Governing the Facebook Self: Social Network Sites and Neoliberal Subjects

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Stephen Owen
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The boy, Oliver. This, like everything, I do for you. I love you mate.

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'Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. Already, in the Eleventh Edition, we're not far from that point. But the process will still be continuing long after you and I are dead. Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak,' he added with a sort of mystical satisfaction. 'Has it ever occurred to you, Winston, that by the year 2050, at the very latest, not a single human being will be alive who could understand such a conversation as we are having now?'

—George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

No, that's not it, the problem isn't language, but the limits of sayability.

—Michel Foucault, letter to Daniel Defert [1966], cited in Defert 2013: 32
Introduction: Facebook as a Space of Freedom?

George Orwell's vision of ubiquitous surveillance in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* conjures up a dystopian scenario that has been interpreted by many as a nightmare in which people's freedom is limited and regulated by the all-seeing gaze of Big Brother. Decades later the all-seeing surveillance gaze is picked up by Michel Foucault who, like Orwell, has had his panopticon metaphor interpreted in a similar way. For many readers of Orwell and Foucault this aspect of ubiquitous surveillance is the beginning and end of their engagement with either author's ideas. But such hasty shorthand interpretations of both Orwell and Foucault as dystopian commentators on the notion of surveillance overlook the more important aspects of each of their works. Both Orwell and Foucault are far more concerned with what one can say and be said—and subsequently, thought—and from this perspective both Orwell and Foucault are both very much concerned about the closing of the 'universe of discourse' (c.f. Marcuse 1964). This thesis too is concerned with a variation on Marcuse's theme of the 'closing of the universe of discourse', namely how Facebook contributes to an ever-narrowing range of acceptable behaviours. Facebook now represents one of the most sophisticated ways in which we willingly collaborate in the closing of our capacity to engage in politically meaningful communication. Thus the focus for this thesis is with how Facebook enables the logics of contemporary neoliberal society to be played out in shaping subjectivities within the domain of free time. That is to say, politics and political insight are rearticulated into forms of understanding that are not merely non-threatening to the status quo but actively contribute to embedding and extending neoliberal logics into the subjectivities of its participants.

In a very short period of time, since its launch among Ivy League colleges in the United States in 2004, Facebook has come to be embraced by hundreds of millions of users who
have signed up to the site. The site is now a primary site of socialising for many of its users who use the site to keep in contact with their friends and family and to co-ordinate social activities. While much of an individual's interactions with Facebook are presentations of the self, they are also social in nature. Indeed, Facebook is a social network site and users write for an audience as well as engaging in asynchronous social interaction. While the Facebook user's Profile and their own perspective is from an egocentric nodal point of a social network, it is the social aspect of Facebook that defines and accounts for its popularity with users. The social aspect of Facebook also problematises the construction of the self. The self could perhaps be more properly understood as a co-construction insofar as it is produced with an audience in mind, it is constructed through ongoing performative interactions, as well as consisting of the contributions of Friends. The Facebook self is a social self, and it is one that is augmented due to Facebook's unique architecture.

While Facebook's role as a facilitator of social networks and self-expression can be seen as a conduit through which individuals connect with the world around them, it also acts as a means through which they might gain insight into their own self. Facebook has been described as an 'architecture of disclosure' (Marichal 2012) and users often feel compelled to maintain visibility within it. As a result the individual's relationship with self and others is augmented. It is here that subjectivity-building and social relationships are entwined with myriad power relations engendered by both augmented relationships and the digital surveillance enclosure of Facebook. It is in these ways that relationships of power, knowledge, and subjectivity are connected. The entwining process is built into the architecture of Facebook and makes its present felt almost as soon as a new user signs up for a Facebook account.
Becoming a Facebook User

Both the design of Facebook and the 'space' of networked publics operate as structures that Facebook users must house their online personas within. From the very outset Facebook users find their behavioural choices limited. The options available to the Facebook user during the signup process provide a structure within which to fill out their personal details. The design choices present within the template constrain the available options to the Facebook user. These limitations can be seen as reinforcing already existing norms such as gender and race (Van House 2011) which have power effects upon the Facebook users' construction of the self. In this sense the design itself facilitates processes of categorisation and normalisation to which the user is subjected. Here then the very structural design of the Facebook Profile interface reinforces existing power relations and norms. From the very outset of their experience with the site Facebook users are subjected to the operation of power. The very act of constructing a Facebook Profile entails a purposive set of acts that constitute 'writing oneself into being' (Sundén 2003). From the outset the choices available to the Facebook user both enable and constrain the semi-permanent display of self that exists as the Profile page. The elements that allow users to provide information about themselves within pre-given categories tend to reiterate existing identity norms whilst masking the contingency of these categories. The Facebook Profile page is then filled in with spaces provided for the display of tastes through listing the user's favourite films, music, and interests, along with the ability to display prominently particular relations with family members and romantic partners. While a great deal of effort may or may not go into constructing the Profile page it does not constitute the main site of behaviour or interaction on Facebook. Most activity occurs through the News Feed page which is viewable to each particular Facebook user and displays incoming activity broadcast by their Friends and Pages to which they are subscribed. Here too is the main interface for the Facebook user to create a 'post' in the form of a 'Status
Update' (marked by an empty field prompting the Facebook user “What's on your mind?”), a photo uploader, or the option to 'ask question'. These posts are broadcast to the Facebook user's network.

