002: 166), facilitated by the Facebook inclusionary rhetoric of 'we' and 'share' coupled with the informal, first person mode of address.

Audience control

Broadcasters' use of Facebook can also be seen to enable them to circumvent other affordances of digital media – that of awarding control to audiences over when and where they watch programmes. In a drive to pull fans back to the television schedule, and to fight the audience fragmentation created by digital technologies, the broadcasters are harnessing the participatory elements of digital media. Rather than placing television in competition to the Internet, they are deploying Facebook to encourage fans to simultaneously watch the live broadcast, while interacting with the programme and with other fans. This practice requires their audiences to 'align their schedules in order to be simultaneously engaged' (Baym 2011: 8). Fans who comply with this requirement are rewarded by the broadcasters' strategy of increasing the sense of liveness surrounding the programmes.

'Synchronicity can enhance the sense of placelessness that digital media can encourage and make people feel more together when they are apart' (ibid: 8). In this case, it simultaneously encouraged audiences to feel they were part of the live events, and worked to combat audience fragmentation. In reality, the move worked to hand back power to the broadcasting companies by persuading audiences that it was to their advantage to be tied to the television schedule. Those who accessed the programme outwith the scheduled time may still have been able to view it, but would be denied the extended liveness which was being created by the broadcasters through the use of two media platforms simultaneously.

Power relations

While the communities built on Facebook around each of the two annual television event series have much to offer fans, the participation and interactivity offered were seldom provided free of charge or effort. Despite the apparent elision of the social and hierarchical distance between fans and the broadcasting companies, principally through the informal and personal style of communication adopted by the broadcasters, the fans on Facebook were constantly directed to take various courses of action. They were encouraged to upload content and were obliged to follow hyperlinks to other websites in order to access new content relating to the shows. In order to fully participate in the online treats which were being offered, they also had to allow access to their personal information on Facebook to the broadcasters and their commercial associates. These fan pages, as Andrejevic comments, offered 'participation at the point of consumption that adds value while leaving untouched the relation of power between those who own the means of production and those who consume its products' (Andrejevic 2004: 44). They also illustrate Bourdieu's theory of power in social space, in which

agents who occupy a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective space symbolically deny the social distance between themselves and others, a distance which does not thereby cease to exist, thus reaping the profits of the recognition granted to a purely symbolic degeneration of distance (Bourdieu 1989: 16).

Bourdieu's theory is also considered in the following chapter, which examines political communication on Facebook in the six weeks before the 2010 General Election in the United Kingdom. It looks at the ways in which politicians adapted Facebook as they campaigned for votes, and how issues of participation and interaction were reflected on their Facebook pages.

Chapter Seven

The 2010 General Election on Facebook

As a Social Network, Facebook's reputation has been built predominantly on the fact that it provides private individuals with an online platform on which they have personal space, and may communicate with family, friends and acquaintances from their off line world whether they are near or far in geographic terms. Facebook can be viewed as offering users a comparatively new 'kind of social situation in which individuals are linked together in a process of communication and symbolic exchange' (Thompson 2005: 34). Individual users view the social in social network as a world constructed around themselves, in which their circle of Friends and acquaintances and their personal interests, including online gaming and favourite television programmes, as discussed in the previous two chapters, are the main focus,.

One of the definitions of social provided by the Oxford English Dictionary is '(of an activity) in which people meet each other for pleasure' (OED 2006) and this seems to be, for private individuals on Facebook, the most commonly accepted purpose of the website. The exceptional position that Facebook has now attained in the Western world in particular has, however, resulted in this meaning of social being extended to fulfil another definition of the word provided by the OED as 'relating to society and its organisation' (ibid). This is indicated by the adoption of the social network as a communication tool by representatives of state hierarchies and commercial organisations.

Social media platforms have become increasingly attractive to politicians and the use of Facebook, in particular, by Barack Obama during the 2008 Presidential election campaign in the U.S.A. is well known (Castells 2009). Obama

comprehensively harnessed the attributes of social networking to reach millions of voters on the site; his team's use of Facebook is credited with playing an influential role in the success of his campaign, leading to claims that 'President Obama used it to get elected' (CNN *Fortune:* 2009). Its potential as a site of political communication was formalised in the forging of a partnership between the social network and ABC News in the approach to Presidential election campaign (Langlois et al: 2009). It is also a significant feature in the political landscapes of Canada (ibid 2009) and Holland (Utz 2009). In 2010, Facebook became a significant element in the General Election campaign in the United Kingdom. This chapter examines how the three main political parties in the United Kingdom, The Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, the Labour Party and their respective leaders used the social network to communicate with voters during their General Election Campaigns.

Politics on the Internet

The use of the Internet in general as a platform for the dissemination of political communication is not new, but initially followed the same one-way flow from a centre point outwards as television broadcasts and leaflets. This is evident in party political messages on broadcast media platforms, and on politicians' web pages. As Negrine notes, political communication via traditional platforms such as leafleting, television and newspapers, 'usually occurs between one source and a large (a *mass*) audience' (Negrine 2008: 172). By the early years of the 21st century, politicians could take advantage of the Internet's ability to not only send 'a high volume of information rapidly and cheaply … [but] to send the information to multiple users at no extra cost' (Polat 2005: 437) and, as Dahlgren observes 'the Internet is becoming integrated with the established system of political communication' (Dahlgren 2005: 151).

While the use of the Internet for political purposes grew there was a principal caveat. Because the new forums available on the Internet are visited at individual discretion due to its 'pull' technology, these websites and pages do not have a guaranteed audience. They are reliant on Internet users seeking them out, and politicians cannot depend upon individuals with no interest in politics doing so, or even those who are interested in politics visiting these sites on a regular basis. In Bordewijk and van Kaam's (1986) taxonomy of communication, the websites can be seen to represent the allocution model of communication – from a central point outwards. Bordewijk and van Kaam describe the defining 'characteristic of 'the social status'' (1986: 577) of allocution as the role of the central point as 'the owner of the information [which] alone decides what part of the information stock will be 'handed over and when' (ibid: 577). Because these websites are dependent on people choosing to visit them, they therefore do not allow politicians and political parties to disregard traditional media platforms while the interactive affordances of digital media enable private individual to challenge politicians. This was particularly significant to political pages on Facebook during the 2010 General Election campaign.

Challenge

The Facebook pages of the Labour Party, Liberal Democrats and their Leader Nick Clegg, and of The Conservatives and their Leader David Cameron, made no mention of the incident in which Labour Party Leader Gordon Brown labelled a Party supporter a 'bigoted woman' after she raised the issue of immigration during a televised meeting with him. Mr Brown made the comment when he was leaving in his car, but was still wearing a microphone. It was heard by representatives of the media and received high profile media coverage, as did his response when he learned in a television studio that his comment had been recorded. Despite the incident dominating

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news on the broadcast media platforms, it was ignored by the three main political parties on Facebook, illustrating Bordewijk and Kaam's point (above) that social status enables the central point of information dissemination to decide which information should be shared, and when (1986). But within minutes of it featuring prominently on mainstream news sources, Facebook users interrupted responses to the latest posts on each of the Parties' social network pages to raise the subject and express their views on Mr Brown's comments. Significantly, none of the political parties responded to the posts.

This exemplifies the way in which the Facebook platform may be considered to empower users as well as politicians and enable them to participate in political debate. The interactive element of the site ensures that while politicians may appear to be offered a means to control the dissemination of their policies and opinions on a relatively new platform, the true situation is somewhat different. If the politicians formulate their Pages to enable Facebook users to respond to their Wall posts, they are ceding complete control over their channel of communication on the platform. This example also illustrates the potential of the Facebook platform as a conduit for political institutions and organisations to gain access to voters' opinions in an unprecedented way.

Visibility

Facebook has not only provided a platform for politicians to enhance their public visibility. The social platform also enables users to become visible to politicians in a manner previously unknown. As Thompson (2005) notes, the development of print, photography and then television has resulted in politicians becoming visible to voters. He describes this situation as 'a double edged sword' (2005: 41) since politicians cannot control how they are represented. On Facebook, they are offered substantial

control over their self-presentation in the same manner as private individuals. But on the social network, this visibility becomes a two way process; private individuals become visible to politicians. The affordances of Web 2.0 technologies enable the many to become visible to the many or to the few, while the few become visible to the many. Before the development of the Web and social networks, political communication took place on Internet discussion boards. It was dialogic, took place within bounded communities built on shared interests, or through email and was directed at a specific audience. After the development of the Web, the scope of communication broadened as it may also take the broadcast form of communication which is directed at no-one in particular.

This chapter therefore considers the manner in which politicians used Facebook to communicate with private individuals on the Facebook platform: it examines how the three main U.K. political parties and their leaders used the social network in the approach to the 2010 General Election and examines a new forum set up on the social network, Democracy UK on Facebook. It considers how interactivity and participation on the pages of politicians and political parties impacted on the privacy of the individuals on the site by means of Facebook's programming, where the public/private boundary lies in the political community on the social network and how power is manifested on these pages. It also considers the impact of interaction between politicians and voters on voter disengagement with politics and democratic governance. Firstly, however, the chapter begins by considering the political environment in the UK, political and government concerns about issues such as electoral disengagement and low voter turnouts in the United Kingdom and how Facebook may be seen as a way of addressing these issues by encouraging mediated participation. It then examines how the 2010 General Election Campaign was conducted on the social network.

Political disengagement

Electorate disengagement with politics, particularly amongst young people, has become a growing concern in recent years (Commentary, *The Political Quarterly* 2008; Kelso, 2007; Dahlgren, 2005; Polat 2005), and is illustrated by the decline in voter turnout in the second half of the 20th Century. The number of registered voters exercising their democratic right to vote in general elections reached a significant low in 2001, when just 59.1% of the electorate voted (uk political info 2010), in contrast to the peak reached in 1950, when 83.9% of registered voters visited the polling booths (ibid). In the 2001 General Election it was estimated that only 39% of young people aged between 18 and 24 voted, in contrast to the 70% of people aged 65 and over who voted (The Electoral Commission 2002). While the turnout rallied somewhat and rose to 61.4% (ibid) in 2005, Kelso (2007) notes that 'debating the problems facing mature liberal democracies as a result of declining voter turnout has become a well-worn groove in contemporary politics' (ibid: 364).

