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The Politics of “Liking”: Public Space, Consumption, and Meaning Making in the Virtual World of Social Media

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The Politics of “Liking”: Public Space, Consumption, and Meaning Making in the Virtual World of Social Media

Thesis by
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Readers: Bill Hoynes & Colleen Cohen
# Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .................................................. 3

CHAPTER 2: THE DYNAMICS OF FACEBOOK AS A PUBLIC SPHERE ................. 11

CHAPTER 3: FACEBOOK'S PARTICIPATORY ECONOMY .......................... 31

CHAPTER 4: USER/CONSUMER EXPERIENCE ................................ 47

CHAPTER 5: COMMERCIAL/PRODUCER EXPERIENCE .......................... 59

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION ................................................. 70

FIGURES ........................................................................ 77

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................. 90
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Zuckerberg, along with a key group of his colleagues, also believes that by openly acknowledging who we are and behaving consistently among all of our friends, we will help create a healthier society. In a more ‘open and transparent’ world, people will be held to the consequences of their actions and be more likely to behave responsibly” (Kirkpatrick 200).

Unless you have been living under a rock for the past 4 years, there is a good chance you have either heard of, seen, or have your own Facebook profile. Facebook, founded in 2004, is a social networking online platform that encourages social connections and distribution of information. The site is semi-public: to receive a Facebook profile, users sign-up using an existing email and password. All user activity is publicized to “friends,” unless users opt-out of such publicity by changing their privacy settings. Facebook is a service that has endless possibilities: people use it for keeping in touch with old friends, meeting new spouses, organizing community events, sharing important information, creating recommendations, playing games, following celebrities, discussing politics, etc. With over 1 billion users, with more than half active daily, Facebook is undoubtedly an important and vibrant location of public life. While there have been many other social networking websites before (i.e. MySpace, Friendster, etc), Facebook has taken the social networking experience to the next level by making Facebook a place to carryout everyday activities overlaid with a social aspect. This means that getting your morning news or looking for a new camera on Facebook makes those activities social, as user’s activities are broadcasted to their “friends” on the site’s News Feed application.

For early cyber theorists, the new possibilities presented through computing technologies challenged traditional social organization. Jeanette Hofmann elaborates: “To the early generation of academic users, referred to here as the 'technoutopians', the internet appeared as a radically different social space that challenged or even broke with
the familiar structures and principles of modern society that had enabled the Internet (Hofmann 87). The growth of the Internet presented entirely new modes of communication. Liberated from the physical world, individuals had the capacity to communicate freely. For many, the digital sphere had the capacity to erase hierarchy and authority while embracing practices of sharing and collaborating. Fred Turner suggests, “In the mid-1990s, as first the Internet and then the World Wide Web swung into public view, talk of revolution filled the air. Politics, economics, the nature of the self—all seemed to teeter on the edge of transformation. The Internet was about to ‘flatten organizations, globalize society, decentralize control, and help harmonize people,’ as MIT’s Nicholas Negroponte put it” (Turner 1). The possibilities presented by the Internet provided alternative modes of communication that seemingly operated outside the physical restraints of the real world. The development of the Internet gave many thinkers hope for a more egalitarian society. Turner considers, “even the individual self so long trapped in the human body, would finally be free to step outside its fleshy confines, explore its authentic interests, and find others with whom it might achieve communion” (Turner 1). As I will discuss later, social media platforms work to glue together the physical, real, true self and its digital other. While sharing and collaborating are characteristic of the Internet, hierarchy and authority is not external to the cyber world. The constraints existing within the physical world persist in the digital realm. What is new, however, is the speed and fluidity between individuals and producers. Although traditional hierarchies still lurch in the background, hidden by technoutopian discourse, new social conventions are introduced, as platforms like Facebook provide new immediate opportunities for public life.
In the past, techno-utopians have projected overly idealistic visions of the Internet, and people continue to apply those fantasies to the capabilities of social networking sites. Of course social networks add value to our social relations and the organization of people, but it is important to remember that these activities are facilitated through major corporations, and no such services are completely free of charge to the user. Utopian views of social media networks—which hope to liberate people from commercialism and hierarchy—only perpetuate notions of the American dream, where the possibility of success and freedom emerge from the liberation of communication hierarchies. Lietsala and Sirkkunen suggest, “The present discussions of new Internet technologies are somewhat reminiscent of talks about the American dream where anyone capable of it has the chance to succeed” (Sirkkunen 174). The myth of the American Dream has shown itself time and time again to be an illusion. Although tools for success and equality seem available, there are still strong hierarchies that control the back-end of these social networking websites. The playing field is not leveled, but the fluidity in which we experience our social life has been fundamentally altered.

Recognizing Facebook as an emerging space of vibrant public life, I would like to explore how this space facilitates a reorientation of what the public sphere looks like. The immense popularity of social networking sites has dramatically altered the ways in which people share information. The more information people share, the better the services of social networking sites become. Yet, the more information people disclose about their personal life to the public, the more Facebook and other commercial interests monitor and exploit such information. Thus, as users enter a space that rewards and encourages full disclosure, how do they remain in control? The central issues surrounding privacy are
matters of control. Users are in constant negotiation of the boundaries between public and private, and that sort of negotiation makes this space an appealing area of inquiry.

I am not arguing that this space is democratic by any means. My intentions are to reveal new patterns of communication and public life. While this space continues to reinforce dominant models of hierarchy and exploitation from the physical world, there are new, fundamentally different orientations of what constitutes public and private life that emerge. Despite the flaws of Facebook as a public sphere, users continue to use the space in a new and interesting ways. Even though many users are aware their information is being sold back to them, they find the benefits outweigh the consequences. Social networking sites like Facebook appeal to a truly human sense of sociality: people continue to carry out their daily activities on Facebook because they enjoy the social element. So what is really at work within this public space is a renaissance of social relations.

I will begin this discussion by visiting popular theories regarding the public sphere. While many theorists state overly idealistic and impossible models of democracy, my intention is to extract characteristics of such spheres that exist within the Facebook sphere, and in doing so, I wish to criticize myths of digital democracy. I ask the question, as publics flock to the Internet on a massive scale, what new limitations emerge and what liberties surface? Understanding how the public sphere begins to take form on the Web, I begin to explore the shifting boundaries between public and private information on Facebook. I will look at Facebook’s News Feed application to survey issues of privacy in context of “friends,” and then privacy in context of commercial interests through the unequal relationships that surface within front end and back end politics. While many early cyber-theorist believed that the Internet would make society more virtual, what really happens is that the Internet
has made society more rooted in the real. I will examine this notion by looking at how Facebook encourages and rewards users for having a singular, true, authentic identity. I will reflect on this space as a public sphere: although inequality is masked by hegemonic rhetoric surrounding democracy, Facebook still attracts millions upon millions of active users, which indicates that the experience real and valuable. Most importantly, I will look at the experience of both the consumer and the producer on Facebook. My hope is to reveal a new dynamic relationship between these two players, revealing the power of the social. While this space is in constant flux and flow, with cultural meaning taking chameleon form, I believe it is important to observe the space of Facebook to expose the dynamics of digital social life.

**The Public Sphere Goes Digital**

“The Concept. By ‘the public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion may be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (Habermas 73:1989).

As Habermas considers the ideal form of the public sphere, I want to understand where such connections occur in contemporary life and what form they take. With the invention of the car and the increased privatization of suburban American life, public life seems to be disappearing. Circumstances in which people come into contact with different ideas have been decreased, ultimately undermining people’s ability to come together and deliberate upon social issues collectively. Such unconnected public life generates individual alienation from society. While government sanctioned “public” space is available, we realize that such spaces are often ignored by citizens because of their spatial inconvenience and lack of fellow citizens: in short, citizens do not come into contact with public spaces
within their daily routines. Thus, where is the public? If we consider Margaret Kohn’s comment “Public spaces are the places that facilitate unplanned contacts between people,” to be true, than we must look to where the people are: the Internet (Kohn 11). What makes the Internet an interesting site of public life is that it is a “public” place where people come into contact with each other and share information. While not all users use the space to deliberate and form public opinion, people are still coming into contact with new ideas at an alarming speed.

Habermas’ ideal of the public sphere is one that values inclusive and collective deliberation about matters of public concern. I would like to take this part of my essay to reveal what aspects of the public sphere I find to be valuable in modern public life. While I take public deliberation to be the foundational character of public life, Habermas does not consider the difficulties accompanying such activity. This notion of a dynamic democratic public sphere assumes the myth of economic secularism. In her “Rethinking of the Public Sphere,” Nancy Fraser comments: “The public sphere in Habermas’s sense is also conceptually distinct from the official economy; it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theater for debating and deliberating rather than buying and selling” (Fraser 111). This ideal assumes that people’s economic needs are secure, and people may prioritize public reflection and deliberation over all other activities. The capitalist structure of the United States has created an environment in which commercial interests are never out of site. In this sense, the market regulates public life. Additionally, market control over public space also creates inequality among participants. While this sort of market control exists within online social networking sites, it is concealed by a seemingly democratic interface that allows the free flow of ideas to penetrate users’
daily consumption of media. The resulting space does, in fact, resemble more of a market
place of ideas rather than a deliberative stage. Public discussion values a model of
popularity more than deliberation and public dialogue: here we see a shift away from
deliberation and towards popularity within public space.

While Habermas regards deliberation about the public good to be a central facet of
the public sphere, I believe that deliberation does not have to be about issues of the
common good. Public deliberation is at its best when people encounter new ideas and
engage with those around them. What emerges on social networking sites is an awareness
of those within your network. The culture of full disclosure creates a more transparent and
open society that allows people to hold one another accountable for their actions, as
increased visibility among peers permits self-surveillance. If traditional mass media is
defined by top-down surveillance, social media encourages a peer-to-peer surveillance
model.

To properly critique public space, I examine how the structure of the Internet
dictates how people interact with one another. I will approach public space through the
lens of Kristine Miller, as she states, “Public spaces do not exist as static physical entities
but at constellations of ideas, actions, and environments” (Kristine Miller xi: 2007).
Habermas’ discussion of the public sphere does not take into account the constant ebb and
flow of economies and culture. While town centers and parks are traditionally recognized
as sites for public deliberation, the ways in which citizens mobilize themselves has
changed. Thus, I am not using Habermas to critique the Internet as a public space: I am
using his theories to show how we need to let go of this utopian vision of democracy and
explore the new sort of public sphere that emerge as the ways in which we relate to one
another have drastically transformed through digital intervention. Let us look to the unconventional space of the Internet as a site for public life. While the spaces of public life have changed overtime, so to should our expectations and interpretations of the function of public space.
CHAPTER 2: THE DYNAMICS OF FACEBOOK AS A PUBLIC SPHERE

Myths of Digital Democracy

As stated above, the Internet is not what deliberative theorists would consider an ideal democratic public sphere, despite early hopes. I would like to use this space to consider why it is easy to consider the Internet, and more specifically Facebook, as a space where deliberation could be liberated from hierarchy and control. I turn to Mark Zuckerberg, founder and CEO of Facebook, for crucial insight into the intentions of the company in facilitating social interaction. Interfaces that simulate feelings of autonomy and participation mask surveillance. It is often times forgotten that user activity is monitored, sold, and repackaged for commercial gain. Thus, commercial interests play a substantial role within this public space. I also want to dispel technoutopian ideals regarding the correlation between improved communication and improved social cooperation. Facebook has drastically improved the speed and efficiency of communication, but issues surrounding hierarchies and control that persist within the physical world still limit participation and deliberation.