Facebook is predicated on displays of self. This is true of the posts generated by a Facebook user's Friends and viewed on the incoming News Feed page. It is also true of the Facebook user who, as a prosumer\(^1\) (Ritzer, Dean and Jurgenson 2012), both consumes content in the Facebook environment as well as produces content. Furthermore, Facebook is predicated upon being a social network site. Content is distributed to the Facebook user's social network and each post becomes a site of further sociality in the form of 'likes' and comments. A Status Update or photo, once posted, might generate a number of comments from those in the Facebook user's audience and itself become a site of back and forth discussion between all participants to whom it is visible. A great deal of the activity on Facebook revolves around these sorts of 'likes' and comments as the content produced by each Facebook user enables further social dialogue.

**Facebook and the Politics of the Everyday**

A key orientation of this thesis is its locating of power and governance in spaces outside of the purview of the state. Following Foucault, along with others such as de Certeau (1984) and Williams (1992), the domestic sphere and the terrain of the everyday are identified as important sites and regimes in which power and government occur. The research conducted for this thesis explored the everyday use of the Social Network Site (SNS) Facebook and the

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\(^1\) The concept of and 'prosumption' (also 'prosumer') is a portmanteau of 'production' and consumption' and refers to acts in which these are joined. The concept has a history that can be traced back at least as far as futurologist Alvin Toffler (1980) and has experienced a resurgence in contemporary studies such as the work of Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010).
ways in which this facilitates the operation of power. For those surveyed Facebook has quickly come to take a central place in their lives with 9 out of 10 accessing Facebook at least once a day. For many users Facebook was a constant presence insofar as it has become something of an 'ambient technology' that is constantly 'around' the individual. Facebook is part of the 'everyday', lived ecology of media use. The ability for most web browsers to open multiple tabs in each window means that, for many users, Facebook is constantly updating in the background and is always a mere click away from providing up to the second information. Furthermore many individuals receive alerts on their smartphones and tablets whenever someone posts to their timeline or comments on one of their posts. In these instances, Facebook alerts are semantically elevated to demanding the same levels of attention as a phone call, SMS, or email.

The elevation to indispensable is often not immediate at first. Inez, a 33 year-old self-employed worker in Spain's 'wellness' industry, explained that she resisted at first but found that it was 'difficult to live without' because of its ease in facilitating contact with so many disparate groups of people rather than needing to coordinate many emails with connections all over the world. Being self-employed and using a computer to organise her business Inez found that Facebook was also particularly convenient for promoting her business. Her professional and personal connections exist on the same plain through the Facebook interface. For Alison, a 44 year-old chef, and Mary, a 44 year-old paralegal, who do not use Facebook while they are at work, Facebook was one of the first things they turned to when they returned home after a day's work. Clem, a 37 year-old PhD candidate and consultant, used her iPad to connect to Facebook and found that the technology itself allowed her to peruse the site in a leisurely fashion while doing other things like watching TV. She accessed Facebook from multiple devices at multiple locations: 'I access Facebook from my computer,
my work computer, or my PhD computer, and my personal computer, and my phone. And I access it maybe 5 or 6 times a day from the different areas'. Clem's use highlights the mobility of the site and the ease in which it is able to be accessed from multiple points. This goes some way to explaining the ubiquity of the site in that users are not restricted to any one spatial or technological environment when using Facebook. In a sense, Facebook follows them everywhere to the point that it is omnipresent.

![Image 0.1: “Seek help at www.facebookaddicts.com.au”](image01.png)

Interestingly, 33% of those surveyed responded that they often accessed Facebook at unusual times such as after waking up in the middle of the night. For these participants Facebook has come to occupy a central place in their lives². This phenomenon can be understood as one that is afforded by the mobile nature of communications and the ability to access Facebook on devices such as smartphones which are often kept close to the owner, even when asleep. 78% of participants reported accessing Facebook from their phones, suggesting a penetration into the lives of users as a sort of 'always-on/always-on-you' technology as identified by

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² Image 0.1 is an award-winning cake depicting Facebook as a pill or drug. The label on the bottle reads 'Login every 3-4 hours. May cause procrastination'. The title “Seek help at www.facebookaddicts.com.au” is an ironic and knowing reference to the phenomenon of Facebook users feeling compelled to use the site numerous times a day.
Turkle (2008). Survey participants reported one of the reasons that they checked their Facebook at odd hours was because the Facebook alert tone occasionally woke them up, prompting them to check their smartphones for the content of their notifications. While this might appear to be an extreme example of Facebook's penetration of the everyday (and night), consider the ways in which face-to-face communication is often disturbed by interlocutors checking their smartphones whilst engaged in conversation. Survey participants reported doing this very thing, something both academic and newspaper reports verify and lament (Gergen 2002; Turkle 2012; Turkle 2011; Walford 2012) as the phenomenon of technologically-driven 'co-presence' comes to intrude upon face-to-face encounters.