The Electoral Commission observes in a report on voter engagement and young people that 'turnout is the most obvious example of political participation and electoral engagement … poor turnout is likely to be the consequence of poor electoral engagement rather than the reason behind it' (2002: 15). Facebook may therefore be seen to offer politicians and political parties a new way of engaging voters. The social network is principally viewed as playing a major role in young people's lives, despite its changing demographics, and is therefore considered to offer a way of communicating with the age group whose members are least likely to vote. The concern expressed about the decline in political participation by voters is clearly justified due to its potential impact upon democratic governance, since any government is dependent for its legitimacy on the support of the majority of the voting populace. Facebook may

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therefore be seen to offer politicians and political parties a new way of engaging with voters, encouraging their participation in the political sphere and of revitalising political debate and engagement.

Politics and the press

The ways in which politicians have communicated with the electorate have traditionally taken the form of public meetings, newspapers and television and, during the approach to an election, advertising, door-to-door canvassing and the postal distribution of campaign leaflets. There have, however, been significant changes to these methods in the past few decades. Political communication has become more professionalised (Negrine 2008; Lilleker and Negrine 2002; Mancini 1999; Mayhew (1997) and tightly controlled (Lilleker 2006). At the same time, the representation of government, politics and politicians on these traditional media platforms has also changed.

By the early 1990s, the reporting of the business of the Houses of Parliament had been markedly reduced in national newspapers, notably *The Times*. Franklin reported in 1996 that the newspaper's decision to drop its traditional parliamentary page was an important factor in the change, since other newspapers then followed suit (Franklin 1996: 298). Following this seachange, not only did Parliamentary and political reporting significantly decrease, but the focus of political news also changed. It became dominated by a small group of individual, usually senior politicians rather than the collective political or party agenda (Franklin 1996) and by political and personal scandals – either financial or sexual. Politicians became subject to a gatekeeping process in which very few gained access to national broadcast media platforms, a practice that reduced the plurality of voices being heard. Facebook therefore offers an

unrestricted platform on which politicians can deliver their political messages direct to the voting public.

As political marketing became more professionalised and controlled by the parties, a move which began with the retention of public relations company Saatchi and Saatchi by the Conservatives and which was subsequently followed by the Labour Party, newspapers in particular attempted to circumvent this control by focusing on issues which they considered more likely to sell newspapers in an increasingly competitive market, in particular scandal. At the heart of the struggle was control over the mediated political agenda, a struggle which has been well documented (Lilleker, 2006; McNair, 2000). By employing the Internet and Facebook as ways of directly communicating with voters, political parties' reliance on the traditional broadcast platforms decreased. They could send their messages directly to voters via email and their social network home pages. Control over the political agenda could therefore apparently be wrested from the hands of external media organisations.

New platforms

The development of the Internet, and in particular social networks, can therefore be seen to offer politicians and their parties a platform that is unmediated by third parties for their communication with voters. Politicians could take advantage of the opportunities to build personal webpages and subsequently establish blogs, both of which could be either monologic or dialogic but which were more direct forms of communication. The efficacy of these forms of communication is however dependent upon the number of people who access them (boyd 2008; Negrine 2008). In 2003, McNair et al concluded, following their research into the impact of the Internet and political websites on the democratic process that while the Internet held 'significant implications for political communication, … the limited empirical evidence assembled

thus far … suggests that its impact on the political process is likely to remain marginal in the short to medium-term' (2003: 106). While they predicted the growth of the Internet's importance to political communication, McNair et al argued that development of political websites alone would not reverse the trend of political disengagement and its threat to democratic governance (ibid).

In 2010, however, Facebook offered an alternative environment in which political participation may take place. The development of social media tools capitalised on the interactive and participatory elements of the Internet, offering easily accessible (to those with Internet access) and non-political platforms which may be viewed as offering benefits to both private individuals and politicians alike. Politicians now use Facebook as a new means of directly communicating with the public on a social platform, while individuals can take advantage of the opportunity to participate in political debate by interacting with politicians within a social sphere in which hierarchical differences appear to have dissolved. Facebook can be seen to provide a new environment for political participation, one that differs from political websites on The Web, and one on which 'political communication … could be targeted at individuals; it could be interactive' (Negrine 2008: 171).

This new form of communication means politicians can 'consult and be better placed to create or modify politics in line with what citizens want' he adds (ibid: 185). While rejecting the ability of the Internet to offer a solution to voter disengagement with politics, apathy and low voter turnout, to 'fix' (ibid. 187) the problems of democracy, Negrine maintains that the Internet holds the potential to support the democratic process. With particular relevance to Facebook, Bohman argues 'for a public sphere to have democratic significance it must be a social space in which speakers may express their views to others who respond to them' (2004: 133).

Participation

The need for participation in the democratic process was highlighted in the 2006 report resulting from a parliamentary inquiry into democracy in Britain, which acknowledged that the best way to improve the political system was to make politics more participatory (Kelso 2007: 372). Participation and interactivity are two of the principal affordances of both digital technologies in general, and Facebook in particular. As Negrine points out, conventional political communication via traditional mass media platforms is 'directed at *individuals* who make up the *mass* audience' (2008: 172, emphasis original), and the content is directed 'at everyone in an undifferentiated way' (ibid: 172). The interactive element of social networks therefore offers an alternative to the established methods of political communication; communication can be not only directed to a mass audience but also to identifiable individuals. The dialogic element may be considered as encouraging voter participation in the political process.

Additionally, Facebook offers politicians further advantages of digital technologies, the ability to boost their public profile; a platform on which they can set the political agenda; and one which holds the potential to reach those voters and individuals who may not consume traditional forms of the mass media, but rely on the Internet for their information, and on Facebook as their social network of choice. Negrine comments that

> assuming that an appropriate way of bringing the public into the political communication can be found, then it is possible to see how the Internet can facilitate the discussion between those who seek to govern and the governed … the governed are no longer outside the process but a party to it (Negrine (2008: 187).

Negrine can be seen to emphasise the importance to democratic governance of participation in political debate by private individuals. The use of Facebook as a tool for political communication therefore, through its interactive and participatory elements and its designation as a social platform, offers one way of bridging the communication gap between politicians and those they seek to govern. The social network offers private individuals a route by which they can participate in the political sphere, a route by which communication takes place in a two-way flow and by which new 'kinds of social relationships between public figures and the public' (Craig 2004: 4) may be forged.

Boyd, however, presents a more pessimistic view of the role of sites such as Facebook in enhancing political participation. She describes politicians' use of Facebook, as restricted only to 'leveraging it as a spamming device' (2008(b): 242) in order to deliver their political messages, while users are more likely to exchange gossip than vote, (ibid). Users of social networks, which she describes as 'networked publics' (ibid: 242), have quickly realised the longevity of content they posts of these sites; its accessibility via Internet searches; content is replicable; and accessible by 'invisible audiences' (ibid: 242), factors which may discourage private individuals from participating in political debate on SNS. To regard political communication on social network sites as 'a cultural panacea' (ibid: 244) to political disengagement is to fantasise, she states, as it will not encourage voters to engage in political debate. It will, however, 'make visible' (ibid: 244) the effectiveness of sites such as Facebook as channels for political communication. This chapter examines how the 2010 General Election campaign was conducted on Facebook and how politicians used the social platform to encourage voter participation in political debate.

Media gatekeepers

On Facebook, individual users may, like politicians, benefit from the lack of media gatekeepers online. While those who post flaming comments (those deemed to be not just offensive but inflammatory) within the confines of the site could expect to have their comments summarily deleted, individuals who wanted to express their beliefs and opinions to politicians were able to do so without having to negotiate the gatekeepers who guard access to traditional media platforms. As Higgins (2008) points out, mediated participation via traditional media platforms, such as letters to the editor pages in newspapers and to television programmes such as the BBC's political show *Question Time* (BBC 1 1979-) are subject to a selection process.

Not every letter sent to the letters' pages is published, and not every question and comment submitted to *Question Time* is given air time on the programme, in which a panel primarily consisting of politicians answers questions submitted by members of the audience (Higgins 2008: 93). Facebook appears to offer an unfettered platform on which both politicians and private individuals can interact; politicians may publicise their policies and private individuals may publish their responses and give voice to their personal opinions.

Facebook

While participation and interactivity are key elements of social media platforms such as Facebook, these are not the sole aspects that make them attractive to politicians. Facebook, obviously, offers not just a new means of communication between politicians and a section of the electorate, but a vehicle for self-promotion. If boyd and Ellison's 2008 definition of social networks in general is taken into account, particularly the first two points – that it allows individuals to construct and publicise a public or semi-public profile within a defined site and to publicise a list of other people

with whom they connected (boyd and Ellison 2008 unpaginated) – the benefits it offers politicians are evident. Not only does it provide an open channel of communication and interaction, but it also offers an informal and casual platform on which they are able to construct and control their self representation, publicise their policies and provide a continuous stream of information.

A presence on Facebook also enables private individuals to have permanent access to these political figures, as they may reply to politicians' announcements and campaign messages at any time. The elision of temporal and spatial boundaries in the online environment ensures that individuals can respond to a post on a politician's page immediately it has been uploaded, or at any time at their own convenience. During the election campaign, responses were often uploaded within one minute of a post being uploaded on to a political page, with the added dimension that several people could respond simultaneously – there was no need to respect the turn-taking code prevalent in face-to-face conversations – and no need to wait to be invited to be speak by the chair as protocol demands at public meetings. Everyone who wished to make their opinions known could do so. This enabled politicians to gain an insight into how their information and policies had been received on a far greater scale than previously experienced.