The idea for Facebook began in a dorm room on the Harvard campus among a group of undergraduate computer science majors. In his book, The Real Social Network, David Kirkpatrick quotes Mark Zuckerberg: “‘Our project just started off as a way to help people share more at Harvard,’ says Zuckerberg, ‘so people could get access to information about anyone, and anyone could share anything that they wanted to’” (Kirkpatrick 29). Zuckerberg’s intention in starting Facebook was not to host a space for students to deliberate about campus issues: his intentions were to create a space where students could access information about other students more efficiently. He believes that the more
personal information we possess, the more connections we make: “Facebook is founded on a radical social premise—that an inevitable enveloping transparency will overtake modern life” (Kirkpatrick 200). Emphasizing full disclosure as a key proponent of Facebook does not necessarily include ideals of public life surrounding deliberation regarding the common good. When creating the infrastructure of Facebook, Zuckerberg did not create a space for conversation. That aspect of the site came later in the process. The original design of Facebook’s interface was to reveal more information about those within the Harvard network in hopes of learning more about the people who surround users.

From the beginning, the goals of Facebook emphasized the importance of the self rather than notions of the citizen. The interface facilitates an experience that values the individual and their tastes and preferences. While some come to Facebook with issues of citizenship, they do so after they have created a personal profile. Facebook is a process in which users decide what information to make public and what to make private. Natalie Fenton considers, “the personalized content provided by social media, the ability to be publicly private and privately public retains an emphasis on the self and on personhood rather than citizenship” (Fenton 133). The public does not approach Facebook as a space to exercise citizenship as an American because the infrastructure focuses on social connections rather than in depth deliberative practices. The spaces of social media act as a vessel to maintain diverse relationships, develop individual identities, and extend networks beyond physical restraints.

Individuals may have increased authority in publicizing their ideas and beliefs, but they are not reflected upon or engaged with by audiences. Natalie Fenton suggests: “The practices of new media may be liberating for the user but not necessarily democratizing for
society. We would be wise to remember that wider social contexts in which networks are formed and exist have a political architecture that predates the Internet” (Fenton 142). The Internet does not emancipate voices that have been traditionally silenced. Commercialism still persists, radical voices remain the loudest, hierarchies dominate, outside sources of hate exist, and not all have access to Internet or the computer skills necessary to participate. Individual agency does not equate systematic transformation. Individuals have the ability to respond and react to issues, but the public, as a whole, does not come together to deliberate and reflect. Individual beliefs are lost in the myriad of opinions.

While there is a comment option, which people use often, and many different group pages and forums for talking about political discussion, such applications are secondary to the primary function of Facebook as a distributor of personal information. In his book, Networks Without A Cause, Geert Lovink asserts: “Web 2.0 was not designed to facilitate debate with its thousands of contributions. If the Web goes real-time, there is less a space for reflection and more technology facilitating impulsive blather” (Lovink 19). What Facebook brings to the table of deliberation is a new way to communicate with one another: users are not always engaging one another, but, rather, they publicize what is on their mind to their network. Because posts are subsumed within a larger feed of posts, posts are not left for reflection and deliberation. As a result, “The Internet is a breeding ground for extreme opinions and border-testing users. If this virtual space is an oasis for freedom, as its reputation claims, then let’s see what we can get away with. This attitude avoids true dialogue, which in any case would take us back to the communication utopia of Habermas” (Lovink 17). The voices that are heard the most are those that are the loudest.
The most ridiculous and extreme get exposure, but the rational and contemplative thoughts blend in with other posts.

What is so powerful about Facebook in simulating democratic space? Facebook’s hypersocial atmosphere of sharing makes its services distinctive from other public spheres. “The seductive power of the mythic center circulates around social life and serves to obscure the reproduction of the dominant values of neoliberal society” (Fenton 125). While users seem to be a part of larger discussion regarding popular public issues, they do not necessarily engaging with those in their network. Just because there are more people circulating ideas in one place does not mean they are talking back and engaging with one another. Yet, there is something to be said about the hypersocial aspect of Facebook in regards to dynamic public space. There is something deeply profound about people being aware about those people around them.

**Negotiation Between Public and Private Life**

At the heart of public life is a negotiation between public and private space. Zuckerberg hoped that in making private information more public, social bonds would strengthen among classmates. Spaces like Facebook give public life to traditionally private matters: users are asked to share as much information about their private life as possible with their particular public. What emerges is a new culture of total disclosure. People like Zuckerberg believe that a more transparent and open society has the potential to improve humanity. The logic follows: as people serve as agents of surveillance and monitor their friends’ behaviors online, individuals will be held accountable for their actions. Real world knowledge of others allows individuals to indorse or denounce their friends’ activities as legitimate. For example, if someone said they were single, and their profile indicates
otherwise, people would question their integrity. The hyper-public arena of Facebook holds individuals responsible for their actions, as all activities are monitored.

As people begin to spend more and more time on social networking sites, they are faced with the task of sharing personal information. To many, this process seems unnatural. Danah boyd considers how; “social information more easily accessible can rupture people’s sense of public and private by altering the previously understood social norms. Offline, people are accustomed to having architecturally defined boundaries. Physical features like walls and limited audio range help people have a sense of just how public their actions are” (boyd: 2008: 14). People are learning to get used to this new norm of sharing private information. Without the boundaries of the physical public sphere, users must adjust to living in a hyper-public world. What used to possess private life (i.e. what you had for dinner, what shoes were on sale today, your political views, etc) is now part of the ubiquitous public flow of information. The infrastructure demands such information in order to work. Mark Zuckberg deliberately, “continues to push Facebook’s design towards more exposure of information” (Kirkpatrick 201). The interface facilitates and encourages activity that exposes personal information about individuals. Such logic follows: the more private information is public, the more we know about the people around us, the stronger our social ties will become, and society as a whole benefits.

So maybe Mark Zuckerberg wants users to reconsider how they relate and interact with one another. Facebook is not attempting to take on democratic public ideals, but, rather, is attempting to create an alternative public space based on transparency and accountability. Zuckerberg asks users to reassess what constitutes private/public life. In reference to the boundaries between public and private life, “Illouz states: ‘We should
remember that it is the patrolling of the boundaries itself that keeps culture alive” (Lovink 43). Thus, critics should not immediately decry Facebook’s culture of full disclosure before understanding what new patterns of social life emerge. Here, surveillance does not come from authorities, but from friends. Although different from what is seen as traditionally normative, these new patterns respond to contemporary wants and needs of publics.

**News Feed: Privacy Among “Friends”**

“On 5 September 2006, Facebook—a social network site primarily used by college students at the time—launched a feature called ‘News Fees’. Upon logging in, users faced a start page that listed every act undertaken by their Friends within the system—who befriended whom, who commented on whose wall, who altered their relationship status to ‘single’, who joined what group and so on” (boyd 2008: 13).

In this section, I look at issues of privacy among friends through an exploration of Facebook’s News Feed application. As stated above, News Feed serves as users’ homepage, supplying a constant, real time feed of friends’ activities: News Feed streams photos from your co-worker’s bachelorette party, news stories that interested your cousin, product reviews for new stereo systems, the locations of your ex-boyfriends, etc. Whenever people do something on Facebook, you know about it. This new immediate feed of information circulating within one’s network seemed, at first, overwhelming and invasive: before, users had to search friends, much like people search things on Google, to see their most recent activity. Users now take on a new role in monitoring the activities of their friends. As private concerns are given a public arena, users not only have to adapt to a culture of full disclosure, but also a culture of observation and social monitoring.

While it may not seem so now, the liberation of private information was a radically new aspect of public life. As danah boyd clarifies, “None of the information displayed through this feature was previously private per se, but by aggregating this information and
displaying it in reverse chronological order, News Feeds made the material far more accessible and visible” (boyd 2008: 13). This heightened exposure sparked new concerns regarding personal privacy. For many, it is not necessarily the particulars of the content that they post but, rather, the loss of control over whom their information was being exposed to. Dana boyd adds: “Yet, privacy is not simply about zeros and ones, it is about how people experience their relationship with others and with information. Privacy is a sense of control over information, the context where sharing takes place, and the audience who can gain access” (boyd 2008: 18). A strong—almost emotional—reaction was triggered by the Facebook community after the debut of News Feed. For many, what was at stake was control over the distribution of their personal information. Before News Feed, individuals posted information to Facebook under the assumption that only people who sought their information would see. Yet, with the advent of News Feed, individuals now had to alter their understanding of who their public was.

When approaching issues off privacy within this public sphere, it is interesting how the interface facilitates user activity. As stated above, Mark Zuckerberg’s vision for Facebook is to create a more open and transparent public. This type of environment is reflected by the site’s interface. After the backlash against the exploitation of people’s privacy with News Feed, Facebook implemented new privacy instruments, hoping that users would feel more in control over their information. The privacy tools gave users the option to “opt-out” of sharing activities with their public. Zuckerberg created these privacy options while still pushing for a more transparent and open public: “An opt-out dynamic means that users have to consciously choose what it is that they wish to hide and then remember their choices as they are navigating the system. When the default is hyper-
public, individuals are not simply able to choose what they wish to expose—they have to choose what they wish to hide” (boyd 2008: 16). This sort of dynamic continues to encourage a culture of full disclosure. If anyone has tried to hide data on Facebook, it is time consuming and not worth the effort. In achieving transparency, Mark Zuckerberg made a genius move by simulating increased control over information. Soon after the News Feed drama, users adapted to the new standards of disclosure and overtime forgot there was a time before the feed.

What makes Facebook an interesting public space is that people are given new authority in monitoring other member’s personal lives: “These social networking sites are also claimed to break down the barriers between traditionally public and private spheres of communication, putting power into the hands of the user and thereby giving the details of private concerns a public presence and enabling the public domain of the official political and institutional realm to be more easily monitored by the private citizen (Papacharissi 2009)” (Fenton 124). Facebook’s News Feed feature provides users with a type of public supervision. What constitute this public are not deliberative practices, but, rather public observation of individuals. People do not have to engage with one another to be a part of this active public: constant surveillance of publics serves as a new form of public participation. While top-down surveillance still exists outside the site, there is a new emphasis on peer-to-peer surveillance. This sort of transparency creates a more open public and attempts to hold individuals accountable for their actions.

At this point, I am sure some are wondering why people take pleasure in this sort of full disclosure? Sure it may seem creepy to some that users update their friends with every detail of their weekend and many users practically spy on their friends (or enemies), but
this type of publically private information serves as valuable social assets within the digital sphere. Social media scholar danah boyd suggests: “People relish personal information because it is the currency of social hierarchy and connectivity” (boyd 2008: 17). If personal information has social and commercial value, then News Feed is understood as a social market place. People locate their identity within the context of their public. This is not a new phenomenon: “According to Illouz, networking through websites like Facebook displays two forms of social capital: ‘showing that one is loved and showing who we are connected to. Showing off one’s position in the hierarchy is not only modern obviously’” (Lovink 42). Hierarchies that exist within the physical world are extended to the realm of Facebook at an accelerated speed. News Feed, therefore, serves as a personal publicity machine. Users find important value in Facebook as a vibrant location of social life. The News Feed allows users to react, form opinions, and negotiate their own social status in real time.