Through engaging in such social dialogue users also come to conceptualise the correct use of Facebook in various different ways, as did the participants that feature in research on which this thesis is based. For example, consider Julia, a 19 year-old student living in Sydney, Australia. She uses Facebook to engage in socialising and to maintain a vast network of social connections across the world. She uses the site to post photos of her socialising with the new friends she has been making since moving to Sydney and to keep her Facebook Friends abreast of the new experiences she has been having at university.

I have a lot of Facebook Friends. 863. And I've met every one of them in person. Some of them are from home, there's my family, there's people who I was living with and the people I met when I was living overseas, and people I met while travelling. I use it like a bit of a networking tool actually... so for keeping in contact with useful people I meet (Julia).

While Julia's use of Facebook as a means to socialise is not particularly extraordinary, the ways in which she manages and maintains her social network connections, and the reasons for her doing so, mirror the professional use of Facebook as a 'networking tool'. In many ways Julia's personal use of Facebook reproduces the logics and rationalities of the professional world and can be understood as a manifestation of an instrumental form of
friendship in which 'Friends' are kept only as long as they are useful. Likewise, one's own self must be kept as desirable as possible to their Friends. Julia maintains an image of herself as 'non-risky' so that she will not be deleted by one of her 'useful' Friends. She does so in an effort to maintain these useful connections so as to leverage them in the future, such as in her example of having accommodation in exotic places around the world.

Julia's use of Facebook also mirrors the ways in which contemporary professionals are advised and instructed to use Facebook through numerous media articles and internet guides. Job seeker blogs and recruitment sites advise professionals on how best to use Facebook to get their next job. Job seekers are advised to keep their image 'clean' and to avoid any unsavoury posts, to maintain a large group of social network connections in the hope of leveraging them to gain a job, and to promote oneself through the judicious use of self-promotional status updates that increase one's desirability as an employee (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of this sort of 'expert' advice). Whereas professionals are constantly made aware of the best ways in which to use Facebook professionally, people like Julia are under no such instruction or imperative to use Facebook in particular ways. That they do demonstrates the context creep of professional and neoliberal logics, and their reproduction through the sphere of the social.

These slippages between the personal and professional are for the most part unavoidable. Facebook's very design, its digital architecture, collapses diverse groups of connections—family, friends, lovers, acquaintances, co-workers, and employers—into the one category of 'Friend'. As a result, the normally discrete spaces within which various comportments of the self are presented to relevant interlocutors are collapsed into one flattened architectural space. Facebook users are presented then with the choice of which sort of self to present to a vast
and overlapping audience comprising these usually compartmentalised relationships. We all present differently when physically co-present with different people. The ways in which we interact with our close friends will be very different to the ways in which we interact with a grandparent, for instance, or in a formal work setting with an employer. We may even present ourselves differently when one-on-one with a close friend as opposed to socialising in a group of friends. The architecture of Facebook complicates these sorts of presentations of self as our usually discrete groups of connections are equally able to view our behaviour on Facebook.\footnote{Facebook introduced the ability to demarcate audiences in 2011, largely in response to Google's SNS 'Google+' and its ability to create 'Circles', or categories of audiences toward whom content could be shared or restricted. Based on the research conducted for this thesis it is not clear that many Facebook users take advantage of this feature.}

Julia, introduced above, said that she was well aware of the challenges this dynamic posed. She discussed the need to curb her normal behaviours such as swearing, which was something that she would do when talking with her friends, because of the broader groups of 'Friends' she kept on Facebook. This trivial example demonstrates the broader dynamics engendered by the architecture of Facebook as a space in which particular forms of visibility are afforded by social forms of surveillance as well as being informed by, and reproducing, broader neoliberal governmental rationalities. As an individual using Facebook Julia is responsible for deciding on the appropriate comportment of herself when using the site such that none of her broader connections of 'Friends' will feel offended by inappropriate behaviours such as swearing. Thus for Julia swearing is framed as a 'risky' behaviour that diminishes her desirability as a 'Friend', the cessation of which (through deleting or 'unFriending') jeopardises the sorts of opportunities Julia cherishes from her Friends such as staying in their houses for free while travelling around the world. Julia must monitor her own
actions and conduct herself in such a way that she does not place at risk any future opportunities that might arise through her cultivation of hundreds of Facebook Friends.