The benefits that Facebook offers to politicians were recognised soon after registration restrictions were abandoned by the social network in 2006 and communication between political parties and members of the public on the website began long before the 2010 General Election was called. The Liberal Democrats were early adopters of the social network and joined Facebook 2007. They were the first party to do so, with The Conservatives and the Labour Party joining the following year. Taking advantage of the scope for publicity and self promotion on the social network,

Nick Clegg, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, and David Cameron, now Prime Minister, each have a page in their names which are separate from their Parties' Facebook pages.

Gordon Brown

Prior to 2009, there was a page in the name of former Labour Party Leader and Prime Minister Gordon Brown but it was relatively short-lived. It had been established by the Labour Party, but became unobtainable early in 2009. Before it was taken down, this page displayed a profile photograph of a smiling Mr Brown being applauded by a small group of people, but recorded 'no recent activity'. While this indicated it had not been used by the Party for some time, his profile, which recorded his birthday and a brief summary of his political career, was still available, but contained no personal details. Most telling of all, perhaps, were two brief statements: one which said that the page was 'for Labour Party members, activists and voters to show their support for our Prime Minster and party leader'; the second, heavily emphasised, stated bluntly that any posts

> which have nothing to offer but derogatory remarks, childish insults and
> horribly misinformed pub-politics will be removed immediately. Please
> save all such content for the rightwing forums and the YouTube
> comment boxes (Facebook 2008, no longer available).

The clear indication was that participation by and interaction with private individuals was only welcomed by the Party if it was supportive. The message from the page administrators indicates that not only would flaming not be tolerated, but neither would the expression of any views which did not accord with Labour thinking – as illustrated by the phrase 'horribly misinformed pub-politics'. Labour therefore imposed restrictions on any interaction between individuals and the Party and its Leader, and

participation was conditional on public responses being in agreement with Labour's policies. By March 2009, Mr Brown's Facebook page had changed address, but featured the same messages to Facebook users. By summer, it was no longer available.

Before the General Election, Mr.Brown could be found on Twitter, in photographs on Flickr and in videos on YouTube, but he was more reclusive on Facebook. The principal way to discover details of his activities was to visit the Number 10 Downing Street page, which merely acted as a channel for directing visitors to the Number 10 Downing Street official application (Facebook 2009). In late 2009, access to the application was straightforward, and no dialogue box was presented requesting access to elements of users' personal information. This was during the period when Facebook automatically enabled applications developers to access private individuals' personal information, as indicated in Chapter Five, and before the introduction of the initial dialogue box the following year. While the application contained details of both Mr Brown and his wife Sarah's activities, it also featured links to Flickr and YouTube and videos of the Prime Minister addressing page visitors. This page is an official government page, however, and while Mr Brown featured heavily, it was in his role as Prime Minister, not as Labour Party Leader. It also publicised the actions of the government and members of the Cabinet. By using the Facebook page only as a conduit to the Number 10 application, page visitors were unable to directly communicate or interact with Mr Brown via the social platform, while the personal information of social network users who accessed the application was available to the government.

Mr Brown's absence on Facebook is significant. It suggests that perhaps the personal branding of Mr Brown as the Party Leader was not considered important; the issue was too important and this new way of campaigning was not compatible with Mr

Brown's personality; or that moves were already afoot to ensure Mr Brown's position as Leader of the Labour Party came to an end soon after the election. Although some of Mr Brown's election campaigning activities were broadcast through the Labour Party's Facebook page, there was no emphasis on Mr Brown as Party Leader or potential Prime Minister. Instead, the page operated as a forum on which the activities of all prominent Labour figures could be broadcast.

David Cameron

The Leader of the Conservatives and, after the 2010 General Election, Prime Minister, David Cameron does have an official fan page in his name. As may be expected, Mr. Cameron's political activities were the principal focus of the page, and the Party's media team embraced the increasing ability to provide links to different digital media platforms to enable Facebook users to access not only statements, but also photographs of Mr Cameron at numerous meetings and visits; links to Flickr albums; videos on YouTube of the Party Leader talking about various issues; televised interviews; and newspaper articles. There were also posts, photographs and links publicising some of the campaigning efforts made by David Cameron's wife Samantha, reinforcing his public image as a family man whose political career was supported by his wife. The Conservatives used the page to broadcast Mr. Cameron's stance on political issues, to publicise public meetings he was due to attend – and to subsequently post photographs, links to photographs and videos of these meetings. Page visitors could comment on all, 'Like' them or 'Share' them with their Facebook Friends.

Posts made in Mr Cameron's name were always in the third party, as in 'David Cameron visited…' and generally were followed by suggestions addressed to page visitors, made in the imperative, to find out more by following the accompanying link. Examples include

> *WATCH: Dermot O'Leary interviews David Cameron about the*
>
> *issues important to first time voters* (22/4/10) and
>
> *A new welfare contract – David has pledged to end the free ride for*
>
> *those who fail to take responsibility. Read more at…* (20/4/10).

As the election drew closer, another post urged page visitors to literally lose sleep by following Mr. Cameron's campaign throughout the night for regular updates from his 24 hour 'campaign for change' (4/5/2011). The David Cameron posts can be seen to be impersonal, given in a formal mode of address, to bear a close resemblance to an advertising or marketing campaign, and were typically made in the imperative. They provided page visitors with a minimal amount of information, and instructed them to take the necessary action to discover the full story in a similar manner to that adopted by the broadcasters discussed in the previous chapter. Communication took the broadcast format of one to many, or allocution in Bordewijk and van Kaam's (1986) taxonomy. Bordewijk and van Kamm suggest that the adoption of this information flow ensures that 'every participating consumer receives the same information and the information store at the centre never becomes empty!' (1986: 577).

The mode of address and impersonal language reveal no attempt to elide the social and hierarchical distance between the Leader of the Conservatives and potential voters 'Social distances are inscribed ... into the relation ... to language' (Bourdieu 1989: 17). One post from David Cameron which differed slightly was made after the polls closed on Election Day and said

> *thank you for all your support and hard work. Together, we can bring*
>
> *the change our country needs*.

This communication, while still in the one-to-many format, was couched in a more personal and inclusive register, in which supporters' efforts were recognised and valued.

Responses

In contrast to the vast majority of David Cameron's communications, individuals who posted comments on the page adopted a different mode of address. Their responses were typically made in a contrasting register – in a personal and conversational tone. They regularly addressed Mr Cameron as '*you*', '*David*', '*DC*' or '*Dave*', for example

> *Good Luck David & Samantha hope all your hard work pays off on Thursday* (3/5/2010) and
>
> *Dave, thank you for going to Northern Ireland you were very welcome*! (30/4/2010).

Page visitors addressed their posts to Mr Cameron as if they were talking and often offering advice to a friend, illustrated by posts uploaded on the 22nd of April

> *Come on Dave do some ass kicking!* and
>
> *Keep going DC*.

Responses to a post on April 20th included

> *it's about time you took the gloves off*.

These responses illustrate Thompson's theory that new forms of media 'create distinctive kinds of interpersonal relationships, social bonds and intimacy' (2005: 34) and also relate to the notion that social media create weak ties between people who do not know each other personally.

It is, however, difficult to assess whether these contradict or are representative of Goffman's 'sense of place' (1959) and Bourdieu's 'habitus' (1989). David Cameron

posts indicate an awareness of the Conservative Party Leader's position in the social and political hierarchy, while private individuals may be viewed as ignoring their sense of place in the social hierarchy. But the individuals were, in fact, the people with the power; Mr Cameron and The Conservatives' election fate lay in the hands of the voters who visited the Facebook page (Diamond 2004; Pilkington 1997). David Cameron and his Party were seeking their support, although this was not reflected in political communication on the page. Bourdieu's theory of habitus would imply that both David Cameron and private individuals were each behaving according to their habitus; Mr Cameron as a political leader from a different social and hierarchical sphere, and individuals who were remaining within their field of practice and fulfilling their role as supporters and, at times, critics.

The language private individuals adopted, however, indicates that they were losing their notion of their sense of place by adopting the same familiar and informal mode of address in which they would communicate with friends (Thompson 2005). Their responses differ greatly from the distant and formal mode of address of the David Cameron posts. They imply an elision of social distance, a sense of mediated intimacy that is not reciprocated (Thompson 2005). This contrasts significantly with the notion that Facebook empowers private individuals, and that the social platform may be perceived as the habitus of private individuals rather than state institutions. The responses also, however, indicate that the respondents acknowledged they were being 'hailed' (Althusser); they acknowledged the David Cameron posts were directed at them, they took the directed course of action and then responded in a supportive or otherwise manner. They acknowledged their status as subjects in the balance of power.

The difference in the modes of address by 'David Cameron' and his supporters is significant. The political communication from David Cameron generally took the

form of orders to supporters to take action in a way which would not be used in a face-to-face conversation in which a politician was seeking to gain the support of the people s/he was addressing. Supporters' communication is personal and conversational, although again it is doubtful whether these individuals would address Mr Cameron in the same manner in a face-to-face conversation. The disjuncture between the modes of address support Thompson's theory of 'distinctive kinds of interpersonal relationships' (2005: 34), with Mr Cameron's supporters addressing 'David' in a personal mode of address and revealing their personal beliefs and values.

By participating on the page and interacting with 'David' and other contributors, they may have been divulging the kind of information which they would seldom publicly reveal in the off line world. This information would be recorded by Facebook itself, since all users' actions are recorded and stored by the company. In addition, and depending on each user's privacy settings, it could not only be linked to identifiable individuals but could also be stored by political bodies and any other visitor to the site as indicated by boyd (2008: 242). Responsibility for content posted on the social network obviously rests with the individual users, but despite boyd's comments, it is debatable just how many were fully aware of the longevity their content may have.