When News Feed emerged, users were up in arms over their loss of privacy. Many saw Facebook as a space of excess and a waste of time where personal information was exploited for entertainment. What use is it to look into the mundane activities of another person’s life? Yet, it is these radically new and controversial alterations to public life that maintain vitality. Acknowledging the real social value users extract from Facebook, David Kirkpatrick includes: “Even back when they often heard the criticism that Thefacebook was a waste of time, Zuckerberg’s standard rebuttle: ‘Understanding people is not a waste of time.’ He started saying that the goal of Thefacebook was ‘to help people understand the world around them’” (Kirkpatrick 143). Sometimes, people need to be pushed out of their
comfort zone: when people leave, they adapt to new principles, possibly creating a better way of relating to one another.

Features like News Feed drastically reorient what people consider public and private information. Within the context of other individuals, Facebook’s News Feed feature has created a new dynamic within individual’s publics that values full disclosure. Breaking the physical barriers that have previously constituted public and private life before Internet, Facebook insures that all information, whether important to individuals or not, is broadcast to the public in real time. This sort of information is what binds people together, ultimately strengthening relations. By knowing more information about those around you, and those who are part of your personal public, the hope is to create a society that is more aware of others.

In the time of writing this essay, a new Facebook feature has been released to a limited amount of users to get feedback before it is released to the entire Facebook community. This new feature is called the Social Graph. As Facebook’s official Facebook page states: “Graph Search helps you find people, places and things—and explore Facebook in a whole new way.” If users moved to a new city and were interested in hiking, they could search: “What friends do I have in the Poughkeepsie area who like to hike?” Facebook would then deliver the results. This type of service rewards those who disclose personal information by creating communities of people who share commonalities. While it is yet to be seen what this feature has in store for the future of social communication, it is interesting to see how these little changes in how individuals relate to one another make a massive difference.
Unequal Relations: Privacy Among Commercial Interests

“As Jodi Dean (2009) notes, the mythic dimension of the openness of new media that has brought about a hegemonic discourse based on the rhetoric of multiplicity and pluralism, autonomy, access and participation that apparently lead automatically to a more pluralistic society and enhanced democracy also happens to coincide with extreme corporatization, financialization and privatization across the globe” (Fenton 142).

Now I turn to Facebook’s privacy within the context of commercial interests to reveal the unequal power dynamics between individual users and corporate entities. Facebook has created a platform that powerfully harnesses the attention of millions of people and the by-product of this public activity is massive accumulation of personal data. This data is gathered and sold to third party interests whether users are aware of this exchange or not. Despite the fact that the front-end interface of Facebook promotes an idealistic, uncorrupted space of public life to flourish, the back-end of Facebook—which is dominated by a small group of people—possesses an agenda that is purely business, lacking any concern regarding matters of public life. Those who dominate the back-end of Facebook mask the exploitation of individual activity through the guise of loosely organized, non-hierarchical front-end encounters with the Facebook public. In other words: nothing is free. Users pay for their use of Facebook’s services through their disclosure of private information. By investigating the tensions between the social front-end and the corporate back-end of Facebook, I attempt to understand how commerce affects this public sphere.

Users flock to Facebook to take advantage of the platform’s easy to use, highly efficient hub of social life. To participate within this public, individuals sign-up by validating their identity through an active email address and create a profile. The barrier to enter is low for interested individuals: to join, users are not faced with entry fees, making
their experience appear like an unregulated space of encounter and public life. This understanding fails to acknowledge Facebook as a business, painting a utopian image of this space. Facebook’s success and very existence depends on the labor of users. In order to keep up with the immense expense of data centers and the constant maintenance of the site, personal information is sold to advertisers and repackaged to consumers. This dynamic, often times unconsidered by users, reveals a hidden structure of dominance that works to exploit individuals: “Fuchs (2008) argues that the typical Web 2.0 business strategy is not ‘selling people access’ but giving them access for free and selling the people to third parties in order to generate a profit. This relationship is clearly highly unequal” (Fenton 141). As users work to produce information to enhance public life, such information is taken out of context and manipulated for capital gain. While there is—to an extent—a certain level of trust between users and those who work at Facebook in creating a public space, there is no such expectation between individuals and third party companies.

Facebook knows almost everything about their users, and users know almost nothing about what Facebook does with their personal information. At the same time that Facebook encourages a more transparent and open society, they seek to maximize potential profit from this type of work. Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) "believes that users are not given sufficiently simple controls for their information, and that Facebook for all its belief in transparency is not very transparent about what it does with our information" (Kirkpatrick 201). Thus, what makes the unequal distribution of power threatening is that users are never quite sure how exactly their information is being used. While users disclose details of their private lives, Facebook conceals its repacking of such information. If Facebook is supposed to be a space
where public life strengthens, what happens when the providers of set space have hidden agendas regarding the participation of users? What are the consequences of utilizing a privately owned public space? Lack of information regarding the agendas of the back-end works to obscure the utility of Facebook as a public space: “there is a tension at the core of the social web created by the uneasy (mis)match of the commercial interests that rule the back-end and community interests advanced through the front-end” (Stalder 249). Does the benefit of improved public life outweigh the consequences produced by commercial interests?

We cannot forget about the corporate undercurrent that influences these new patterns of public interaction. Power dynamics that rule the back-end remain concealed by the appearance of loosely organized social interactions that dominate the front-end. Discourse surrounding autonomy and participation often times paint an overly idealistic portrait of spaces like Facebook. Natalie Fenton suggests: “Because it is social and is felt to begin with the individual user choosing to communicate with whomsoever they desire, it also confers a high degree of autonomy to the communicator” (Fenton 126). Just because users have more individual control over their attention does not mean that such qualities lead to improved public life. As a high level of autonomy is granted to the individual communicator, systematically, the public still falls victim to the agendas of unknown authorities. While Facebook seems to deliver new agency to users, further examination of back-end dynamics reveal a highly unequal distribution of power. The lesson here is that it is all too often easy to become caught up in feeling more in control. Increased individual control does not equate to increased control as a community.
While Facebook offers new patterns of sociality, they are not without their flaws. The problem with approaching Facebook from a deterministic perspective is that such rhetoric takes hegemonic form: “the seductive power of the mythic center circulates around social life and serves to obscure the reproduction of the dominant values of neoliberal society” (Fenton 125). Surrounded by overly idealistic perspectives regarding the power of social media, Facebook is not an otherworldly realm where hierarchies of dominance disappear due to increased individual agency and stronger social connections. Whilst many aspects of public life improve within the Facebook world, market-demands and hierarchies still penetrate. Felix Stalder comments: “If we look at the front-end, social media of Web 2.0 may well advance semiotic democracy, that is, ‘the ability of users to produce and disseminate new creations and to take part in public cultural discourse.’ However, if we consider the situation from the back-end, we can see the potential for Spectacle 2.0, where new forms of control and manipulation, masked by mere simulation of involvement and participation, create a contemporary version of what Guy Debord called ‘the heart of the unrealism of real society’” (Stalder 242). While the tools and infrastructure appear to provide Facebook’s public with the necessary tools to achieve utopia, the controlling authority that dominates the back-end is often times overlooked, making those promises of democracy and liberation dull.

Despite the hidden back-end agendas and unequal power dynamics that emerge, I believe critics are too quick to judge the exploitative practices of Facebook. It is essential to distinguish between intention and necessity. Individual activity is monetized to improve Facebook’s services: “Making Thefacebook fun was more important than making it a business. It was a statement that would reverberate down through the short history of
Facebook” (Kirkpatrick 33). Mark Zuckerberg’s priority to users revolves around creating new social connections, ultimately injecting public life with new energy. Individual labor works to create a better society, while at the same time that participation is collected and exploited. For Facebook to provide these incredible services that reconfigure our social connections, there needs to be some sort of cost structure. In exchange for Facebook’s services, users—to their knowledge or not—must consent the rights to their information. Indicated by the hundreds of millions of active users, this transaction between individuals and Facebook works. In many ways, it is in users’ best interest that Facebook generates revenue. The more revenue Facebook receives, the more resources Facebook can dedicate to improving the public structure. The obscuring of back-end agendas help stimulate and promote more democratic ideals, removing the glare of commercial intervention from the surface of interactions.

**The Singular, True, Authentic Self**

One feature of Facebook that is unique among other online communities is it’s policing of singular and authentic individual identity. While there are many online worlds that allow and even encourage alternate identity play, Facebook does not. During its infancy, Facebook only allowed Harvard students to join the site, allowing one account to whoever had a Harvard email address. This ensured that no outside people could pose as a Harvard student. The goal was for students to get to know the people around them better, not to experiment with alternate identities. Once Facebook went public, users were still encouraged to hold a singular Facebook profile that most accurately portrayed their real identity. While there are many fake usernames, Facebook makes it hard to switch back and forth between two accounts, and still requires a real email address. Additionally, users
typically interact with people they already know in the physical world, adding another layer of identity verification. Rob Cover suggests, “the call from the friend to clarify in terms of a known, recognizable and perhaps normalized narrative is undertaken on behalf of contemporary culture’s imperative for coherence” (Cover 187). Through peer-to-peer surveillance, friends work to contextualize individuals, reinforcing the authority of the singular, authentic Facebook profile.

For Mark Zuckerberg, it is critical to develop a public that encourages singular and authentic identities: “He makes several arguments. ‘Having two identities for yourself is an example of a lack of integrity,’ Zuckerberg says moralistically. But he also makes a case he see as pragmatic—that ‘the level of transparency the world has now won’t support having two identities for a person’ (Kirkpatrick 199). Zuckerberg’s vision does not support multiple identities, and nor does Facebook. This makes the platform more successful in reaching its objectives of helping people understand one another better: people are interacting with others that ideally project a somewhat accurate image of themselves, making those interactions valuable. Facebook does not encourage false relationships, because such relationships do not improve or strengthen the public of Facebook. For this public, integrity is an essential expectation of users.

Yet, as Facebook represents the largest online social media community, some voices that do not fit into the singular, authentic mold are left out. Facebook denies the complexity of both individuals—as seen in the design of individual profiles pages—and relationships—simplifying all social connections to “friendships”. Geert Lovink suggests: “We are allowed multiple passions but only one certified ID on Facebook, because the system response cannot deal with ambivalence” (Lovink 13). The singular identity is what makes Facebook
work: by being who you say you are, users are able to hold others accountable for their actions. In order for Zuckerberg’s radical premise to be achieved, people need to abide by these standards.

If “early cyberculture was driven by a shared desire to become someone else,” contemporary social media networks like Facebook reflect a completely different mission (Lovink 39). Facebook grants individuals an organized and efficient version of their real world social connections. If individuals want to experiment with multiple personalities, a diverse array of game worlds and online universes exist (i.e. Sim City, World of Warcraft, Second Life, etc.). While many find Facebook’s policing of singular identities problematic, the majority of users continue to find value in the services. Facebook is not a space for play: Facebook is a space for real social connections and is treated as such.

Facebook’s philosophies regarding identity reflect ideologies that circulate within our existing political world. The policing of identity is not specific to Facebook: “The war on terror aborted the desire for a serious parallel ‘second-self’ culture and instead gave rise to a global surveillance and control industry. To this assault on freedom, Web 2.0 tactically responded with coherent, singular identities in sync with the data owned by police, security, and financial institutions” (Lovink 40). The practices of Facebook have not ushered in a trends of surveillance: existing political and economic systems have been pushing for more transparency for many years. Social media sites like Facebook only standardize these trends. Thus, the increased surveillance of identity is a feature of modern life that is here to stay.