While Facebook users are aware of their visibility to their Friends, and adjust their behaviour accordingly, they also turn this gaze upon themselves. This occurs through both an internalisation of the audience gaze and concomitant processes of self-monitoring as well as through the visible representation of their own behaviours, the Facebook Profile. Facebook becomes a ‘technology of the self’ (Foucault 1988), a form of self-writing in which users both produce a visible representation of the self, as well as engaging in an ongoing performative construction of the self. Far from merely existing as a site of leisure and socialising, Facebook is implicated in the very serious work of producing subjectivity while intersecting with a number of dimensions of life such as the professional sphere, the personal, and the social. As Julia's example demonstrates Facebook allows neoliberal logics to creep into the non-professional aspects of users' lives. Facebook becomes an important object of research then as a space through which the dominant rationality of the present—neoliberalism—is reproduced and extended throughout the social sphere and into the very subjectivity of its users. The ways in which these reproductions occur can be understood through the concept of performativity (Butler 1988).

**Performative Constructions of the Self on Facebook**

Facebook becomes a space to produce the self *performatively* through an ongoing everyday engagement with the site. Various aspects of the self can be performatively reiterated by highlighting a commitment to one's particular obligations or by simply rendering oneself visible within the governable terrain of the site. While performing these roles users often demonstrate restraint so that their posts conform to a spectrum of acceptable claims and
behaviours related to the particular subjectivity they are occupying and portraying. Performances are shaped by a number of formal and informal regulations such as the 'truths' embedded within the multiple discourses that contribute to the performative constructions of the self. For example, in performing the subjectivity of being a student and all that this entails, whether it is the self-disciplined and diligent scholar submitting assignments on time at the expense of all social commitments or the slacker whose social commitments intrude upon their studies, subjectivity is performed with an eye to 'the rules of the game' of being a student. In these ways numerous power relations are manifested whenever users draw upon one or other discursive materials as part of their presentation of the self. Indeed the very act of performing the self, of being a performatively constructed subject, is an exercise of power in Foucault's sense of any given exercise of power is a productive act (Foucault 1984).

Another way in which Facebook exhibits an effect on the behaviours of its users is found in relation to the constant 'pull' of Facebook. For some, the use of Facebook itself is one that is characterised by an almost-compulsory engagement with the site. Users must repeatedly use the site to stay abreast of the activities of one's Friends while also maintaining a visible presence to others. To be absent can be cause for suspicion, or worse, to miss social and professional opportunities. If a user misses an invitation to a social event organised through Facebook because they were not online this is seen as their fault, rather than the host's for not contacting them by other means. Increasingly, this is one of the emerging norms of Facebook etiquette, namely that not to be logged on is a form of deviance. Indeed, Facebook itself contributes overtly to creating and sustaining this norm by sending email reminders to users pointing out the 'interesting stories' that they have missed. Hence not only is the individual user regulated by the moral and ethical values deemed (by other users) to be relevant to their
particular performative subjectivity, Facebook works on individual users through its particular form of panopticonic surveillance, framed as helpful reminders.

During the observation component of the research it became clear that different people used Facebook in different ways. Some provided scant, selected traces of their daily lives while others lived their lives out loud and through Facebook, broadcasting and amplifying their activities to a select audience of hundreds and occasionally thousands. In the research interviews and survey users reported the ways in which they came to manage their Facebook use and the rules they themselves applied to themselves when using Facebook. These applied to the times when they would choose to use Facebook. University students Isobel, Jason, and Spike discussed the need to turn Facebook off when they had academic work to focus on. Current and former Facebook gamers Brenda, Brigid, Ted, and Clem all discussed the temptation that Facebook games, such as 'FarmVille', provided causing them to keep coming back to Facebook. Interestingly, all four framed the use of Facebook games in terms of ethical or moral judgments as can be seen from their comments: 'idiot games' (Brigid), a 'time vortex' and a 'cord' needing to be 'cut' (Clem), or 'mindless' and 'a bit like turning on the TV when you come home from work and you can just get sucked in and it takes your life and you're not alive anymore you're just doing, you know, Farmville, or just whatever game you've got' (Ted). In contrast to these descriptions Brenda, who defined one aspect of her subjectivity as a 'gamer', argued that her use of Facebook games was morally preferable to watching TV which she framed as a passive activity. These experiences demonstrate the ways in which users create their own frameworks of media use through constructing their own senses of ethical or moral judgments as rules of use.
It is the exploration of the performative construction of the self, a nexus of individualising and totalising power relations, and of the production of unfreedom within spaces of freedom, that this thesis examines. Facebook, through its design and the intersection of various discourses, facilitates the individualisation of its users and encourages them to engage in the work of reproducing neoliberal rationalities through the performative production of the self. At the same time Facebook, while itself still a relatively new technology, has become almost ubiquitous in its use and insertion into the everyday. Facebook has become a primary space through which contemporary socialising occurs and serves as a conduit for many types of relationships. While remarkable in the ways it has augmented social relationships it has come to be experienced by its users as being entirely unremarkable, indeed it is largely seen as a 'normal' thing to use. Together these paradoxes—individualising yet totalising, unfreedom within freedom, and extraordinary being experienced as ordinary—provide a productive tension that makes Facebook an important object of research into the reproduction of political rationalities within the everyday. These complexities will be unpacked and become themes that run through the thesis.