Dialogue

Communication by David Cameron also followed the traditional political communication flow of top-down, and its form was one-to-many – directed at the individuals who comprised the mass audience as described by Negrine (2008); they were addressed to everyone in general, and to no-one in particular. Nor was there any evidence on the page of any two way dialogue between David Cameron and the correspondents. Communication appeared to follow the broadcast format, with no evidence of any response from David Cameron to the comments posted by private

individuals. The lack of response or acknowledgement from David Cameron to any communication from page visitors suggests that the page was of great benefit to The Conservatives, since the Party was able to garner personal insights and responses to policies that would previously have remained invisible. Like the television viewers discussed in the previous chapter, the user-generated content apparently empowered the private individuals, but actually reinforced the dominant social hierarchy. Like Facebook itself, as discussed in Chapter Four, the posts by David Cameron 'hailed' (Althusser 1984) page visitors, directed them to take certain courses of action, and encouraged them to comment. But supportive posts were not acknowledged, and there was no engagement with page visitors in any debate on Party policies or actions.

Activists

The David Cameron page was also used to transform supporters into activists. In the weeks before the General Election and on Polling Day itself, David Cameron urged Facebook supporters to campaign on his behalf. The page hosted a 'Share' button, inviting supporters to share their support of the page with their Facebook Friends, and supporters' Friends Lists offered an ideal way of recruiting new supporters and voters.

> *A contract between the Conservative Party and you – read it and share with your friends* (20/4/10);
>
> *Please remember to vote Conservative and to tell your friends why they should too. Together we can bring change* (6/5/10).

The change in the mode of address of this second post, made on Polling Day, is significant. It implies inclusion and shared aims and exemplifies posts which direct respondents to take action and to work at recruiting new supporters for David Cameron and his Party, reflecting Doyle and Fraser's assertion that power is productive (2010). It is however unusual, since it begins with a request, rather than the imperative.

Nick Clegg

Of the three political leaders, Nick Clegg proved to be the most adept at building a relationship with visitors to his official Facebook page, and while there were some instances when the imperative was used to direct page visitors to take a certain course of action, they were not in the majority. The importance of personal identity on Facebook was acknowledged and could be clearly seen in the Nick Clegg profile page on the social network. While it provided only very brief family details and highlighted the politician's professional career, it also provided an extensive list of his personal preferences such as his favourite films, books and music – apparently offering the public a glimpse of the man behind the political figure, a backstage view of Nick Clegg rather than only the public image (Goffman 1959).

Great effort appeared to have been made to ensure that voters were given a more personal insight into Mr Clegg's personality during the General Election campaign. Nick Clegg posts were delivered in a more personal mode of address, and the aim was clearly to establish a relationship between Mr Clegg and his supporters in another illustration of Thompson's 'non-reciprocal intimacy at a distance' (2005: 34). In this way, the Lib Dems and Nick Clegg can be seen to have acknowledged the importance of voters perceiving the Party Leader as being very accessible on Facebook. This campaign tactic highlights the potential benefits to all politicians of a presence on a social network such as Facebook, which has been built on personal identity and relationships. Nick Clegg and the Lib Dems may be considered as having recognised that Facebook offers a completely new way of Election campaigning, despite the fact that their posts reflect a variation of the one-to-many mode of communication.

The personal touch

While many of the posts on Nick Clegg's official page mirrored those on David Cameron's in that they were impersonal and used the imperative to direct individuals to take further action, there were many others in a far more personal mode of address and in a conversational, not official, register. Typical of these is a post made on 3th May 2010 that implies an elision of the hierarchical boundary between himself and those he was addressing

> *about to start a public meeting in Richmond having arrived a little*
>
> *late (sorry!) as the Citizens. UK event I was speaking at over-ran*
>
> *slightly.*

This attracted responses within a minute. On Polling Day itself, one Nick Clegg post four hours before polling closed on Election Day said

> *Urge everyone to go out and vote. We have a chance to build a fairer*
>
> *Britain. Get involved.*

While Mr Clegg can be seen to direct people to take action, his message ends on an imperative but inclusive note, suggesting that he and the voters will work together towards a common aim and implying that, by voting, they can participate in improving British society. It offers a vision of voters' involvement in democratic government. The page also recorded when Mr Clegg and his wife Miriam had voted, and the profile photograph was changed to one showing the couple at the polling station – again implying a personal link between Mr Clegg and the voting public.

Photographs

Profile photographs played a significant part in Mr Clegg's campaign on Facebook. Until the General Election was called, his profile photograph featured both he and Vince Cable, the senior Liberal Democrat who had gained considerable national

recognition for his statements on the state of the UK economy before and during the financial crisis which began in 2008. These lent credibility to Mr Clegg, indicating that the young politician was working closely with an elder, more experienced politician. At the beginning of the official election campaign, the profile photograph changed to one of Mr Clegg alone, standing in the Houses of Parliament. Soon afterwards however, after traditional media platforms publicised a statement made by his wife Miriam that she would not be joining the election campaign because of work and family commitments, the profile photograph changed regularly to show the couple out walking, travelling to or at certain campaign events. The captions to these photographs always referred to 'Miriam and I'.

In this way, the Liberal Democrats used the Facebook page to assure visitors that Mrs Clegg was indeed a supportive political wife and was in fact joining him on the campaign trail despite her earlier comments. This move not only ensured that comparisons could not be drawn between the publicly supportive Mrs Cameron and the more private Mrs Clegg, but emphasised the latter's commitment to her husband's political career. The use of photographs on Facebook ensured that the issue of Mrs Clegg's support was managed without it being addressed publicly and directly. The episode offers a further illustration of the benefits Facebook offers politicians during an election campaign; a response offered via press and television platforms, if published, would have required Mrs Clegg's earlier comments to be repeated. A photographic record of the couple's activities during the approach to the election provided evidence that she was indeed supporting her husband's campaign.

Mr. Clegg's Facebook page was used to do more than simply direct visitors towards some course of action; it was also used to ask questions of page visitors, and to invite them to submit questions for him to answer in videos that were subsequently

uploaded to the page. Mr Clegg had already established a pattern of regularly holding question and answer sessions with visitors to his page, and his video responses to the questions were also directed personally to the questioner. Thus the medium apparently shifts from being a means of mass communication, to a means of one-to-one communication. In reality, of course, although the answers were personally addressed to the individuals who posed the questions, they were available to all page visitors who watched the video.

Privacy

On Facebook, however, this manner of response also had an impact on questioners' privacy, since their involvement in the video resulted in them being 'tagged' – a process in which the person who uploads the visual content identifies by a name tag those who appear in photographs and videos posted on the social network. The tag then appears whenever a computer cursor is run across the image of each person featured in photographs and videos. This ensured that participants were publicly identified to everyone who viewed the photographs and videos and also that everyone on their Facebook Friends' List was informed via their News Feeds, where notice of their participation was publicised. Tags are applied at the discretion of the person posting the photographs or videos, but while individuals had the option to remove them, there could be a time lapse between the uploading of a tagged photograph/video and the person identified becoming aware they have been tagged. Changes have been applied since the General Election campaign, and users may now choose whether or not to be tagged before the photograph is published.

This practice by Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats may be considered as enhancing an individual's 'social capital' (Bourdieu 1986) on Facebook by such public association with a national political leader. Certainly, the theory of individuals

acquiring social capital by the number of Friends they have on the site has been

highlighted in previous academic research (Ellison, N.B., Lampe, C, Steinfield.C,

Vitak, J. (2010); Steinfield, C, DiMicco, J.M., Ellison, N.B., Lampe, C. (2009);

Livingstone, S., Hadden, L. (2009); Ellison, N.B., Steinfield, C., Lampe, C. (2007)).

But it also brought private individuals into the political debate.

Recruitment

The ability to directly communicate with politicians and political parties was not

the only way in which Facebook users could feel they were participating in political

debate during the Election campaign. The frequent directives to individuals to 'share'

the respective Parties' policies and election messages with their Friends also meant that

these Facebook users were being recruited to actively canvass, or work, on behalf of the

Parties. The Parties' campaign messages were therefore being personally delivered by

and circulated within an established circle of Friends and acquaintances in which trust

is likely to play a significant role. The delivery of an election campaign message by a

Friend is likely to receive a more favourable response than that generated by an email

or leaflet delivered by a party activist who is a stranger. The Conservatives also

recognised the importance of the personal and social approach on Facebook during the

campaign. This practice is illustrated by one post in which Conservative supporters

were urged to hold Watch Parties in the approach to the final televised Leaders' Debate

in a post uploaded on 27th of April 2010

> *Why not make an evening of it and watch them in a group?*
>
> *Register your evening so we know it is happening so that we can*
>
> *arrange a conference call with you and Eric Pickles,*
>
> *(Conservative Party Chairman), before the debate starts. Watch*
>
> *Parties should be fun. It's a great way to relax and socialise with*

> *like-minded people. Invite some friends to gather round your TV*
>
> *over a pizza or you could arrange an organised evening that is*
>
> *open to a large number of people* (27/4/2010)

By working for The Conservatives, supporters were being offered the opportunity to acquire social capital by means of a phone call, most likely a recorded message, from the Party Chairman, but were also providing personal details to the Party. The Labour Party asked their supporters

> *Have you seen our new Labour Doorstep webpage yet? Check out the*
>
> *videos, tell your story and pledge how many people you'll talk to for*
>
> *Labour until May 6* (April 16th).

Labour and the Conservatives repeatedly urged their Facebook supporters to campaign on their behalf with invitations or suggestions to 'share' information, 'tell' their friends and to register their personal details with the parties. They commonly used the imperative to urge page visitors to take certain courses of action, including extending their support for the respective Parties from the social network environment to the offline environment.

Applications

One significant move used by both Parties was the development of applications in their Facebook campaigns. The Conservative Party launched an application on April 9th to urge supporters to

> *Tell friends why you want David as Prime Minister with this new*
>
> *Facebook application – Share for Change*

while on Polling Day, a Conservative Voting Application was uploaded which encouraged supporters to

> *remind [your] friends to vote for change.*

Links to these applications were posted on both the David Cameron and the Party's page walls. On April 29th, the Labour Party also launched an application and posted the link on its Wall, telling supporters

> *New this week – 'Word of Mouth' app! You can donate your Facebook profile pic, add the Labour rose to your pic, invite friends to vote Labour or post telling everyone why you've decided to support us on May 6* (29/4/10).