Facebook does not liberate the singular, authentic, real self. Facebook liberates the channels in which individuals make connections with one another, providing a service that
compliments and enhances the social experiences that exist within our physical world. Geert Lovink agrees: “The cyber-prophets were wrong: there is no evidence that the world is becoming more virtual. Rather, the virtual is becoming more real; it wants to penetrate and map out our real lives and social relationships” (Lovink 13). Facebook is not an unconventional world but a concentrated universe that acts as an extension of our physical existence. Facebook creates a new dynamic in which users are able to monitor their public through evaluation of other. Because Facebook is rooted in the real, users can hold their friends accountable. The singular authentic Facebook identity ushers in a new self-regulatory system of peer-to-peer surveillance.

The singular and real identity feature of Facebook also creates new opportunities away from the Facebook network. Now, when signing into other websites (i.e. Amazon, Spotify, Instagram, Sephora, etc.) users have the option of signing in with their Facebook log-in and password. The idea is that Facebook will become a universal log-in, verifying that consumers/users are who they say they are. While I will talk about this more in another chapter of my paper on new economic models that emerge within Facebook, it is interesting to consider the future that our Facebook identities hold. By connecting to other websites through Facebook, Facebook becomes a contained universe, where people carry out everyday activities through their Facebook identity. Yet, I cannot help but wonder whether this linking of identity to commercial activity will take away from Facebook as a vibrant social sphere? Is there a way to marry our identities as consumers with our identities as “friends”? Or will Facebook log-ins more so act as a verification system?

The foundation of this public sphere depends on singularity and consistency. Individuals are held accountable for their actions by being open and honest. This feature
creates a system of public regulation that uses individuals as unofficial enforcers of integrity within their public. Mark Zuckerberg's hopes to improve public life by becoming more familiar with those around us. It is hard to create a strong social connection to those who are inconsistent. Perhaps by forcing individuals to be open, consistent, and honest, social bonds will strengthen, ultimately fortifying the union of the public.

A New Public Sphere

Although many positive experiences emerge from this platform, it is important to understand the profound control certain individuals have over public communication. However, despite certain flaws, people continue to engage on a massive scale. Facebook commands a new standard of communication that calls for a reorientation of public life. I would like to use this section to reflect on the new characteristics that define this public space, and how, despite the extension of corporate institutional domination, users truly value Facebook.

After investigating Facebook as an active public sphere, it is safe to say there is no resemblance to Habermasian ideals of democratic deliberation. Additionally, individuals do not flock to Facebook as concerned citizens looking to solve the world’s problems. People participate within the Facebook public for diverse reasons, but what all motives have in common is the social element. By reorienting the boundaries between public and private information, Mark Zuckerberg has created a space where people can relate. Before, when private information was bound to the private sphere, there were less avenues for individuals to find commonalities. “What is fascinating is not so much the flux of opinions, as Jean Baudrillard once described democracy in the media age, but the ability to indulge in similarity with others” (Lovink 25). Thus, maybe it is the commonalities that bring
individuals closer. What makes Facebook a dynamic public sphere is not its centralizing ability to bring together a diverse set of ideas: the pleasure that emerges from monitoring ones News Feed comes from recognizing similarities. By indulging and celebrating those things individuals have in common, social bonds are strengthened and celebrated. Perhaps Zuckerberg’s push for full disclosure provides a new model for what lively public interaction may look like.

As a public space, Facebook strives to strengthen the bonds of individuals in greater pursuit of improving public life. In spite of its flaws, Facebook undeniably has changed the ways in which individuals relate to one another and to society as a whole. Facebook’s services grant individuals new channels to connect in profound ways. Dana boyd suggests: “Humans are both curious and social critters. We want to understand and interact. Technology introduces new possibilities for doing so, and that’s where the passion comes in. We’re passionate about technology because we’re passionate about people and information, and they go hand and hand” (boyd 73). The sentiment provided by dana boyd makes Facebook an important subject of inquiry. By liberating private information from private life, Facebook injects public life with new vitality, allowing individuals to find commonality among their once estranged peers. Although many restraints that exist within the physical public sphere persist, Facebook proposes a radically new standard of public participation and observation.
CHAPTER 3: FACEBOOK’S PARTICIPATORY ECONOMY

In this chapter, I would like to explore the roles in which commerce shapes and dictates the public space of Facebook. As many individuals carry out everyday activities through the interface of Facebook, it is important to understand how commercial presence is experienced. The role of commercial agendas are given dramatically new presence in relation to traditional mass media environments, changing the rules of engagement between traditional consumers and producers, and creating new patterns of commerce. While early cyber-prophets hoped more openness would foster individual relationships functioning outside the flaws of capitalism, ridding public life of price-driven hierarchy, the reality Facebook enacts reproduces rather than obscures capitalist agendas. This is not to say that there are no aspects of Facebook that do encourage more democratic principles of participation and collaboration, because there are. My intentions are more so to dispel any myths regarding alternative economic models that function outside the domain of capitalism in order to reveal a contract that, although working within a capital-driven market, promotes a new culture surrounding the social consumption and production of commodities, altering the traditional relationship between producers and consumers. While I will go into great detail regarding the experience of Facebook consumers and producers in later chapters, I will now turn to discussions regarding new economic models of participation and collaboration that emerge from Facebook’s social platform.

Participation Economy: The Definition and The Discussion

When considering the qualities of Facebook as a hub of public life, many praise the site’s seemingly more democratic space of communication, especially in contrast to
traditional mass media environments. Whereas traditional mass media platforms produce a passive, one-to-many experience of media consumption, social media platforms grant consumers more autonomy and control in providing increased mobility, access, and the ability to manage the circulation of information individuals find valuable within their public sphere. In other words, individuals become apart of a social economy of information through their active participation within their public sphere. This model of social exchange creates a new pattern that appears to function outside the domain of price-driven markets: individuals exercise personal control over the circulation and consumption of social information, creating a democratic space of participation.

On Facebook, participation is most basically described as the collective activities of individuals that are shared and consumed. Each user contributes content by actively engaging with their network. Katri Lietsala and Esa Sirkkunen suggest that this digital activity denotes a new mode of content production that is dependant on participation: “So here, ‘the content’ is not just the digital files you create, publish and distribute or the social interaction documented, like your messages in the comment boxes and discussion chains. The definition also includes the traces you leave and which the systems automatically spread the in-formation about” (Lietsaka 47). An example of this sort of content is reflected in the platform’s “like” button. This feature allows individuals to engage with other users by simply “liking” their content. Users are notified that an individual liked their content, and that action of liking is publicized to both users’ networks. In this case, content production is as simple as acknowledging another user’s content by liking it. Within Facebook’s participation economy, content is not necessarily concrete information: content is the traces of engagement held in place by the medium. “There’s an implicit ‘architecture
of participation,’ a built-in ethic of cooperation, in which the service acts primarily as an intelligent broker, connecting the edges to each other and harnessing the power of the users themselves” (O’Reilly 37). The more participation, the better networking Facebook provides for users. At stake in liking is the fabric of participation that keeps Facebook’s vibrancy in motion. Liking, commenting, sharing, etc all stand in as a form of participation, creating trails of information, generating complex networks of information and communication.

It is important to distinguish the difference between collaboration and participation. On Facebook, users share information and engage with content as an act of participation. Yet, participation does not equate collaboration: “User-generated content and social media create the tendency for confusion between sharing and collaboration. Sharing of content alone does not directly lead to collaboration” (Hyde 53). The interface of Facebook encourages and depends upon sharing of information between users; but the platform does not serve as a space for individuals to work together to construct a collective project. While collaboration is possible, such functions are not provided by Facebook but by third party application: “Social media platforms can become collaborative when they add an additional layer of coordination…these mechanisms aggregate the content into a new social order” (Hyde 53). The resources provided by Facebook appear to offer the tools and resources necessary to collaborate (i.e. free sources of information, access to social networks, ability to communicate openly and freely, etc), but should not be confused with open source spaces. The infrastructure of Facebook does not inherently provide such services: rather, how users choose to coordinate among one another grants the opportunity for collaboration.
I suggest that although the architecture of Facebook and rhetoric surrounding it as a communicative platform appear to be more democratic, participation within such spaces do not act outside the sphere of capitalism, but, rather, work to extend capitalism to the digital realm. Des Freedman suggests: “...the Internet’s privileging of collaboration and transparency insulates it from these dangers and somehow removes the digital economy from the endemic flaws of a crisis-ridden capitalism” (Freedman 80). Facebook does not function as an alternative market: Facebook—founded in the real—serves as an extension of the physical world and it’s market values. However, despite the fact that Facebook functions within a price-driven market, new experiences of participation work to transform market relations. In stark contrast to traditional mass media, consumers have increased agency over their media consumption. Critics should not confuse Facebook’s participation economy with our market economy: “the participatory economy is not whatever economy Internet businesses make possible. It is the economy that participates create by just fulfilling various motives” (Lietsaka 14). Participation does not stand in as an economic model: it enhances the modes of production and consumption within existing market structures. Participation more so directs the social and cultural flow of communication.

I now turn to Katri Lietsala and Esa Sirkkunen’s work Social Media: Introduction to Tools and Processes of Participatory Economy to consider their definition of what the characteristic of participation economies prevail within social media platforms. Johnathan Sterne’s ideas of labor that is meaningful and pleasurable (Sterne 2005), Melakoski et. al.’s tying of participation to commoditization, Benkler’s suggestion that individuals can do more for and by themselves in loose commonality with others (Benkler 2006), Scholtz’s discussion of how dominating market ideologies prevail on social media (Scholtz 2008),
and Bauwen’s notion of the use-value of participation (Bauwen 2005), among others, all help to mold Lietsaka and Sirkkunen’s working definition of how participatory economies function within social media platforms. There definition follows: “We think that participatory economy is based on use-value being created for a community of users. The activity is often pleasurable or meaningful in and of it. When the social activity and interaction accumulates, it brings use-value for the participant and creates something new; an additional value for others, to the people, to the design, for the owner of the site or the stakeholders related” (Lietsaka 164). The sum of user activity represents Facebook’s participation economy. Users participate as long as they find value in the services provided: the value is dependent on the active participation of individual users. Additionally, as third party corporations find value in the platform’s database of personal information they continue to provide a constant stream of revenue to Facebook. In this sense, individual labor contributes to the collective labor of Facebook’s community as a whole, generating a new sort of value for all parties involved.

This model of Facebook’s participation economy does not, however, function outside the market demands of capitalism. Applying logic from Michael Bauwen’s research on peer production, Facebook’s participation economy does not function as an alternate model to capitalism, but as a byproduct of capitalism. Bauwen considers: “Peer production is highly dependent on the market because peer production produces use-value through mostly immaterial production, without directly providing an income for its producers…peer producers are dependent on the income provided by the market. So far, peer production has been created through the interstices of the market” (Bauwens 5: 2005). The labor put forth through the participation of individuals on Facebook is only
made possible by the opportunities provided by our market economy. Leisure time and necessary hardware—resources produced by capitalism—are required for such participation economies to exist. Participation economies, in this sense, operate as an extension of monetary markets.