The thesis broadly sought to inquire into the ways Facebook users experience the site's digital surveillance architecture, and how they might internalise the relationships of power engendered by the mutual surveillance gaze. It further sought to examine the relationship between presentations of the self online with users' offline self. Finally, the question of how and to what extent these online and offline identities might be enmeshed with broader political rationalities of the present. These questions were pursued by looking into the entanglements of Facebook use in relation to spheres of employment and work, in relation to issues of privacy and surveillance, and finally in relation to the commercialization of users' data and personal information.
Ultimately this is a thesis about subjectivity and the ways in which this is shaped by neoliberal values. Julia is not an isolated example of this phenomenon. Not all people participate in Facebook in the same way, and many users of Facebook would argue that they are unaffected by this. But what this thesis will demonstrate is that it is not possible to participate in the Facebook domain without Facebook's structure and internal logic shaping the subjectivities of its participants to greater or lesser degrees.

As the participants discussed in this thesis demonstrate Facebook is used for a multitude of purposes and in many different ways. Facebook users post 'Status Updates' that inform their Friends of their activities and experiences as well as to discuss their future desires and projects of the self, such as those participants who used the site to announce their intentions to master their bodies through diet and exercise. Much of the material posted to Facebook through Status Updates is a sort of mundane diarising of the everyday in which users document their ordinary goings on. Other Facebook users post less of this quotidian content choosing only to post Status Updates that project their exciting life moments. By omitting the mundane, everyday activities some users' Facebook Profiles stand in as a sort of 'highlight reel' that suggests a life far less ordinary than that experienced in the real world.

As the participants in the thesis also demonstrate, many Facebook users come to the site with their own rules and guidelines such as whom they will and will not connect with as Facebook Friends. This often revolves around the Friending (or not) of work colleagues or relates to practices of self-censoring, the kind of which Julia alluded to by making an effort not to swear on the site. This aspect of rules or guidelines for use is interesting for the fact that Facebook has very few formal rules of use relating to what can and cannot be posted. That norms do arise relating to the use of Facebook is testament to the ways in which social
etiquette and customs circulate, many emanating from 'moral entrepreneurs', and come to operate discursively to be taken up and internalised by Facebook users when engaging with the site. Thinking in this way about the role of norms and customs serves as an entry point for understanding Facebook as a site that facilitates the operation of power.

(Re)Producing Political Order

Facebook is a cultural artefact imbued with relationships of power and facilitates the reproduction of political order. Its architectural design, the discourses that shape user behaviours, and the ways in which it augments relationships all contribute to the production of well-regulated selfhood and political order. Understanding Facebook in this way is a crucial step toward recognising its importance as an object of social research. But why should we care about Facebook reproducing neoliberalism? This thesis lays clear the ways that government, following Foucault, can be understood as an ensemble of practices that occur outside of the state and contributes to the processes through which people become subjects. The 'norms', etiquettes, and discourses related to Facebook practices all contribute to the reproduction of political order. Cultural artefacts and practices are hence identified as sites through which political order is reproduced and the operation of power is facilitated.

Facebook extends the reach of neoliberal rationalities and operates as a space in which its users are able to both present and meditate upon their actions as moral subjects. As a technology of the self, Facebook allows its users to write themselves into being through largely informal practices of self-writing and to later reflect on these writings in the form of the Facebook Timeline. The morality of the neoliberal subject is ultimately linked to the political and economic spheres of production and consumption (Bauman 2005). Entrepreneurial self-government is largely about producing good, employable citizen-
consumers and thus extending the governmental reach into the sphere of the everyday while
punishing (or threatening to, via the risk presented in 'life after social networking discourses')
behaviour that is outside an ever-decreasing range of acceptable 'normal' behaviours. The
corollary of this is that these processes are interlinked with ethics. Hence people behaving
outside of these acceptable ranges of behaviour are cast as immoral. As Peter Kelly notes:

as workers in liberal democracies we are free to choose and act, but to be
employable or successful in the world of flexible capitalism we have to choose
and act in certain ways—or suffer the consequences (Kelly 2013: 11).