As indicated in Chapter Five, applications on the Facebook website enable developers to automatically gather information about users' networks of Friends, by means of Facebook's social plugins programmes. Users must also consent to certain personal information being made available to the administrators in order to access the apps. By using the applications, they were thus not only campaigning for the Parties, but enabling the political Parties to access personal information which would previously have remained private and inaccessible. The extent of the information garnered would have depended upon the privacy settings applied by individuals, but individuals who may previously have been invisible and anonymous, became visible to the political Parties. There was no evidence that the Liberal Democrats used applications in the approach to the Election, and communication on their Facebook Wall was at times more casual

> *If by any chance you missed last night's Leaders' Debate, you can watch it online here'*(30/4/10)

for example. At other times, posts were made in the imperative, telling supporters to take a particular course of action, such as 'watch', 'read', 'see'. Significantly there was no constant incitement on the Wall to supporters to spread the Liberal Democrats'

campaign messages amongst their Friends, although individuals' actions on the Liberal Democrats' or Nick Clegg pages would be published on their Friends' News Feeds.

Communication between the political parties and visitors to the Liberal Democrats' page was principally in an informal mode of address, and there were many examples of this in posts on both Nick Clegg's and the Party's Walls, including one in which Mr Clegg commented on one of his campaign visits on May 1[st,] on both Walls,

> *in Manchester now having enjoyed a pint of Charger at the Nag's*
> *Head in Malvern with Richard Burt. One of the most enjoyable visits*
> *so far.*

Again, the post was phrased in an informal mode of address, and one which can also be seen to align Mr Clegg with voters – implying the elision of the social distance (Bourdieu 1989) between ordinary voters and himself, as Leader of one of the major UK political parties and potential Prime Minister.

Sharing, or canvassing?

The benefits of using social networks for political campaigns has been subject to much recent research (Utz, 2009; Southwell and Yzer, 2009; Wills and Reeves, 2009; boyd, 2008). Evaluating the use of the Dutch SNS Hyves during the Dutch General Election campaign in 2006, Utz found that the site 'expose[d] active users unexpectedly to political campaigns' (2009: 238). This was attributable to the habit of site users of establishing a network of contacts which included those who were not particularly close off-line friends, but who exposed them to a wider range of lifestyles and perspectives. These 'unexpected exposures … offer politicians a way to reach new voters' (ibid: 238) she noted, concluding that the level of 'active interaction' (ibid: 238) with fellow site users, was more important to the dissemination of political messages than the number of 'Friends' in users' networks. This is apparent in political communication on Facebook

during the approach to the 2010 General Election, and in politicians' harnessing of users as the bearers of their political messages. Facebook enabled politicians to overcome what have been the principal caveats of political communication on both the Internet and social networks; that the technology is reliant upon users seeking out and 'pulling' the information on to their computer screens; and that only politically active or interested individuals would do so (boyd, 2008; Negrine, 2008).

This caveat has been overcome by Facebook's News Feed feature, which is a major element in the dissemination of information on the social network. As discussed in Chapter Four, it has proved contentious due to the way it provides a perpetually updated list of all the actions carried out by individuals within the Facebook boundary: who commented on whose wall; who befriended whom; who has changed their status (from single to in a relationship, to married and back again); who 'Likes' or has joined a particular Facebook group or page. On Facebook, the level of activity identified by Utz is commonly associated with individuals' circle of acknowledged Friends, with the vast majority of users' communication directed at and actions on the site being relayed to other users on their Friends List via the News Feed. This ensured that users' Friends Lists provided a valuable new distribution method for the Parties' campaign messages.

The News Feed ensured that every action on the site by users who complied with the constant directives by political parties to take action on the social platform became visible to those who could access their Facebook page, and would be posted on their Friends News Feeds. If users adopted a Party's campaign logo as their profile photograph, the logo would thus accompany every action they performed on Facebook and would also be accompany posts on their Friends' News Feeds. Therefore, the more active a Party supporter was on Facebook, the more frequently they would be canvassing for the political party. This method would be more effective since the

political canvassing was being conducted by Friends, rather than by the respective political parties. The value of Facebook to politicians was also enhanced, as without the network's programming that enabled individual users to adopt party logos as their profile photographs, and enabled politicians to use the Friends List and News Feed algorithms as new campaign tools, politicians would have been unable to utilise private individuals as canvassers in a social environment. The ease with which political messages can be distributed (or 'spammed' in boyd's terms (2008b) on Facebook indicates that the three leading parties took advantage of the snowball effect of the website – whereby a message sent to one person rapidly spread to a large group of people with no extra effort required by party workers.

Campaigning on Facebook

Within days of the General Election being called, the three main UK political parties set out to use Facebook to boost their profile through the use of private individuals. Each of the parties' Facebook pages developed new landing pages which provided details of and links to their election manifestos. These were accompanied by buttons inviting them to 'share' the information with their Facebook Friends, as well as to join the respective parties and/or donate to their campaign funds. As Polling Day drew closer, campaigning on the website increased and the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats intensified their Facebook campaigning, supplemented by the affordances of the social platform.

The special election opening tabs invited visitors to sign up and to share with their Friends, while Facebook's social plugins, discussed in Chapter Four, enabled the Parties to accompany this invitation with the profile photographs of users' Friends. This ensured that visitors needed only to click on the boxes beside their Friends' profile

photographs and names to spread the desired political message. The Labour Party's Facebook election page directed individual users to

add up to 12 of your friends by clicking on their pictures below.

 Both measures ensured that little effort was required by supporters to spread the Parties' respective political messages from the comfort of their own homes.

Page visitors were also urged to invite their friends by email through the provision on the Facebook page of a list of the email addresses of their Friends and off –site friends, a move that provided the Parties with the contact details of individuals' Friends. The viral aspect of communication on Facebook was also adopted by the Labour Party to boost its campaign. An interactive video was compiled to focus on one aspect of its campaign message. It was formatted to enable viewers to add in their Friends' names and then send it to them via Facebook. This ensured that their Friends' names would appear on the video and also in an online address book. This married the ability of individuals to increase their social capital while simultaneously providing the contact details of their Friends. The Conservatives also introduced a new landing page for the election, headed by a 'Share for Change' logo.

Start by telling your Facebook Friends why you're voting for change

(3/5/10)

it urged. While it directed page visitors to campaign for the Conservatives, unlike the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party, the text was not accompanied by a list of the visitor's Facebook Friends. This opening tab changed on Election Day, and urged visitors to 'Vote for Change' and to adopt the logo as their profile photograph. It also provided a link to the party's Facebook voting application

to remind your friends to vote for change' (6/5/2010).

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The importance of supporters' Friends List and the rationale behind the Conservatives' 'Share for Change' application was explicitly explained in its accompanying text on the link page

> *the app lets supporters tell their friends why they're voting Conservative in a quick and easy way and mobilise a large number of endorsements for the Party very quickly* (6/5/2010).

The use of an application again meant that the Party was provided with the personal details of the respective individuals and potentially their Facebook Friends.

With the added option to adopt the Parties' campaign slogan or Party Logo as their profile photograph, as discussed above, each of the Parties can be seen to have recognised the value of the affordances available on the Facebook platform that enabled them to use private individuals as canvassers. The potential of the Friends List as a form of personal endorsement and support in electoral campaigning was recognised and applied by each of the three main parties. The significance of Facebook's move to ensure that users' Friends Lists are always available to applications is illustrated in the use made of it by the political parties. While it is pursuant of Zuckerberg's aim to create a Web of individuals' connections rather than of individuals, as discussed in Chapter Five, the visibility of the Friends' List ensures its success as a marketing and promotional tool for a wide range of hierarchical organisations.

This application of the Friends List contrasts with Facebook's assurances that public access to it was in the best interests of individual users, since it was essential to them being correctly identified in site searches. Simultaneously, Facebook users' political affiliations also became visible and accessible to a far greater audience. Unless an individual is politically active either locally or nationally, or particularly vocal in their opinions, their political beliefs may not necessarily be known to many friends or

indeed family members. The way in which the News Feed stream publicises users'

actions, both on and off Facebook could record when an individual 'Liked' a political

party, politician, or policy or downloaded an application to their page. It did not simply

notify their Friends, but also a wider range of political and commercial organisations

due to the Facebook algorithms.

Democracy UK on Facebook

The Democracy UK on Facebook public page was very active during the weeks

before the General Election and remained so three months later. Despite its description

in a site search result as a 'government organisation', the page is described 'Facebook's

page for politics' (Democracy UK on Facebook 2010) and bears the tagline 'Facebook

UK's page to bring people and politics together' (ibid). The information tab offered

only a list of Facebook urls and a Twitter address for the group page, and no

information was provided about when the page was launched. The home page listed

twenty-two 'favourite' pages, each of which was the Facebook page of a member of

traditional media platforms, such as television news channels and newspapers, and the

main political parties in the U.K.

The group's Wall consisted mainly of an aggregate of political information and

links provided by traditional media platforms and the Facebook pages of political

parties. Posts accompanied by the relevant hyperlink generally ended in a question as

Facebook sought to discover what people were thinking – as it still does with the

question 'What's on your mind?' that appears every time a user logs on to their home

page. Once more, page visitors were 'hailed' (Althusser 1984) and encouraged to

respond, to upload content and thus provide information – to talk about their political

beliefs and their thoughts in detail, providing an illustration of Foucault's 'incitement to

discourse' (Foucault 1990: 19). Typical examples in the approach to the General

Election were two posts, one on May 3rd which stated

> *all is still to play for,*

another which asked

> *what will decide your vote over the next 72 hours*?

and one on April 21st that asked

> *what are the most important foreign and defence*
>
> *policy issues for you?*

Questions asked on the Wall generated thousands of responses. While some people

simply 'Liked' posts, which ensured both they and the link to the Democracy UK page

would be posted on their Friends' News Feeds, other page visitors expressed their views

quite clearly and briefly debated with others on the page. In the final analysis, however,

these did not appear to lead to any concerted action. People posted their comments,

agreed or disagreed, and while the actual number of posts was usually extensive, no

consensus was reached, as Meikle observed of online political discussion (Meikle

2002). Once more, the imperative behind the questions was to incite people to reveal

their thoughts and to publicly discuss them – to work at providing content for the page.