While participation economies are not exempt from the hierarchies produced by capitalism, they do work to reorient the relationship between individual users and corporations. As all participation is public, individuals work to monitor one another’s activities, holding their public sphere—including commercial entities—accountable for their actions. Zuckerberg claims: “Facebook and other forces on the Internet now create sufficient transparency for gift economies to operate at a large scale. When there’s more openness, with everyone being able to express their opinion very quickly, more of the economy starts to operate like a gift economy. It puts the onus on companies and organizations to be more good and more trustworthy” (Kirkpatrick 287). Here, gifting is carried out through individual participation. In effect, we see Zuckerberg’s deliberate choice to make Facebook more transparent: by making this sphere more open and by encouraging participation, Zuckerberg hopes to generate a more honest society. Not only are individual held more accountable, but so are corporations. By adding a layer of participation to our capitalist economy, new, improved and, perhaps, more equal relationships emerge among commerce and individuals.

Our participatory economy and monetary economy are in a dynamic relationship: participation is commoditized and made into capital, while such capital creates the opportunities for participation models of exchange to flourish. The spirited connection between participation and capitalism reflects the conflicted nature of spaces like Facebook:
“The digital sphere is not a parallel economy but one that accentuates the tensions between the creativity and collaboration of a generative system and the hierarchies and polarization prioritized by a system that rests, above all else, on the pursuit of profit” (Freedman 92).

The relationship between capitalism and participation is complex: while the intentions of Facebook are to inject public life with increased strength and vibrancy, the existence of such services cannot persist without profit. In other words, Facebook’s participation culture cannot exist without the presence of capitalism. This model represents a sort of give and take between the public sphere and commercial sphere as the two are in constant dialogue. Yet, this tension is what makes Facebook such an interesting area of inquiry.

At work in Facebook’s active participation economy is a transformation to our modes of production. Des Freedman reflects: “Web 2.0 commentators coalesce around the notion the web culture is ushering in a far more efficient, creative, smoother, democratic and participatory form of capitalism: “A new mode of production is in the making’ (Tapscott and Williams 2008)” (Freedman 70). While hierarchies that exist within capitalism still prevail, the dynamicism between monetary and participatory economies distinguish a new mode of production, producing new modes of sociality, perhaps injecting our public sphere with a new found sense of democracy and unity.

We cannot confuse participation economy as an alternative economy that functions outside of our price-driven economy: we must understand participation economy as a new sort of social economy driven by social capital that derives from capitalism. Facebook reorients means of production and consumer relationships to producers. What emerges is a new hyperactive model of commerce that has become embedded into our daily interactions and activities that are carried out on Facebook. With the new power that is
derived from Facebook’s participatory economy, Facebook must make constitutive choices regarding how that power will be monetized, ultimately affecting the activities of millions of individuals. While I will explore the new patterns of sociality and the transactional relationship that emerges from increased participation later, I will now turn to Facebook’s transformations to and adaptations of advertising to reveal Facebook’s commercial intentions.

**Changing the Game: Facebook and The Advertising Industry**

“‘The basic idea is that ads should be content,’ he says now. ‘They need to be essentially just organic information that people are producing on the site. A lot of the information that people produce is inherently commercial. And if you look at someone’s profile, almost all the fields that define them are in some way commercial—music, movies, books, products, games. It’s part of our identity as people that we like something, but it also has commercial value’” (Kirkpatrick 260).

I briefly turn to Facebook’s advertising program to garner an understanding of Facebook’s revenue model. This model is important to take into consideration when examining commercial and individual agendas within the Facebook’s public sphere, as it provides a new framework for sociality through consumption.

As Facebook began to grow, the founders realized the unique and powerful database they had created: “The combination of real validated identity information and extensive information about individuals could yield insights no Internet service has previously seen” (Kirkpatrick 142). Personal information tied directly to a validated identity offered Facebook the opportunity to directly market products to desired individuals by tapping into their publically personal information. This sort of information became, and still is, the company’s most valuable asset. This power was first realized when Facebook was limited
to college age students. The amount of offers made by companies wanting to advertise on Facebook was astounding: Facebook provides a space where young consumers are actively engaged. Advertisers were able to market to a specific age, intelligence, and socio-economic demographic. Yet as time went on, Mark Zuckerberg remained cautious in selling-out to the advertising industry. He refused to utilize traditional banner advertisement that is most commonly found on social media networks. Yet, as the company began to grow larger and larger, Zuckerberg and his colleagues could no longer afford the immense cost of servers. Zuckerberg made the decision to allow advertising on Facebook, but under the condition that he controlled the terms. Thus, the stage is set: Facebook’s revenue model is advertising.

Zuckerberg was very cautious in implementing advertising on Facebook. He obsessively worried that traditional banner ads would disrupt the experience of Facebook. What made Facebook’s network revolutionary was its function as a social economy: individuals were the deciding forces in determining who, where, and what they engaged with. Zuckerberg’s main job became trying to incorporate advertising into Facebook without disrupting the experience. Zuckerberg dictates, “that advertising should always be useful for the user.’ Though his mandate was revenue, he had taken to saying things like ‘We almost shouldn’t be making money off of it if it isn’t adding value’” (Kirkpatrick 175). Zuckerberg determined that the role of advertising should be useful to users. This has been the goal of advertising in traditional mass media, but Facebook extends efforts made in other media sectors by tapping into their rich social networks. The hypersocial element embedded within the user’s experience provides news developments within advertising. At stake in the implementation of advertising is the user’s experience of their social sphere. In
2008, Zuckerberg announced his advertising program, which would change the advertising industry. This program included three main types of ads: social ads, engagement ads, and commercial Facebook pages. The aim for this new model was to integrate advertising into a user’s experience as seamlessly as possible without disruption. Additionally, the promotion of interactivity between advertisers and users was critical to Facebook’s success in revolutionizing the ways of advertising on the Internet. Regarding the success of Facebook’s new interactive model of advertising, Lietsaka suggests: “Provision-based value-adding services or features will most likely be more productive when it comes to revenues” (Lietsaka 99). Zuckerberg succeeds in making advertising undisruptive by adding value through interaction. This model of interactivity is drastically different than traditional mass media advertising: users have more stake in brand meaning and directly benefit from such interactivity.

While I will not focus on engagement ads or social ads, I found it important to include. My intentions are to acknowledge how Facebook is changing the rules of advertising. No longer can advertising companies control the visibility or reach of messages. Companies now have to respond and engage in real time, leaving thoughtful and perfect ad campaigns as things of the past. Facebook’s unique and highly valuable database of personal information is undeniably attractive to marketers. To tap into Facebook’s database, companies must understand and respect the dynamics provided by the platform’s infrastructure. Here, not only do individuals interact with corporations, but

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1 Social ads are “self-service” ads “which pair a paid commercial message with a Facebook user’s endorsement” (Kirkpatrick 247). Engagement ads serve as a “modest-looking message from an advertiser on user’s homepages that invites them to do something right on the page” (Kirkpartrick 260). Facebook Pages encourage “any commercial entity to create a ‘page’ on Facebook for free” (Kirkpatrick 246).
corporations are forced to interact with individuals. Henry Jenkins provides: “interactivity refers to the ways that new technologies have been designed to be more responsive to consumer feedback” (Jenkins 204). Facebook’s interactive model of advertising places traditional consumers in a new space of authority: users/consumers determine the reputation of corporations and the value of their marketing. By controlling the lucrative assets of personal information, Facebook is in a unique position of power in establishing new market standards in advertising.

Most pertinent to my research is the advent of Facebook Pages. For the first time ever, Facebook held an event in New York on November 6th 2008 for the advertising community. They announced that “any commercial entity could now create a ‘page’ on Facebook for free, which would have many of the characteristics of an individual’s profile...The company’s strategy was to get as many companies into its system as possible, on the presumption that once they were operating there they would find cause to advertise or otherwise spend money, even if their page itself was free” (Kirkpatrick 246). Rather than “friending” individuals, users could “fan” or “like” pages. Most importantly, these pages allow in depth analysis regarding individual posts and demographic engagement called “Insights”. I will go into this more later. Additionally, “activities of users on these new commercial pages would be broadcast to their Facebook friends’ New Feeds” (Kirkpatrick 246). The more likes a Facebook page accumulates, the more visibility and circulation content receives. The introduction of free commercial Facebook pages allows corporations to reach and access consumers on an individual level. By “liking” a Facebook page, individuals subscribe to the page’s updates just as they do when friending friends. Commercial groups are successfully integrated into consumers’ daily consumption of
media, appearing alongside information such as your nephew’s first birthday and your college roommate’s pictures from her trip to Europe. Commercial presence has successfully permeated the space of Facebook, creating a new dynamic between consumers and producers. (While I introduce this concept now, I intend to look at this new dynamic critically in the next two chapters).

If traditional advertising within mass media is described as a one-to-many passive experience, interactive advertising within social media is an active, many-to-many experience. For commercial entities and individuals alike, what is at stake in “liking” is the important capital of virality: the more likes accumulated equates popularity and, thus, visibility. Individuals now have increased capacity to publically circulate and interpret commercial messages. In reference to traditional mass media environments, “commercial industries developed powerful infrastructures that ensured that their messages reached everyone in America who wasn’t living under a rock. Increasingly, the commercial culture generated the stories, images, and sounds that mattered most to the public” (Jenkins 207). Facebook’s model of interactivity marks a split from traditional mass media’s as producers no longer control content to the same extent that they did before. Consumers/users have increased agency in determining what matter’s to them. Within this system, content that individuals find interesting are ranked by popularity rather than what company paid the most money to buy a popular slot of airtime. While ratings of popularity have existed for some time, Facebook taps into a new, more in depth measurement of popularity. Users gain increased agency in controlling popular content because they directly engage with content and personally circulate relevant items. What emerges is a model of social media
consumption where consumers take on the powerful role of circulating brand messages while creating their own meaning.

Facebook’s advertising model as changed the relationship between individuals and commercial entities. Facebook pages allow corporations to take advantage of the social power generated through individual networks. Individuals find value in this relationship through their ability to interpret and determine commercial messages. Interactive models of advertising are successful because they are able to harness and control word-of-mouth by using individuals to multiple brand messages. Engagement with commercial content is meaningful because it occurs within the context of individuals’ social networks. Conversely, access to individual attention through successful integration of marketing is extremely valuable to corporations. Facebook’s model of advertising has reshaped the ways in which commercial and individual groups relate to one another: consumption is now active and social. The social element of Facebook’s advertising model is new and distinctive. Of course consumption is, and has been, social, but not to this extent. By tapping into the unique dynamics of a social environment where individuals access corporations at an intimate level (and visa versa), Facebook has created a new playing field in which traditional consumers and producers begin to negotiate their new relationship.

**The Social/Commercial Transaction: Reimagining the Consumer/Producer**

**Relationship**

“The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society (Marx and Engels 1975: 36)” (Freedman 79).
In this section, I would like to look at the role of commercial presence within Facebook’s participatory economy. Participation includes engagement with commercial Facebook pages. Not only do individuals engage with the market, but they also generate valuable social capital through their engagement. How one engages with commercial entities reflects an individual’s cultural perspective. By engaging with particular commercial brands or corporations, individuals publicize their personal tastes and preferences. At stake for individuals is valuable social capital. For corporations, the more user attention—or likes—they accumulate, the larger visibility they receive. Additionally, likes grant corporations invaluable insight into their followers’ personal information. Yet, to get individuals to follow commercial groups, corporations must generate content that individuals find useful. Individual users offer their engagement at the price of utility.

Embedded within the social current of Facebook, a new transactional relationship emerges between consumers and producers.