The stakes here, then, are those of freedom. The reproduction of neoliberal values ultimately
relies upon the paradox of producing unfreedom within freedom. It is about producing a
regulated range of acceptable behaviours by encouraging free individuals to adhere to an
ever-decreasing range of acceptable behaviours, and to cast those outside of these acceptable
behaviours as unethical and immoral. That those who fail to conform with the acceptable
behaviours are often linked to lower social classes or those outside the spaces of success
within neoliberal capitalism reinforces the notion of the 'deserving poor'. Those that are
struggling to keep afloat within the precarious seas of neoliberal capitalism are somehow cast
as deserving of their fates due to their supposedly inherent immorality (Sayer 2005).

It has been argued by Zygmunt Bauman (2005; 2007) that the present era is marked by a shift
from individuals as primarily 'producers' to a mode of existence that is primarily that of
'consumers'. He terms this 'consumerism' and traces the shifts from industrial capitalism
through the dismantling of the welfare state, along with the flight of capital to developing
countries (in which poorly paid workers perform the work that was previously performed in
the West) and contends that a concomitant shift occurred from the 'work ethic' to the
'consumer ethic'. Bauman contends that in each case, the work ethic and the consumer ethic,
political order is ensured as it is reproduced by those interpelling the ethic, performing the
work, and consuming the goods. Facebook becomes a means through which this ethic is extended into the everyday, where individuals are themselves commodified, and where spectacular consumption is displayed through the Facebook Profile. Truly, this is the protestant work ethic 2.0. Hence, it is the reproduction of political order that constitutes the stakes of the phenomena that this thesis investigates.

Thesis Overview

Many of the core concerns of this thesis fit squarely within the interdisciplinary field of internet studies and these are outlined in Chapter 1 of the thesis. Internet researchers have long been interested in the intertwining of identity and the internet, and the ways in which cyberspaces facilitate social relationships and forms of identity play and work (Rheingold 2000; Turkle 1995; Turkle 2004). The shift from the anonymous to 'nonymous' internet (Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008) and the emergence of web 2.0 and social media saw concomitant shifts in online self-expression and performances of the self. Internet use became less 'niche' and the purview of computer 'geeks', and more an everyday technology in which everybody began to take part in reproducing and rearticulating the self and their relationships online. Put simply, 'cyberculture' simply became 'culture'.

However, these spaces of web 2.0 were also tightly constructed spaces owned and governed by corporate entities. Far from the 'Wild West' of early internet spaces (c.f. Rheingold 2000; Turkle 1995) many social media platforms were built as 'walled gardens' of capital for the pursuit of profit. That these tightly constructed and governed spaces should possess certain architectural features that affect user behaviours became core concerns for those researching internet use. Lawrence Lessig's (2006) maxim that 'code is law' recognises the ways in which the digital code that 'build' online spaces also guides and governs the behaviours of those who
inhabit these spaces. Elsewhere danah boyd (2011; 2008a; 2008b) has constructed a typology of the sorts of spaces SNSs present to users and the affects that these have upon them in the shape of 'affordances' and other dynamics. Particular behaviours are both enabled and constrained, while others are privileged or discouraged.

Another central feature of the architecture of SNSs is that they are forms of social surveillance (Trottier 2012). Visibility is made possible through the social surveillance architecture in which audiences (along with many unknown others) are able to view the behaviours of SNS users. Visibility can be understood as operating as a sort of performance spotlight (Pearson 2009) in which individuals relish in the attention given to them by their audiences, or alternatively it can be seen as a disturbing phenomenon in which SNS users' behaviours are tracked and commodified in the service of capital (Fuchs 2011a; 2011b).

Stemming from the notion of SNSs as surveillance are a number of related discourses that have the effect of shaping and limiting the understandings of SNS surveillance. News media circulate stories that highlight the risks of using SNSs such as the possibility that one's use of SNSs in the present may come back to later haunt them. These 'life after social networking' discourses (Albrechtslund 2008) are often internalised by users in such a way that they complement the structuring surveillance architecture of SNSs and cause them to behave and present themselves in particular ways. As noted more generally in relation to surveillance discourses (Barnard-Wills 2012), or in relation to SNSs themselves (Marwick 2010; 2013), these are often in line with the broader logics of neoliberalism.

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4 The term 'affordance' has a long history and while its usage has appeared across fields it was applied in relation to human-machine interactions by Donald Norman (1988), which then began to be applied to fields of human-computer interactions (HCI) (see Rogers 2004). It was picked up by Fuller (2005) in media studies and finds a central place in boyd's descriptions of SNSs as 'networked publics'.
While these works are all very important and offer many useful ways to think about and analyse Facebook use the concept of power is noticeably absent. For a political scientist the concept of power is always central to thinking about any social phenomenon, though as Brass (2000) has argued, it was not until Foucault's influence became ubiquitous that political scientists had to be reminded that they had taken the concept for granted. The absence of power as a concept in studies of Facebook use would appear to be a crucial oversight, or put differently, would appear to be a necessary means to more fully understanding how Facebook users' behaviours are shaped by interacting with the site—as well as understanding what the stakes of these interactions are. In this context the realisation emerged that perhaps a Foucauldian orientation toward the operation of power might serve as a unifying thread that brings together these various analyses. While not quite operating as a 'theory of everything', this Foucauldian conceptualisation of power, especially in relation to the construction of the self through processes of subjectification, offered a means to better understand the importance of Facebook as an object of social research.