Further opportunities

The probing questions were not restricted only to the pre-Election period, and

there was a suggestion that more of these opportunities would become available on

Facebook. A video was posted on the Democracy UK Facebook wall of Mark

Zuckerberg and U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron discussing

> *giving people in the UK an opportunity to give their ideas about The*
>
> *Spending Challenge through Facebook* (9/7/10).

The proposal was that dedicated space would be allocated on the social network which would allow Facebook users to voice their opinions on a direct channel to David Cameron. The post ended, however, with the inevitable question

What are your ideas about how to reduce spending?(9/7/2010)

and this unofficial poll generated 317 responses. Again, Facebook users were urged to discuss their thoughts and ideas, and while moves were being made to establish an official poll on the website in which participants would know their answers would be directed at the UK Government, Facebook pre-empted the move. Answers to the Facebook poll, provided in posts on a publicly available page, were not anonymous however.

A major feature of Democracy UK on Facebook was the regular posting of what the group page described as polls, which worked to distinguish the questionnaires from surveys or indeed questionnaires and to lend them a more formal status. It served to link them to politics in a way other descriptions would not, and may have encouraged more Facebook users to complete them than if they were designated as mere surveys. Since the subjects of the polls on this page were always political, it also encouraged Facebook users to feel that they were participating in the political process – particularly given the group's site search designation as a government organisation. The polls were, however, uploaded by private companies, not the government. The increasing use of polls in political discourse is problematic for Papacharissi (2010), who decries the reliance of the mass media, politicians and government on the aggregation of public opinions as expressed in polls. This practice 'exchanges the individuality, detail, and authenticity of personal opinion on public affairs for a concentration of opinions that fit into predetermined question and answer sets reported in aggregation' (Papacharissi 2010:

14), an argument supported by Castells (2009). There was, however, much use of polls on the Democracy UK on Facebook page.

Voting advice

As the General Election drew closer, visitors were welcomed to the page by an offer of help to those who were unsure which party to vote for. New tabs were established for applications labelled Vote Match and My Vote Adviser (both are no longer available). The Vote Match poll required users to reveal their opinions about various political issues and My Vote Adviser subsequently informed them which political party best matched their views. The applications were sponsored by *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper

> *to raise awareness of the policy differences between the parties on issues that matter to you.*

The 'Vote Match' survey asked Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Facebook users twenty-three questions on their political views, and posed thirty questions for English users. The questions were split into sections headed: Defence and Foreign Affairs; Economy; Employment and Equal Opportunities; the Environment; Immigration and Asylum; Parliamentary Reform; Pensions and Retirement; Sovereignty and Devolution; Marriage; and Tax. The version of the poll for voters in England had extra sections covering the subject of an English Parliament; Crime and Justice; Education and Health – issues which are devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Once the survey had been completed, participants were asked to prioritise these issues as more or less important. The poll page also bore a badge

> *I'm voting. Why are you voting?*

with the invitation to users to 'share' their answer with Friends.

My Vote Adviser shows you detailed responses from all parties to

fifty-five key policy questions and matches them with your views

said the Telegraph's explanation of the rationale behind the applications. This may

have encouraged page visitors to use the application, by apparently taking the hard

work out of the political decision making and voting process. Rather than reading the

party manifestos or newspapers/television/websites to check the positions of each party

on particular issues, the application virtually told those who completed Vote Match

which party they should vote for. Given the emphasis by Facebook that the site is built

on identifiable users and the extent of the user information provided automatically by

Facebook, however, the applications also supplied detailed information to both a

newspaper and to the social network itself about those who completed the polls and

their political beliefs on a range of issues.

Horror

Those who had accessed both applications could post responses on the public

page, and many participants expressed horror and disbelief after they had been

informed that their political views were aligned to the policies of British National Party.

Given that several people lost their jobs after their BNP membership was publicly

revealed in the weeks before the General Election, it can be assumed that few people

would welcome any public association with the Party, particularly one as ephemeral as

an online poll. Furthermore, in a climate where the threat of acts of terrorism being

planned or carried out by people with extreme views is taken very seriously, any

suggestion and identification of users as holding such views may prove a source of

concern. While a record was provided of how many people had used the applications,

no other information was made public. Facebook, however, records all users' actions

and interactions on the site while the extent of the information retained by the Telegraph as the application developer was also unclear.

The same point is applicable to the less detailed polls supported by the Democracy UK on Facebook page itself. The page featured several polls during the approach to the General Election in May, and continued to do so for several months afterwards. These asked page visitors to 'Rate the Debate', seeking their views on the Party Leaders' performances in the televised Leaders' Debates; who they wanted to be Prime Minister; and what result they wanted during the days immediately following the General Election when it was unclear what form the new government would take. While the questions (usually only one, with three or four options), were posted on the Democracy UK on Facebook page, anyone wishing to take part was directed to a separate Poll page. This revealed that not only were these being run by outside companies, but that they took the form of applications. Again, this ensured that the applications developers would have access to a certain amount of users' personal information including their Friends Lists. Many of these polls ran before the introduction of the dialogue box, at a time when Facebook automatically made certain information available to application developers.

An example of this feature of Democracy UK on Facebook was the poll posted on the group page in July following Prime Minister David Cameron's launch of his Big Society policy which sought to encourage more people to participate in various aspects of society. The 'Big Society = Big Idea?' poll was an application run by Kremsa, a commercial company with offices in the U.S.A. and in Europe, and which was discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Since the poll was actually an application, despite its brevity – it asked one question and offered just three options, yes, no and don't know – would-be participants had to consent to the application gaining access to their Basic

Information on Facebook. This included the user's name, profile photograph, gender, networks, user ID, list of Friends and any other information they had shared with everyone. This was a considerable amount of personal information being sought by a commercial company for the privilege of answering just one question. Nor did there seem to be any apparent reason why the company should require access to individuals' Friends Lists or 'any other information' (ibid) they have shared with everyone before allowing them to complete the poll.

Kremsa did make its privacy policy available, but the link was at that time provided unobtrusively at the bottom of the application page. This policy, which detailed the information that Kremsa collects and stores, was redrawn in 2011 as discussed in Chapter Five, including personal information which would be 'shared' with Facebook. While Kremsa's privacy policy emphasised that users 'voluntarily' provided the information they posted on their pages, use of the application was again conditional on them granting access to the requested information. The company warned in 2010, however, that it 'may also request optional information to support your use of our application' (ibid) such as date of birth, gender, and other 'demographic information'. Kremsa also collected content submitted during the use of its application, such as photographs, reviews, ratings, *voting options* and other material posted on the application. The list of information collected by Kremsa continued to grow: information about individual users and their Friends who used the application from any social network site they also used – in this case Facebook – 'in order to provide you with a more personalised experience' (ibid); user ID; information from users' posts; and if users were to email Kremsa, the contents of their correspondence, including attachments, would also be collected.

Conditional access

The collection of such extensive information, not just on the individual using the Kremsa application but also on their Friends, indicates the extent of users' personal information harvested by the company. Kremsa's explanation, similar to that of the companies examined in Chapter Five, was that the information was required in order to benefit users' experience while using the poll through the personalisation of services. Like Facebook itself, Kremsa offered a Privacy Policy which placed responsibility on users for the information they provided, but made access to the polls conditional on users' granting access to the requested personal information. Despite Kremsa's heavy emphasis on how seriously it regarded users' privacy, the information users posted on the website would be used for commercial reasons. Similar to Facebook and the political parties, Kremsa 'hailed' Facebook users by offering them the opportunity to record their views, and encouraging them to participate in the polls and reveal their thoughts and opinions. The brevity of the polls, however, indicated that the answers may not have been particularly important, but that the main priority was access to users' information, since there was little apparent need for the questions to be asked in an application format.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the fate of users' personal information was not particularly clear. The company used the hedge 'may' in regard to the provision of the information to other companies, and indicated that in the event it was merged or acquired by another company and/or acquired subsidiaries, these third parties would merely be 'require[d]' to honour Kremsa's privacy policy. The repeated use of 'may' and 'required' in these statements offered no clear assurances about the future of individuals' personal information, and at the same time ensured that Kremsa elided any legal responsibility for how it may be used in a variety of circumstances.

Before the introduction of its new Privacy Policy in 2011, the company repeatedly used the euphemism 'share' and like Facebook, it elided the more direct and stark description of inform to explain their practice of providing users' personal information to other parties by using 'share'. Kremsa 'shared' this information with a wide range of third parties, such as social networks, advertisers, and its service providers, although again there was repeated collocation of 'may' and 'share' in this context. This language used failed to state a definitive position, and indicated there was a possibility that users' personal information would be provided to external or associated companies. Users were therefore left unsure if and when their personal information would be provided to other companies, and in what manner these companies would use it. Kremsa may have provided the information, but did not accept responsibility for how it was used and failed to offer any assurance that steps would be taken to ensure the conditions contained within the Privacy Policy would be adhered to should it be subject to acquisition or merger.

Conclusion

As early as 2002, Meikle noted that major political parties which used websites had adapted their online communications style from the broadcast media; adopted the interactive capabilities of the Internet to allow users to consult documents at their leisure; and used registration of details in the operation of their recruitment methods (Meikle 2002:46). This investigation of political communication on Facebook during the 2010 General Election has shown that, in general, little has changed. In terms of the two party leaders, particularly David Cameron, and the three political parties, communication addressed a mass audience on the website and was addressed to everyone in general. What has changed is the systematic use of social media tools, and Facebook programming, to engage social network users in the work of canvassing; they

were comprehensively employed to distribute political messages, but from their domestic sphere and individually rather than collectively. The oft repeated suggestions on the political parties' pages that they 'share with friends' (Liberal Democrats; Conservatives; Labour); 'use our Facebook voting application to remind your friends to vote for change' (Conservatives); 'invite your friends to a Facebook event to help Labour and Gordon Brown win the UK General Election on 6 May' (Labour); and 'urge you to … find non--voters and persuade them to vote' (Liberal Democrats) were published on the presupposition that Facebook users would follow these instructions. The voters may have been encouraged to feel as if they were participating in the political process, but in fact their efforts in this regard offer a further example of Terranova's (2000) theory of unpaid labour on the Internet.