The information producer’s extract from their Facebook pages is invaluable: individuals voluntarily like a page, and thus find value in the page’s content. Corporations have the ability to better understand who their consumer is. This marks the commodification of individual labor: “As Marx puts it, ‘objects of utility’ become commodities ‘only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and directly, through them, between the producers’” (Marx 1918)” (Freedman 82). As individuals work to engage with Facebook pages, their labor is converted to commodity. The knowledge acquired through user participation is repackaged and sold back to consumers. The labor put forth by corporations is also seen as a commodity because users find value in their content, so much so that they hand over
valuable personal information that may be exploited. Individuals only receive the value of a commercial page by liking such page: pages only receive valuable information about consumers by providing useful information to fans. This transaction marks the connection between Facebook’s participation and market economies. Des Freedman remarks: “capitalist will do everything they can to extract more value from the production process” (Freedman 80). Both consumers and producers use one another, functioning in a sort of symbiotic relationship, as valuable resources are exchange.

Individuals participate with commercial groups (and consequently their own exploitation) because it is valuable to their experience of Facebook. In addition to extracting value from a Facebook page’s content production, individuals also find value in the ability to state their tastes and preferences publically. By liking a Facebook page, individuals take part in a process of identification: their activity of liking is publicized to their network and added to their personal preferences, making that activity of liking part of their personal identity. Liking a company’s Facebook page becomes an important part of social participation. Alice Marwick states: “Not only are users treated as consumers, they are encouraged to consume others in a concept of networking that privileges social capital over friendship or community building” (Marwick 10). Facebook serves as a hyperactive market of social capital for both individuals and corporations. Users are positioned to consume everyone and everything around them, each activity serving as increased social capital within the social market that is Facebook.

At the heart of this transactional relationship is user participation in the form of a “like”. Through the process of liking, users generate content, leaving a trail of their activity. Liking allows individuals to publicize their preferences and corporations to tap into
valuable consumer information. Geert Lovink suggests that Facebook’s like function is a powerful digital currency: “The like button enables users to make connections to pages and share content with their friends with one click and to show logged-in users which friends have already ‘liked’; the page. At stake is the politics of traffic” (Lovink 17). The idea is that the more traffic a Facebook page receives, the more attention that can be harnessed from individual users. This attention is incredibly valuable because users have the ability to circulate and engage with such corporations, ultimately multiplying the brand message. While this is the hope, there is not necessarily a way to quantify how attention is translated to increased revenue for individual corporations. Does more traffic equal more revenue for companies? What does it mean to exchange commodities that do not intrinsically possess monetary value? Does a new sort of value emerge? How does this exchange affect the dynamics of public life carried out on Facebook? This transactional relationship is better understood by examining the experience of both the user/consumer and the corporation/producer.
CHAPTER 4: USER/CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

In this section, I would like to examine the experience of the individual Facebook user within the context of commercial consumption (i.e. the act of liking a commercial Facebook page). While there is no monetary transaction that occurs between the consumer and producer—which is what I am calling commercial Facebook pages—there is a new form exchange at play. To engage with a Facebook commercial page, individual users have to initiate the relationship by “liking” a page. In order for users to put effort forth to make a connection with a commercial page, they must find some sort of value within the exchange. Within the process of liking, individuals give up a certain amount of privacy as they hand over their personal information to the commercial page they engage with. Additionally, when an individual likes or engages with a page, their activity is broadcasted to their network and stored on their profile, making such activity part of their personal, digital identity. Within this process, I find at stake for consumers two critical points of worth: (1) what users “like” says something about their individual identity, and (2) users perceive their action as adding value to their online experience. In effect is a new form of consumption that revolves around the social aspect of Facebook. By taking part in liking commercial pages, individual consumption is contextualized within their social network, creating a hyperactive space of consumption and production of valuable social capital.

Consumer Profile

When individuals sign-up for Facebook, their first task—after registering with an official email address—is to create a personal profile. This includes stating your name, age, current city, posting a profile picture, and listing one’s favorite movies, books, television
shows, athletic teams, etc. by liking their commercial pages. In effect, the creation of a Facebook personal profile resembles a sort of consumer profile: individuals list off their favorite branded products, making each contribution an important marker of their personal identity. This public construction of the self does not necessarily have to be start forward: individuals play with popular culture in creating their online identity. For instance, individuals can like items of popular culture ironically, expressing their nuanced and contextualized understanding of a particular culture. At work in profile identity formation is a play with popular culture.

The resources in which individuals construct their digital identity center around personal consumption: “The materials of social identity have changed...With the rise of consumer culture in the late 20th century, possessions and consumptive choices were also brought into the fold of identity” (Lui 252). As society progresses, the individual has been increasingly defined by his or her consumptive choices, as such choices have been granted public presence. Even such activities as going to the mall place all consumptive habits on display for everyone to observe. Individuals fashion their identity through their consumptive “choices”.

This process of fashioning selfhood is accelerated and exacerbated within the space of Facebook. Facebook’s hyper-public flow of information and exchange is the material that publically defines individual identity. All activity is archived and put on display for an individual’s public, making their identity held in place by the medium of Facebook. This reflects Facebook’s practice of identity formation as public presentation of identity: “The virtual materials of this performance are cultural signs composed together into a taste statement that is ‘performed’ through the profile” (Lui 253). The tools of
profile/individual management are those that reflect consumptive practices. Individuals display their personal tastes and preferences by liking or engaging with commercial pages. In essence, by liking a commercial page, individuals publicize their tastes, and such brands become apart of the user’s online identity. As Facebook lacks those physical indicators that persist within physical world, likes become valuable building blocks for personal identity formation. Additionally, if likes represent individual interests, likes also become the foundation of commonality among friends.

What makes Facebook an interesting space of identity performance is its characteristic hyperactive and public flows of information. These qualities frame a new stage for carrying out identity formation. Judith Butler’s theory of performativity is helpful to understand this new environment: “Butler’s theory of performativity is based on the idea that identity and subjectivity is an ongoing process of becoming, rather than an ontological state of being, whereby becoming is a sequence of acts, that retroactively constitute identity (Butler, 1990; Salih, 2002: 46). That is, identity formation occurs ‘in accord’ with culturally-given discourses, structures and practices which, once stabilized for the subject, comes to feel as commonsense” (Cover 178). Facebook brings this ongoing process of performativity of identity and subjectivity to the forefront of an individual’s experience, as individual performances of identity are contextualized within social networks. The constant flux and flow of culture within the space of Facebook allows for this sort of ongoing performance of identity, rather than a static conceptualization of individual identity. As personal statements of tastes are publicized to friend’s News Feeds, real-time knowledge of individual identities is contextualized and consumed by the social presence of others.
What is at stake for individuals who engage with commercial pages is the performance and publication of their personal tastes. The practice in which personal assertions of identity are broadcasted to an individual’s network marks a process of commodification in which such information is consumed as a product, and exchanged as important social capital. Veblen theorized that “the tastes of that class, and especially its tendency toward conspicuous consumption of costly goods, were driven by the desire to assert and vie for status and honor” (Lui 255). The social layer of consumption and identity performance fuels a hierarchical accumulation of social capital. Performances of taste and class are interpreted and acknowledged by an individual’s network. If any action of liking becomes a part of identity formation, then all activity is transformed into social capital. As identity performance is given public presence, friends are invited to monitor digital identity, making sure individuals provide a coherent performance of the self.

Individuals have the ability to engage with luxury brands and use such brands to fashion their public identity without monetary or physical exchange. Des Freedman suggests that network power occurs through the actions of “liking rather than owning” (Freedman 73). At stake in this activity are not physical goods but, rather, knowledge. Displaying to their network that they possess the knowledge of luxury brands, individuals produce significant social capital. This sort of social knowledge is contextualized among friends and through the process of commodification is transformed into capital that is exchanged. While friends work to police individuals in enacting a coherent version of the self, this activity allows individuals to work outside the physical confines of monetary consumption in presenting their identity. For instance, when an individual likes the high fashion brand Chanel, such information becomes apart of their performed identity whether
they can afford Chanel products or not. As an individual publicizes knowledge and engagement with such brand, they work to build their reputation among friends. Despite being one of the most expensive labels in the world, Chanel has 8.6 million likes. Thus, the type of capital that comes from this sort of engagement is not physical: it’s social.

Consuming without monetary exchange marks a new transactional relationship between consumers and producers, with the agreed upon currency taking form of the like. For users, commercial pages are important resources for fashioning identity and publicizing important social knowledge. Alice Marwick considers “Generally, the user is portrayed not as a citizen, but as a consumer” (Marwick 10). Examining the social and commercial spheres of Facebook, individuals present themselves to their public networks through commercial deliberation. Identity is less tied to personal beliefs and active engagement regarding the public good and is more so tied to practices of consumption. Liking serves as an affiliation, and through liking, individuals actively consume and produce popular culture. In spirit, individual profiles are more akin to consumer profiles.

**Liking and Engaging with Commercial Pages: Consumption Made Public**

While working to perform identity through engagement with commercial pages marks an important aspect of the consumer experience, equally as important is the value users extract from such engagement. At stake in liking a commercial page for individuals is surrendering personal information to commercial groups. Users give up their information because they extract social value from the transaction. Joseph Turrow considers: “The idea that consumers would make a cost-benefit calculation in giving up useful information about themselves fits the needs of advertisers and media perfectly” (Turrow 114). Users engage
with brands only if they find it beneficial to their experience. The labor performed by consumers is exchanged for value provided by commercial content, such as rewards, entertainment, social capital, etc. The cost of handing over personal information that may be used against individuals equals that of services and information provided by commercial pages.

The process of engaging with a commercial page requires the user to put forth their labor. Not only do individuals focus their attention through the consumption of commercial content, but they also work to maintain their personal profile, which provides invaluable information for companies. Individuals willingly take part in this form of work if they perceive added value from their labor. Freedman suggests: “The idea of creative and enjoyable production relates to another significant shift in the social relations of the contemporary world, concerning the character of labor in a digital economy” (Freedman 76). The character of labor is satisfying to the user. Facebook provides a unique marketplace for consumption and production because labor on the consumer’s part is recognized as entertaining and valuable. From an individual’s perspective, their engagement with commercial pages is pleasurable. Commercial pages provide users with entertaining and constructive resources in exchange for personal information: users are rewarded for their labor.

The effort engaged users put forth is rewarded in many different ways. For individuals to be engaged, they must perceive there to be added value within the utilities provided by corporations. Below are some examples of how users find value in commercial content: they have access to exclusive deals, insider information regarding new products, entertaining content, access to important popular culture or viral advertising, etc. I would
now like to spend some time looking at individual examples of how consumers are rewarded for their labor.

Many consumers find it valuable to like a commercial page because they are granted special promotional deals that cannot be found elsewhere. On Valentine's Day, Starbucks announced a free drink promotion to all those who liked their page on Facebook (Fig. 1). In exchange for giving up personal information and directing some sort of attention to the content produced by Starbucks, users received exclusive promotional deals that could only be found on Facebook.

Makeup distributor Birchbox rewards consumers by providing beauty tips from professionals and opportunities to win product giveaways (Fig. 2). The content provided by Birchbox's Facebook page is useful to consumers: not only do users get insider information on new products, but they are also rewarded with the opportunity to win free products. By providing useful information about products, users utilize brand pages as filters: “Instead of relying on such information filters as algorithms and recommender systems, online social networks, or expert curation, Schmidt remains resolute in his belief that brands are absolutely essential in helping us to navigate the new information world” (O’Conner 37). Commercial pages provide interested consumers with informative product information that is relevant. Such information can aid consumers in making informed consumptive decisions.