Hence the theoretical framework of this thesis as outlined in Chapter 2 is distinctly Foucauldian. This chapter expands upon the aforementioned authors' works while reframing them within a broadly Foucauldian theoretical orientation. An important aspect of this is the identification of a link between processes of government and governing, the operation of power, the construction of the self, and the ways in which cultural artefacts and spaces like Facebook facilitate these related phenomena. Facebook is understood as a surveillance architecture that engenders a form of the panoptic surveillance gaze in which users internalise the surveillance gaze and come to self-monitor and self-regulate their behaviours. The related discourses of Facebook use further contribute to a set of preformed (and dominant) understandings of proper usage of Facebook and the acceptable range of behaviours that are
to be performed within its confines. Coupled with these are the commonly understood consequences for improper use such as loss of employment or potential employability. The links here between the dominant rationality of the present—neoliberalism—and the requisite comportment of the self are found in the policing of one's own actions so as to best engender the desirable and untarnished self-as-commodity.

The ongoing nature of these presentations of self can be understood by conceptualising them as 'performative' (Butler 1988). Butler, herself drawing on Foucault, proposes that selfhood is an ongoing performance infused with power relationships. Far from being arbitrary, performances of self are informed and regulated by dominant discourses related to, in Butler's work, gender, but also other discourses such as class and race. At the present, the overarching discourse of neoliberalism provides much of the raw discursive material for contemporary subjects to construct and regulate their presentations of self. Facebook is a social surveillance space in which presentations of self are often marked by a continuity (masking the contingent as 'stable fictions' (Butler 1988)) that is itself the result of pervasive self-monitoring and self-regulation, and infused with the power of normative discourses. Facebook becomes a space in which individuals engage in the business of the 'government of the self'.

This theorising ultimately leads to the question of how to conduct research into Facebook and power. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the thesis research. In step with the concern to analyse from a number of levels of analysis the research too examines a number of 'facets' of Facebook as a research object. As the above paragraphs indicate, this thesis is based on a novel theoretical approach to analysing Facebook use. That this approach itself is new required constructing a suitable methodological framework with which to conduct the research for the thesis. The methodology draws on a number of interpretive and qualitative
traditions and methods, largely from internet studies and digital anthropology. The research consisted of three separate but overlapping stages. The first stage consisted of an online survey that served to both generate data that suggested broad trends and attitudes toward Facebook and related issues of privacy and correct behaviours, while also serving to recruit participants in the further stages of the research. These further stages consisted of one-on-one interviews conducted both face-to-face and via Skype, and an ongoing online observation. The observation component of the research comprised a purpose-built Research Facebook Profile (RFP) that participants could 'Friend' which allowed for an ongoing observation of all of their interactions with Facebook that would normally be seen by any of their other Facebook Friends through the News Feed. This observation was conducted daily over nine months allowing for a picture to emerge of each of the 134 observation participants' daily presentations of self through Facebook.

The combining of methods allowed for a sufficiently broad and multi-faceted picture of Facebook use to emerge. The surveys allowed for an insight into the broad attitudes Facebook users had toward the site and in regards to issues such as privacy, the presentation of the self, and Friending habits. The data generated from the surveys was then used to both shape the questions used in the interview stage, as well as to inform the sorts of behaviours that were observed during the course of the observation stage. This combination of methods allowed for an investigation into what Facebook users thought and felt generally in the surveys and in more detail during the interview stages, as well as being able to see what they actually did online during the observation stage.

The analysis chapters (Chapters 4-6) draw on the various research methods to consider a number of aspects of Facebook use. Chapter 4 further explores the notion of 'writing the self
into being' on Facebook as well as considers what sorts of selves and what sorts of spaces users conceive them to be in their use of the site. This chapter explores the problematic notion of 'authenticity' in relation to the sorts of selves Facebook users imagine their online (re)presentations to be. Presenting the self online involves myriad decisions as well as a suite of strategies for facilitating self-presentation. Some users actively limit the sorts of people they will Friend, such as those who enforce a policy of excluding work colleagues so as to be able to feel more able to express themselves freely without fear of jeopardising their presentations of self in the workplace. Other Facebook users, such as Julia introduced earlier in the Introduction, employ various techniques of self-branding when using the site. For some, there is little distinction between their professional and personal self when using the site and their self-presentation strategies see them comporting themselves in such a fashion that they themselves are cast as desirable commodities, whether as a friend or an employee. As Zygmunt Bauman observes SNS users:

are enticed, nudged, or forced to promote an attractive and desirable commodity, and so to try as hard as they can, and using the best means at their disposal, to enhance the market values of the goods they sell. And the commodity they are prompted to put on the market, promote and sell are themselves… They are, simultaneously, promoters of commodities and the commodities they promote (Bauman 2007: 6, emphasis in the original).