Politicians' pages focused on delivering their political messages and canvassing. There was little evidence of acknowledgement, with the exception of Nick Clegg, of individuals' responses to policy announcements, or that politicians were influenced by voters' comments. The role of Facebook users was predominantly restricted to that of supporting politicians' aims, rather than full participation in political debate and democratic governance. Power rested with the politicians, who harnessed the affordances offered by Facebook programmes, such as the Sharing, News Feed and Like programmes, that made voters and their Friends individually and collectively visible and identifiable, to gain access to information which was never before available within the public domain while retaining their own privacy. They were also able to urge private individuals to canvass on their behalf. These practices raise questions over the efficacy of political participation on Facebook and its potential to enhance democratic governance.

As a new forum for public communication between politicians and voters, Facebook benefits both political parties and private individuals. But while this new platform has much to offer existing supporters of the political parties, it has little to offer disengaged voters due to the lack of dialogic communication, politicians' lack of engagement with voters and their emphasis on encouraging page visitors to work on behalf of the parties. By responding to the posts and directives from the politicians, individuals were indicating that the politicians' voices were being heard. However, there was no reciprocal indication that voters' voices were being heard or were having an impact on policies, factors that may be truly effective in reversing the trend of political disengagement (McNair et al 2003). The political discourse disregarded the true balance of power – the political parties and politicians needed the support of voters in the General Election and power thereby lay in the hands of the voters (Pilkington 1997; Diamond 2004).

Accustomed as Facebook users are to the perpetual prompts from the website for them to take action within its borders, many individuals may not have been fully aware that by following these directives, they were in effect working for the parties. This begs the question as to whether the individuals who duly followed these online directives and 'shared' political communications with their Facebook Friends, would have been so willing to take part in traditional canvassing methods offline, such as door-to-door campaigning. The use of 'share' is also particularly significant, since in these circumstances it is a euphemism for 'tell' or 'inform' – but the politicians failed to 'share' with page visitors the information that they would be part of the campaign process, or indeed that they were already regarded as such. This begs the question whether politicians and Facebook users 'share' the same meaning of participation in the political process or in participatory culture.

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The Facebook algorithm which guarantees that when individuals visited these political pages, their Friends Lists, complete with profile photographs, would automatically appear on the page ensured that the calls to action seemed personal. However, communication from the politicians and the parties was predominantly impersonal and followed the same mass broadcast style as previously used in television broadcasts and election leaflets. Individuals were encouraged to reveal personal thoughts and beliefs, while those who provided the encouragement mainly maintained their social status, power and privacy.

Interacting with the Democracy UK on Facebook page also impacted upon privacy, something which is considered vital in the election process in the UK – with the electorate casting their votes anonymously in all elections as is normal practice in democracies. Like communication on the political pages, individuals expressed personal and political opinions on the Democracy UK on Facebook page and through the interactive polls. These opinions became visible not only to Friends, but to political and commercial companies. Individuals could be seen to interact and participate in political debate and while this was obviously a conscious decision, the Facebook participants may have been unaware of the potential for these pages to be copied and stored for indefinite lengths of time – by anyone who visited these public pages, while Facebook automatically stores all user content on the website. In Western cultures, where the threat of terrorism is never far from the political conscious since 2001, it is not impossible that interaction on these pages could have its price at some point. This is not as improbable as it may seem, given that both Facebook's and Kremsa's Privacy Policies make it clear that the companies will provide users' information if required under certain legal circumstances. It is worth remembering at this point the relentless campaign fought against Communists in the U.S.A. in the middle of the 20th century –

when anyone who was or had been identified as a Communist sympathiser was subject to government investigation and repression.

Private individuals may also be unaware of the concomitant issue of surveillance. Like Foucault's theory on the Panopticon, those who participated on political pages could follow the actions and values of a few political actors, but equally, like Mathiesen's Synopticon, they and their contributions were visible in varying extents to the politicians and tens of thousands of their supporters, as well as anyone else who visited these public pages. The potential political implications of digital technologies have already secured a place on researchers' radar. Wills and Reeves (2009) mapped a theoretical 'Facebook as a political weapon' scenario, in which data collection software and the Facebook Application Programming Interface are used to mine Facebook for details of anyone who may be specifically targeted in an election campaign – therefore not necessarily people who have interacted on political pages or whose 'Friends' have supplied their contact details. This scenario would be enabled by identifying potential political sympathisers through the content they upload on Facebook.

The research conducted for this thesis indicates that Wills and Reeves' scenario may be close to becoming reality. The 2010 General Election campaign on Facebook, indicates that such a process has already begun. The harvesting of personal information allowed those who participated in political debate on the social network to be, as set down in Foucault's (1978) theory on power, categorised and productive. As Papacharissi (2011) notes, individuals were participating in the political sphere from within their private domains.

> In contemporary democracies … not only do these pursuits
> progressively emerge out of the private realm, but it is frequently

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necessary for the individual to return to the private realm in order to

practice these newer civic habits with greater autonomy, flexibility

and potential for expression. (2010: 13).

This factor, coupled with the fact that this participation was taking place on a social

network, may have encouraged voters to take a more relaxed view of the information

they were imparting and the work they were performing on the politicians' behalf.

Facebook may certainly have offered politicians a platform on which they could be

'better placed to meet citizens wishes' (Negrine 200 8: 185) but participation on these

public pages proved costly to private individuals in terms of privacy. Simultaneously,

they remained subject to political communication that followed the allocution model –

addressed to no-one in particular and everyone in general - while the politicians

selected the topics of communication. Only Nick Clegg, Leader of the Liberal

Democrats, used the affordances of Facebook to adopt a more casual and personal

approach to communicating with individual Facebook users. While Facebook offers the

potential to reverse voter disengagement with the political process, this potential may

be compromised by continued political use of the social network as a marketing and

campaigning tool rather than as a means of engaging with voters.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Baym (2011) notes that eventually people come to regard once 'new' individual technologies as accepted practice. 'Through a process of *domestication* (italics original) they become taken-for-granted parts of everyday life, no longer seen as agents of change' (Baym 2011: 24). Her comment is relevant to Facebook, which in seven years has attained a prominent position in both the everyday lives of hundreds of millions of private individuals and in society. As discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, the social media platform has been adopted by commercial companies, broadcast media and political organisations as well as private individuals. Facebook is recognised as a platform which enables all categories of users to make comprehensive use of the tools associated with the development of Web 2.0 practices, such as new forms of communication, interactivity and participation, while also providing them with personal space online and enabling them to create and publish a self profile.

User-generated content

Facebook is dependent upon user-generated content; the affordances it offers private individuals encourage them to participate in the social network and to interact with others on the network. The social network's ethos of continuously increasing the range of communication tools and services it offers must be seen as the principal way in which it holds users' interest and loyalty. As online technical developments progress, other websites or platforms may offer the same range of services. By offering these on the social network, Facebook encourages users to remain on the platform, particularly since those who have uploaded a substantial amount of personal information and multi-

media to their Facebook pages may find it too onerous to transfer all of their content to and to establish new connections on another social network.

The continual developments also offer users new ways of responding to Facebook's continuous prompts to users to take action, while simultaneously uploading more content onto the social network. User-generated content thus transforms Facebook users into individuals who simultaneously produce and consume content on the same platform. It is also the means by which Facebook generates income, since the company aggregates users' personal information and 'shares' it with external companies including advertisers. The euphemism 'share' elides any commercial imperative and implies that Facebook's services are provided free of charge. The aggregation of this information enables users to be categorised for commercial purposes, and to be identified by their tastes, preferences and Friends and political beliefs. Taste, says Bourdieu, enables individuals to be classified; it ties them to 'a given position in social space' (1984). It also works to tie individuals to the identity they have created on Facebook.

Communication

The informal mode of address adopted by Facebook, its Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg, and its personnel in their communication with users, is a major factor in encouraging user to upload content. Also adopted by many social hierarchical organisations and commercial companies, as evidenced in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, this seeks to elide the social distance between said social hierarchical and commercial organisations and private individuals, and serves to disguise the power relationship between them. Facebook adopts an informal and personal mode of address towards network users as it seeks to create an environment of sociability and a relationship of equality and intimacy. The personal mode of address encourages private

individuals to continuously upload content and to make their thoughts, beliefs, emotions and actions visible. These practices may be seen to reflect Althusser's (1984) theory of interpellation, and Bourdieu's theories of power in social space as illustrated by the constant prompts to users to take action and to reveal personal information.

Much of the communication directed at private individuals on Facebook does not name them, but hails them, inviting them to respond. Althusser describes this process as one which can be viewed in any street when 'the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*' (1984: 48, emphasis original). Interpellation, argues Althusser, is the way by which individuals subconsciously recognise themselves as subjects of power. This form of communication simultaneously encourages them to 'work' for Facebook by providing the content which categorises them, and in this way turns them into 'products' (Meikle and Young forthcoming).

Power

As Bourdieu comments 'symbolic relations of power tend to reproduce and to reinforce the power relations that constitute the structure of social space' (Bourdieu 1989:21). By responding to the inducements to upload content Facebook users may be considered, in Bourdieu's terms, to have recognised their sense of one's place (ibid) in society, as well as a 'sense of the place of others' (ibid), such as political and media organisations. Facebook's emphasis that apps developers should provide users with a 'great … experience' (Facebook: Platform Policies 2011) suggests that these experiences, such as games and quizzes, may be considered as a reward for the content and information users provide. The process of encouraging Facebook's individual users to divulge personal information has been extended over the past three years. The registration process has remained very simple, but once registered, users are

continuously faced with prompts to provide personal information which enables them to be categorised. These prompts are issued not only by Facebook, but by governmental, political and commercial organisations via communications on their publicly accessible pages. Power is made manifest on Facebook in various ways: the constant prompts urging users into self-revelation; the constant threat of exclusion if users do not provide access to personal information; and the lack of control users' have over their own information and content.