Content from commercial pages also serve as popular entertainment. Taco Bell provides users with humorous content that lends itself to viral consumption. Taco Bell posted a funny video, revolving around the outrageous behavior of party-animal grandparents, and the video received massive attention from consumers (Fig. 3).
Additionally, brands like Old Spice constantly produce content that is perceived as entertaining by users (Fig. 4). Consumers find value in engaging with producers because of the entertainment value. Not only do users find commercial content interesting, but they also find they share such interests with others. Because individuals initiate the relationship with a commercial page engagement, page followings generate a consumer community that finds similar content appealing, as all those who like a page do so voluntarily. In this sense, consumers take part in entertaining popular culture that can only be distributed and enjoyed on Facebook. Taking part in such popular culture also provides important social capital among friends.

Entertainment also takes form in using Facebook pages as extensions of other branded experiences. For example, The Biggest Loser Facebook page provides helpful tips from the show’s trainers and provides deleted scenes from the show. Consumers are rewarded for their engagement through added material that enhances the viewing experience.

Consumer engagement with commercial Facebook pages reflects an accepted transactional relationship. Consumers surrender their personal information to commercial entities in return for utilities provided by such groups. Henry Jenkins suggests: “Interactivity refers to the ways that new technologies have been designed to be more responsive to consumer feedback” (Jenkins 204). As users interact with brands on Facebook, they are, in essence, providing producers with valuable information that may make their consumer experience better. There is a two-way exchange of information that occurs through the process of individual users liking commercial pages. Users extract value from their labor as producers reward their efforts. While it is commonly held that
consumers are plagued with and despise commercial interruption, Facebook makes such relationships beneficial. While the relationship between consumers and advertising can be seen as an extension of previous models, Facebook expands this by opening the flow of information between the two, improving and accelerating the process of exchange. By tapping into the social resources of Facebook, commercial presence is no longer a disruptive top-down experience of media content: it is media content.

**New Consumer Experience**

“This comes from the fact that online social networking is not a singular activity but a set of interrelated – sometimes incompatible – interactivities which include identity performances through profile management, friending, becoming a fan (‘liking’ fan pages), tagging, being tagged, updating statuses, and having responses given by others to one’s own status updates. That is, an array of activities that require users to ‘work’ to perform a coherent, intelligible selfhood extending across all these online activities in addition to offline behaviors” (Cover 178).

What underlies the new consumer experience is the added layer of social networks. The social aspect of consumption on Facebook is achieved publically through the fashioning of identity using commercial goods, and through engagement with such commercial brands (i.e. liking, sharing, commenting, etc.). For users, consumption is given a visible social context: “According to Donath and boyd (2004), a user’s friend connections speak to their identity—the public display of friend connections constitutes a social milieu that contextualizes one’s identity” (Lui 254). Social meaning is created within the
framework of an individual’s social network. Users test their identity and consumptive practices against one another. As a result, individual activity contributes to a much larger culture of consumption.

This process of consumption is not a result of highly superficial individuals. Geert Lovink considers: “The marketing of the self is not so much a narcissistic venture aiming to satisfy one’s inner needs but in primarily powered by the fast consumption of objects external to us, the unstoppable drive to collect more and more stuff— from friends and lovers to brand products, services, and other quasi-exclusive short-lived experiences” (Lovink 44). What emerges is a sophisticated market of social capital. Individuals police and consume the actions of one another, and at lightening speed contextualize such activities within a larger public exchange. In order to keep up with this fast moving social economy, individuals must learn how to decode massive amounts of information to extract social meaning.

Facebook’s hyper-public space facilitates a new consumer experience that revolves around increased social presence. The structure of Facebook encourages the intersection of identity and consumption. Despite succumbing personal information, engagement and interactivity with commercial pages allows for a more fluid relationship between consumers and producers. Facebook provides a new and unique consumer experience by calling upon the consumer to initiate the relationship with producers. Users do not have to engage with commercial entities at all; yet, the vast majorities voluntarily do at a high frequency. Users decide whether they want to subscribe to commercial content. This dramatically differs from traditional consumer cultures in which consumers depended upon passive, one-way forms of commercial communication. Now, consumers willingly
hand over their personal information and labor in return for social capital in varying forms. Commerce is the stuff that consumers all have in common, transforming declarations of preference to critical social capital.

**The Future**

Above I have stated the current, right-at-this-moment experience of consumers/users on Facebook. But I feel that it is important to briefly touch upon what the future could hold for individuals. In 2008, Facebook announced a new utility called Facebook Connect. Facebook Connect allows individuals to sign into other websites using their Facebook username and password, allowing users to skip registration and connect immediately to the utilities of other websites. For instance, instead of creating an account on Amazon or Zappos, Facebook users can just sign in using their Facebook information. Another feature of Facebook connect is the ability to publicize, on Facebook, individual consumption. If a user bought a pair of shoes on Zappos, they have the ability to “share” that information with their Facebook network. This feature is most commonly found on entertainment and news websites. The purpose is to embed Facebook within the very fabric of the Internet. In essence, what Facebook is attempting to do is to create a universal login, encouraging individuals to relate all activities that occur outside Facebook back to that platform. This aspect makes Facebook a contained universe, where all activity is made public. Facebook is an incredibly popular feature of Facebook, but the is too young to understand its significance (Fig. 5).

Another possibility the future may provide is shopping within Facebook. Users will have the ability to purchase products directly on Facebook without having to leave the site.
Currently, Facebook provides users the ability to buy friends physical products on their birthday (Fig. 6). Allowing monetary exchange to occur within the confines of Facebook’s social network dramatically alters the meaning of such spaces.

Relevant Quotes:

“Facebook made yet another huge transition in late 2008. Zuckerberg aimed to start embedding Facebook into the very fabric of the Internet. In a fundamental change to its platform, the company launched Facebook Connect. The launch was an appeal to developers to start building on top of Facebook in a new way” (Kirkpatrick 305).

“Connect makes it possible for any site on the Web to allow you to log in using your Facebook account. That accomplishes several things. It lets you bring your identity with you wherever you go online. Because you can tell Connect to send information back into your Facebook feed, it’s a way to project information about the actions you take on those sites back to your Facebook friends just as if they were actions inside Facebook” (Kirkpatrick 305).

“For users, Facebook Connect and the platform outside Facebook offer what could turn into a universal log-in. Over one million websites use it in some fashion, as of November 2010, and 150 million Facebook members are actively employing it” (Kirkpatrick 306).

“‘Facebook Connect is the future of the way that platform is going to work,’ says Zuckerberg. ‘I don't think it's going to be these little applications inside Facebook. It will be whole websites that just use people’s information from Facebook in order to share more information'” (Kirkpatrick 306).
CHAPTER 5: THE COMMERCIAL/PRODUCER EXPERIENCE

As Facebook announced commercial pages, advertisers had to adjust their traditional marketing techniques to tap into the new and powerful utilities of Facebook’s social network. What makes pages invaluable for producers are “Insights.” Insights are metrics provided by Facebook that deliver “analytics on how many people your post reached, how many people engaged with it, and how many people talked about it with their friends.”

Insights allow pages to quantify audience information at both post and page level: age, gender, geographic location, language, new likes, unlikes, frequency, reach engagement, who’s talking about, impressions, virality, etc. Pages also have the ability to export insights allowing companies the ability to create their own graphs to extract further information. This type of knowledge reveals detailed analysis regarding a producer’s audience. Additionally, producers are now uniquely positioned to engage with consumers: Facebook pages appear to be just like individual profiles, making the communication between user and page seem personal and authentic. To reach consumers at such a personal level grants brands new access to untapped markets. Commercial producers have to learn how best to harness the creative work of consumers to translate engagement into increased revenue. While there is no monetary exchange between producers and consumers on Facebook, liking or engagement stands in as a new currency of exchange: consumers access insider information while producers receive qualified and quantified audience information and access to the social network of consumers.

New Position For Advertisers: A “Liking” Game

If liking is the agreed upon currency for producers, what is at stake in a like?

Producers place great value on increased likes, but this sort of capital does not immediately translate to monetary gain. At stake for producers is brand loyalty and popularity. Andrew Lipsman suggests, “By ‘liking’ a brand, followers can express their interest affirmatively in a particular brand” (Lipsman 43). Consumers experience their interest for a brand by engaging with their page. At stake for producers is politics of traffic: the more attention their message receives, the more popular social momentum it obtains. While there is no immediate monetary gain, producers are granted access to: consumers’ daily consumption of information, detailed audience knowledge, friends of fans, potential customers, etc. Pages offer commercial groups a unique mode of production, allowing their message to benefit from the social flow of Facebook's networks.

No longer can advertisers afford the time to carefully craft and place their brand’s message. The rules of the game have changed. The new commercial space of Facebook is uneasy territory for advertisers. Where traditional mass media marketing is characterized as a passive, one-to-many distribution of content, social media marketing is depicted as a fast, active, many-to-many exchange of information. Social media is new field for traditional advertising methods: “For advertisers, social media is problematic. It is not an easy task to understand how the online communities function and which kinds of messages suit the selected environment...Also, the return-on-investment is hard if not impossible to calculate or predict.” (Lietsala 87). Social media is a hard network to penetrate for those who do not understand it. No longer can advertisers spend massive amounts of resources and time in creating ad campaigns. Facebook is a market place where ideas are exchanged and forgotten at lightening speed: success for advertisers depends of their ability to respond in
real time to network activity. Real time response activates the authenticity of a brand’s authority.

Access to fan’s News Feed makes Facebook an intriguing space for marketing. Individuals no longer have to search for relevant content: it pops up on their New Feed with no effort. Access to individual consumers is the power that companies must tap into to harness the attention of users. In this sense, “the playing field has been leveled by the site’s neutral way of treating all messages as similar...Activity on a page gets deposited into users’ News Feed—just like the activity on any individual’s profile” (Kirkpatrick 297). Any activity produced by users, including engagement with pages, is publicized to their friend’s News Feed. When one’s sister likes a new clothing designer, that activity is experienced right above their high school friend’s most recent trip to Africa. Entrance into consumers’ daily consumption of entertainment, personal, news, and business content is priceless for producers. Real time response allows brands the capacity to incorporate commercial marketing within users’ daily consumption of content. This model is effective by way of the producer’s voice entering the public popularity contest. Geert Lovink asserts: “With the miniaturization of hardware, combined with wireless connectivity, technology becomes an invisible part of our everyday life. Web 2.0 applications respond to this trend by attempting to extract value from our every situation” (Lovink 13). By tapping into Facebook’s social network, brands are able to seamlessly integrate their message into users everyday media world. Liberated by the technology of smart phones, users unconsciously consume and engage with Facebook at rapid speed, regardless of their location or the time of day: Facebook has become a part of daily life.
Facebook pages aesthetically look identical to individual profiles: they must have a profile picture, they list their interests, they post information to their networks, etc. Pages also have the ability to engage with consumers by replying to their comments and producing more content that users find enjoyable. The ability for a company to respond in real time to personal comments makes them appear human. Consumers no longer experience brand presence as a disconnected, inhuman entity. Users engage with producers at the same level they engage with their friends. Facebook mediates this new dynamic relationship between consumers and producers. The more authentic brands are perceived, the greater the connection with consumers. By facilitating a relationship between consumers and producers, Facebook creates a new market place that circulates around the social power of its platform. The social current of Facebook is so commanding, “some consumer-oriented companies now put less emphasis on their website and more on their Facebook page, where they can host a wide variety of Facebook applications and where actions of fans get virally projected to their friends” (Kirkpatrick 264). Some companys, like Vitamin Water, redirect consumers who visit their website to their Facebook page. By emphasizing the content of social media, brands encourage consumers to interact and engage with brands to create an active relationship rather than passive one. The more active and engaged consumers are with producers, the more information can be extracted and the stronger the brand loyalty.