An unanticipated finding in the research, discussed in Chapter 4, concerns the correlation between certain forms of work and the sorts of presentations of self, such that they appear to be 'always-on' in regards to their chosen profession. For these Facebook users there is no clear demarcation between work and not-work. Finally, this chapter discusses some of the research participants' attitudes towards issues of privacy and the ways in which these inform their behaviours when using the site.

Chapter 5 examines the role that the design of Facebook as an architecture of surveillance plays in shaping user behaviours, along with the related discourses of Facebook and
surveillance in informing the attitudes and dispositions of Facebook users. This chapter introduces the notion of Facebook being a surveillance space of 'lateral panopticism', denoting both the internalisation of an all-seeing surveillance gaze as well as the lateral, horizontal surveillance relationships engendered by the social surveillance architecture. Facebook users contend with the issue of invisible but imagined audiences toward whom they must present themselves. The imagined audience exists as a moderating influence as Facebook users internalise the gaze of potential audience members and conduct themselves as appropriate to the potential audience's gaze. This is complicated by the flattened network in which otherwise discrete categories such as friends, family, and professional contacts are collapsed into the single category of 'Friend', while the possibility for information to escape its confines on the personal Facebook Profile means internalising the risk of unanticipated viewers. Research participants indicated that they were aware of the possibility for their information to escape its intended confines and that this was a factor in the choices they made while engaging with Facebook. This chapter also discusses the ways in which discourses of surveillance and Facebook inform Facebook users of the sorts of behaviours appropriate when using the site. It is shown that norms of Facebook use are far from arbitrary and there exists a link between the proliferation of news reports relating to Facebook, especially in regards to dismissals from employment because of inappropriate Facebook use, and Facebook users' own understandings of appropriate behaviours when using the site. 'Life after social networking' discourses ultimately shape the opinions and behaviours of many Facebook users.

Chapter 6 chapter examines Facebook as a 'technology of the self' (Foucault 1988) through which users write the self in a form of everyday diarising. Data builds up over the lifetime of using the site, sedimenting in the form of a digital double. These sediments allow the
Facebook user (and others) to look back over their daily interactions with the site and are organised, through the Facebook Timeline, into a chronological diary of events. The posting of Status Updates to Facebook is explicitly framed as a form of diarising in this chapter and a typology of diarising, based on the observation of Facebook users, is offered. While much of the everyday interaction on Facebook is social in nature, either through seeking interaction through 'phatic' posts or by documenting everyday behaviours through 'ordinary interpersonal surveillance', other posts can be defined by seeking to elevate one's status through the posting of spectacular displays of self, while a fourth category of Status Updates are 'resolutions of the self' in which users largely write for themselves by chronicling their attempts to submit to self-discipline and self-improvement. This chapter examines these sorts of posts in relation to the posting of a number of research participants and demonstrates the ways in which self-presentation, performativity, power, and self-government are intrinsically linked.

**Conclusion**

This thesis examines Facebook as an object of social research that is implicated in processes of government of the self. As a cultural leisure space it has largely been ignored as a site of power. This thesis rectifies this. It demonstrates the ways in which Facebook extends the reach of governing into the everyday by harnessing users' own desires and behaviours as a means to limit their own freedoms. This is also linked to processes of self-construction through the performative subjectification of individuals. As such, Facebook is an apparatus of governing and governmentality, and facilitates the operation of power while extending the reach of neoliberalism into the microspaces of the everyday. It is also an architecture of social surveillance, a space in which Facebook users internalise the surveillance gaze of imagined audiences. The internalised surveillance gaze requires of individuals that they themselves perform much of the surveillance work as they come to monitor their own actions.
and regulate their behaviours as a result. Complementing this surveillance structure are various discourses that intersect and buttress the architecture's tendencies to instil a limited (or limiting) range of behaviours. As a discursive formation of digital architecture and forms of knowledge the 'universe of discourse' is narrowed in such a fashion that the very horizons of possibility are themselves shrunk and users conform to a smaller range of acceptable behaviours. These behaviours are, of course, those that facilitate the smooth functioning of neoliberal capitalism and 'consumerism'. As a space in which we so willingly engage in self-regulation, and a space that is so prominently entwined with our everyday social relationships, Facebook warrants analytic attention so as to understand better the ways in which this tightly controlled space of freedom contributes to our own unfreedom. That we are drafted to become our own self-governors needs to be recognised as a core technique of neoliberalism. Facebook's contribution to this and the reproduction of the key aspects of the dominant political order is shown throughout the course of this thesis as an important issue to be reckoned with.