The majority of these prompts also inevitably end with a question which encourages users to respond, ensuring that they are uploading content and publicising their thoughts, activities and emotions. Users' emotions play a significant part in the process, as broadcasters, as considered in Chapter Six, seek to tighten the emotional bonds viewers may feel for favourite programmes. Use of Facebook, however, also enables both broadcasters and politicians to access the thoughts, emotions and activities of individuals which would have been inaccessible before the development of social media. Furthermore, it enables political parties to communicate in an apparently direct manner with visitors to their pages. Their communication takes the form of broadcast communication, one to many, which echoes their communication via traditional media platforms such as television, radio and newspapers. It is addressed to no-one in particular and to anyone in general, despite the personal and informal mode of address.

Again, these hierarchical organisations direct users to take certain courses of action and encourage them to respond on the public pages, and to upload posts of a personal nature. This practice exemplifies Foucault's theory of power as he elucidates in *The History of Sexuality* (1990/1976)

> more important was the multiplication of discourses concerning
>
> sex in the field of exercise of power itself; an institutional

incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a

determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it

spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak through explicit

articulation and endlessly accumulated detail (1990: 18).

Communication on Facebook between the social network company, broadcasters and politicians mirrors Foucault's illustration of the discourse of sex. Individual users are continually urged to speak about themselves and to do so constantly as these agencies seek to garner personal information. As Foucault further states, the reason behind the incitement to discourse (ibid: 18) is to subject the information gathered to 'analysis, stocktaking, classification, and specification' (ibid: 24). Through discourse, users are likely to provide more information about themselves than they may by answering questions during the registration process due to the personal mode of address, and the placing of these questions in the less formal location of their home pages, on Friends' Walls, or on a public forum comprised of people with whom they have something in common such as political beliefs.

Power is again manifest in the surveillance and monitoring of users' content on Facebook. Facebook Inc. records all users' content and activities on the social network for analysis. As discussed in Chapter Four, it connects circles of Friends, and categorises users by their Friendships and connections; information that is freely supplied by users. Fuchs (2011) states that the mass surveillance operated by Facebook 'is personalized and individualized at the same time ... for this form of Internet surveillance to work, permanent input and activity of the users are needed' (Fuchs 2011a: 138).

Privacy

This thesis has examined how Facebook users' interactivity and participation on the social network has impacted upon their privacy. It has concentrated on the ways in which users' participation and interaction on Facebook with the social network, commercial, media and political organisations impacts on their ability to control access to their personal information. Nissenbaum (2010) argues that individuals' expectations of privacy are influenced by context, especially within the new social sphere, and Facebook offers users a range of privacy settings, apparently in recognition of individuals' wish to control, within context, access to the personal content they upload on the site. But users may only exert the level of control which the company, through its algorithms, allows them – a fact which Facebook continuously seeks to elide by refusing to acknowledge responsibility for these technical programmes. Livingstone's (2005) observation that the public/private divide has always been subject to constant pressure by new forms media and the demands of profit, participation, and governance is particularly relevant to Facebook as this thesis has shown.

While the level of control users are accorded appears to have been extended with successive changes to Facebook's privacy policy over the past three years, the true situation is somewhat different. Facebook takes individuals' use of the social network as agreement with its privacy policy and terms of use. Facebook foregrounds in its privacy policy that users both own and control the content they upload to the site. Simultaneously, the company's Terms of Use statement clearly indicates that, by using the social network, users are granting the company the right to use this information at its own discretion. Individuals are advised they can only use Facebook if they agree with both the privacy policy and the terms of use statement; if they do not, they are advised not to register with the social network. Users may, however, access and use the

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social network without formally agreeing to either document. Developers also adopt

Facebook's approach to use of their applications. Users are not obliged to read either

the privacy policies or terms of use documents of these companies before they use the

applications. Developers are obliged by Facebook, however, to present the Dialogue

Box requiring users to consent to the companies accessing certain elements of their

personal information.

Exclusion

By using Facebook they are considered to have agreed to the conditions of use;

but they have a choice over whether or not to allow developers to access the requested

personal information and thus allowing it to be used, categorised, and passed among

diverse Web companies for commercial purposes. By giving their consent, they are

allowed to fully participate in Facebook and in the applications made available on the

social network by a growing number of companies and organisations. They are

therefore included in these online communities; if they refuse, they are excluded.

Pressure to agree, meanwhile, is exerted by the ability of developers to publish the

profile photographs and names of their Friends who already use the relevant

applications. Furthermore, the commercial significance of users' News Feeds and

Friends Lists is evident in the way that applications developers are able to use both as

promotional tools.

Developers' application of the inclusion/exclusion ultimatum reflects its use by

Facebook itself. Users who do not want their personal information made available to

external companies through Facebook Platform and Connect are advised they may

disconnect from the services. But this course of action, Facebook warns, is likely to

affect users' ability to make full use of the social network. This advice implies that the

resulting impact is due to technical reasons, but the company not only fails to specify

whether this is indeed the case, but also fails to acknowledge its responsibility for the programming which may determine users' exclusion from certain elements of the social network. Full use of Facebook and all the activities available on the network is therefore dependent on access to users' personal information and content.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of this thesis were to

1. To examine the impact on individuals' privacy of their participation and interaction on and with Facebook, and on the publicly accessible pages established on the social network platform by commercial and professional organisations.

2. To examine how power is reflected on the social platform.

The objectives were to establish how commercial and state hierarchies used the social platform, and how privacy and power issues were negotiated. These aims and objectives have therefore been achieved: this project has established that the impact on individuals' privacy of their participation on the public pages established on Facebook by commercial and professional organisations is substantial. Users' power to control access to their personal information has been greatly reduced by successive technical programmes introduced by Facebook Inc. that enable external companies and organisations to determine to which information they want access, and to refuse access to their applications if users do not comply.

Simultaneously, this thesis has shown that this is the predominant way in which power is manifest on the social network, since the issue of access to personal information and content is what determines whether individuals can participate fully on the social platform. Facebook Inc. holds the reins of power, since the company decides which privacy settings are available to private individuals, and which programmes are introduced to the network to enable external agencies to overcome the settings imposed

by individuals on their personal content. This thesis offers some significant original contributions to social media, in particular Facebook, research. It provides a rigorous investigation of the social network's policies on users' privacy and the platform's development; an exploration of the balance of power on the platform; and challenges the positive discourse of 'sharing' on Facebook by which the company elides responsibility for the ways in which personal data is gathered, subsequently disseminated across wide ranging Web companies and organisations, and stored for indeterminate periods. It recognises that access to users' personal information has become the principal bargaining tool in determining full participation on Facebook, and furthermore charts the way in which Facebook has moved from a privately enclosed social network to a global and public Web space.

Semantic Web

As noted in Chapters Four and Five, the affordances which Facebook offers its users have been subject to continuous change. In the three years duration of this research project, there have been significant changes on the social network which I suggest are driven by Zuckerberg's stated aim at the 2010 F8 Conference for Developers. As indicated in Chapter Five, he aims to create a new structure for the Web, one based on private individuals and their webs of connections with Facebook at its centre. The notion of the semantic Web, or Web 3.0, is not new, it has already been considered (web3.org 2011; Flew 2008), while Facebook as a social network has already been developed around this principle. If Facebook is to be the hub of this new Web structure, as Zuckerberg intends, this implies that the personal information of the hundreds of millions of the social network's users must be the focal point.

This may be affected by Facebook users' expectations of control over to whom their personal information and content are visible and accessible and, between 2008 and

2011, Facebook introduced an extensive range of privacy options to allow users more control over their personal information. Simultaneously, however, there have been significant changes to the social network. Firstly, the boundary between Facebook and the rest of the Web has been gradually dismantled, as considered in Chapter Four; secondly, the number of applications mounted on Facebook Platform has greatly increased. This is linked to the third significant change: the fact that the affordances offered to external companies and organisations which mount applications on the network have been extended, making the process easier and enabling apps developers to retain users' information indefinitely. The introduction of Real-Time updates programme and social plugins ensure that developers are continuously informed about any changes their apps' users make to their preferences and page settings. The introduction of the one-off Dialogue Box, discussed in Chapter Five, enables developers to restrict access to their apps on an inclusion/exclusion basis: only individuals who grant access to the required personal information are allowed to use the apps. Facebook, meanwhile, also automatically makes public users' names, profile photographs and Friends Lists on the Web.

These developments suggest that Facebook Inc. has been gradually working towards its goal to restructure the Web and to place private individuals at its centre. They have ensured that the personal information that users upload to Facebook is available to growing numbers of social and commercial hierarchical companies that share it with other companies on the Web. While some of this information may already have been available on the Web, it would have been in diverse locations. On Facebook, however, this information and more is available in aggregate form, in context, and linked with potentially identifiable individuals.

This new Web wide direction for Facebook was, however, first signalled by Zuckerberg in 2009 during an interview in which he said that the construction of 'one worldwide platform where you can just type in anyone's name, find the person you are looking for and communicate with them' (Zuckerberg (2009a) in Hempel 2009). Most Facebook users, however, continue to regard the social network as a means of communicating with their off-line friends and acquaintances, not as a means to contact people they do not know. The growing number of applications mounted on Facebook, and the affordances provided to apps developers, indicates that they are seen as a way of overcoming users' privacy settings in order to access their personal information. This then moves into the commercial environment on the Web where it circulates between companies. Ultimately, users may have to choose between accepting that interaction and participation on Facebook will result in much, if not all, of their personal information being accessible to a far greater audience than expected, or excluding themselves from many of the activities available on the social network or Facebook itself as Zuckerberg seeks to progress his aim to situate Facebook at the heart of an open Web.

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