As consumer interactions with commercial pages are publicized to their social network, producers have the ability to reach a much larger audience than their fan base. Total likes for a Facebook page provide detailed analysis and information regarding a brand’s audience. Audience members must initiate this relationship first by liking the page.
At the moment of engagement, such actions are broadcast to a fan’s friend group, making their activity visible to individuals who do not like the brand’s page. This creates a word-of-mouth phenomenon: “Friends of friends are an intriguing audience for marketers. As these consumers have yet to identify themselves as fans of a given brand, there may be more upside in messaging to them—either for brand building or increasing consumption” (Lipsman 45). Facebook’s social network provides the opportunity to market to the most coveted social group: friends of friends. When an individual likes a page, a page also has the ability to reach an individual’s extended friend group, which—to some extent—possesses similar tastes as the engaged user. While pages don’t have access to these individuals directly, they have increased incentive to produce useful content for fans, in hopes that they will circulate and endorse brand messaging.

In this sense, consumers do the work of distributing and circulating important information. This is where the power of social networks is realized: “It is true that the greatest Internet success stories don’t advertise their products. Their adoption is driven by ‘viral marketing’—that is, recommendations propagating directly from one user to another” (O’Reilly 38). The power of circulation that may be derived from a consumer’s social network occurs instantaneously upon engagement. Producers attempt to harness the influence of consumers by generating content that is desirable to engage with. I call these Facebook marketing techniques “like campaigns”. For example, Walmart posted a status advertising their new Eggo Waffles: “‘Like’ if you want to try chocolate, ‘Share’ if you prefer vanilla” (Fig. 7). This type of content does two things: (1) it encourages engagement among consumers; and (2) allows consumers to participate in meaning making through a friendly competition of sorts. Consumers find this post valuable because their opinion is elicited,
and they decide which waffle is better. The more individual engagement, the greatest extent the friend of friend audience may be tapped. 22,564 individuals liked the post and 2,436 individuals shared the post. Not only are producers provided with in depth demographic information regarding the engaged audience, but they also gain knowledge regarding the preferences of the active audience. Thus, having stake in meaning making is an affective method for producers in harnessing consumer and potential consumer attention. Coca Cola also employs this technique in asking consumes what they would trade for an ice cold Coca Cola (Fig. 8). 2,009 consumers commented on this post, 4,277 liked the post, and 413 shared the post. While the total number of engaged users is 6,699, such post also reached those 6,699 people’s social network. The potential reach for companies is massive. Other companies like Vitamin Water utilize viral marketing to circulate their brand image (Fig. 9). By asking consumers to engage in a caption contest, consumers find value in shared humor and stake in the brand’s meaning. Untapped consumer markets provide large incentive for companies to create viral content that elicits consumer engagement. This content must be useful and of interest to engaged consumers to be successful.

**Do More Likes Translate To More Revenue?**

While Facebook facilitates a new market of exchange between consumers and producers, it does not make clear the effect such transaction has on increasing a company’s revenue. Commercial entities put a lot of time and effort into maintaining their presence on Facebook: they produce valuable content for consumers to engage with and respond in real time to audience needs. Yet, it is hard to know whether this exchange is worth the effort. I
assert that there is a valuable exchange that occurs through engagement that is in a company’s best interest to activate. What is being exchanged between consumers and producers is attention and meaning. As consumers make private knowledge public on Facebook, producers have the ability to mine this previously private well of knowledge to learn more about their audience. By rewarding consumers with meaningful content, producers access invaluable insights that reveal incredibly detailed market knowledge. While there is no direct monetary exchange, brand loyalty and attention is solidified, securing physical exchange away from Facebook’s sphere. What takes form here is an incredibly rich resource for audience research. The build in monitoring system embedded within Facebook provides new standards of research that are faster and more in depth.

The most valuable resource producers obtain is Facebook page Insights. The ability to qualify and quantify active audience members allows companies to better market themselves. This type of audience knowledge has been painstakingly sought after for decades. Lipsman suggests: “Understanding the demographic characteristics of a brand’s social media following may reveal interesting audience dynamics and uncover the potential for new marketing opportunities” (Lipsman 47). In exchange for detailed audience knowledge, producers must create content that is meaningful to consumers. Consumers engage—and therefore hand over their personal information—only if they are rewarded for their engagement. Joseph Turow considers: “The goal for tracking is to store huge amounts of linked personal and lifestyle information in databases with the goal of more efficient ‘relationship’-oriented marketing that rewards ‘best customers’ with discounts and even story lines designed for them” (Turow 105). Mediate by Facebook, the appearance of a living relationship between users and commercial pages allows a fluid
transaction, using engagement as the agreed upon currency. The price of engagement manifests itself in more personalized marketing.

The perceived relationship between consumers and producers has great influence on consumptive choices. The more authentic and personal the relationship appears to consumers, the stronger brand loyalty becomes. Consumers appreciate being engaged with. Companies elicit consumer opinion and attention, rewarding their engagement with insider information or exclusive content. Thus, the ability to acquire greater brand loyalty is extremely valuable for companies: “media producers can garner greater loyalty and more compliance to legitimate concerns if they court the allegiance of fans; the best way to do this turns out to be giving them some stake in the survival of the franchise, ensuring that the provided content fully reflects their interests” (Jenkins 233). To attract consumer engagement, producers must give users the ability to contribute and decide what is meaningful to the brand. While this does not directly lead to increased revenue, it solidifies the relationship between consumers and producers, securing future consumptive choice.

Smirnoff provides consumers with useful information by publishing cocktail recipes to their Facebook page (Fig. 10). In addition to providing valuable information, Smirnoff also enlisted the opinions of fans by having them choose which drink recipes were their favorite. Smirnoff offers utility that includes purchase of their product, while at the same time taking into consideration the desires of consumers. Granting consumers stake in brand meaning, Smirnoff works to secure brand loyalty among fans.

Nikon elicits consumer opinion in a similar way (Fig. 11). Nikon asks consumers: “What tips can you share for photographing interesting and memorable photos of your
pets?” In asking consumers this question, Nikon’s Facebook page serves as a consumer community, where consumers use their page as a central location to share valuable photography tips. The feeling of community facilitated by Nikon further solidifies brand loyalty by appealing to consumers on a more personal level. It is in a photographer’s interest to utilize the services provided by Nikon. By generating a conversation among consumers, Nikon can listen and take part in the conversation, creating a more personal connection to consumers. Producers now have the ability to join in on the conversation.

Producers also use engagement to spread their message beyond their fan base, in hopes of reaching potential consumers. Because individual fans are contextualized among their friends, their engagement is crucial to harnessing potential consumers. For example, Swiffer posted a photo that that states: “LIKE if you think all cats should come with a Swiffer.” By liking, consumers express some affinity to pet ownership, allowing Swiffer to extract more detailed information about those who engage (i.e. pet owners who like in...). Liking assumes that individuals who have cats also recognize Swiffer as an efficient way to clean pet related messes. This preference is publicized to individual’s entire social network, hopefully attracting the attention of other pet owners who are looking for good ways to clean up pet mess. In this way, producers have the ability to target niche audiences directly.

Lastly, one of the best ways to garner brand loyalty is to extend the consumption experience on Facebook. Television show The Biggest Loser provides many different tips regarding health and fitness (Fig. 13). Their Facebook page also supplies healthy recipes from the show, contestant bios, never before seen footage etc. This Facebook page extends and enhances the consumer’s experience of the show.

**New Producer Experience**
Within the integrated social infrastructure, Facebook allows for a more social relationship between producers and consumers. Disclosure surrounding fandom suggests consumers extract social meaning in their relationship with producers. While this is an extension previous producer marketing, the built-in social framework situates activity within a larger social order. The core of this relationship is its public presence on Facebook. The most powerful resource for commercial groups is the social current of Facebook: the complex social networks of users provide organic word-of-mouth circulation of information. This provides producers with a unique platform to reach consumers at a more personal level, garnering a more fluid relationship, and ultimately changing the experience of the producer.

The social dynamic of production is extracted from the process of facilitating conversation among consumers: “In an age of ‘digital distraction the powerful metaphor going forward is conversation, and media brands are no longer information providers.’ Instead, Fransecky tells them, ‘You're in the conversation business’” (O'Connor 46). Facebook allows brands to be apart of a social exchange of information by facilitating conversations. As producers initiate conversations among consumers, they have the ability to look in on the conversation and analyze claims being made among consumers. Additionally, reaching consumers on an individual level, producers appear to be more authentic, promoting stronger brand loyalty.

Facebook provides a new framework to conceptualize the relationship between consumers and producers. Producers access detailed knowledge of audiences only to the extent that they have a large audience. The more fans a Facebook page has, the more information they can mine. Producers must provide utility to consumers. Social media
demands advertising to be entertainment. To a further extent that television, the digital sphere of Facebook allows for a unique convergence of commerce and content by extending earlier methods of audience research and tapping into the intrinsic sociality of the platform. Tim O'Reilly suggests, “When commodity components are abundant, you can create value simply by assembling them in novel or effective ways” (O'Reilly 48). In order to tap into the rich social network of consumers, producers must find unique and meaningful ways to appeal to fans. The process in which producers extract meaning and assemble knowledge provided by fan insight may be reflected in future production of content. To maintain brand loyalty, producers must provide relevant content to consumers. The relationship is secured through the constant consumption and engagement (labor) of content, making brand presence integrated fully into consumers’ daily practices of media consumption. In essence, commercial content serves as social information that is circulated by consumers. The new producer experience is defined by its assimilation into the personal social sphere of consumers on Facebook.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Hopes of increased equality, decentralized control, and global harmony held by early technoutopians, are a far cry from contemporary reality. It is easy to become wrapped up in Facebook’s democratic rhetoric of sharing, liking, collaborating, networks, etc. While the characteristics of the Internet do provide possibilities for such hopes, the Internet remains subject to external demands that persist in the physical world. Felix Stalder concludes: “The social meaning of the technologies is not determined by the technologies themselves; rather, it will be shaped and reshaped by how they are embedded into social life, advanced and transformed by the myriad of individual actors, large institutions, practices, and projects that constitute contemporary reality” (Stalder 242). The advent of the Internet does not change the ways of society: the preexisting socio, political, and economical framework in which technologies are developed command far more attention.

Technoutopians hoped for the liberation of the self from the body, but the reality of Internet selfhood requires an extended version of the singular authentic self that is mandated by the physical world. The restrictions and politics of the physical world take form in the digital world: “though tools offer ways to create knowledge and content more openly, we are not that open. Language barriers, digital divide, media literacy, insufficient personal competencies, subjective truths, personal agendas. That is the ballast people carry because, well, because we are humans” (Lietsala 174). At times, the technoutopian fantasy resembles aspects of the American Dream: if individuals worked hard enough, they can make it big. While the Internet appears to be open for success, external control, hidden from the surface, is present on the back-end. The Internet does not erase indifference.
Different agendas are concealed through the interface as Facebook treats all individuals, corporations, and content the same. New technologies are not defined by their inherent characteristics: new technologies are defined by the ways in which they are embedded into the fabric of everyday life.

Despite its shortcomings, the power of the Internet is harnessed to extend and improve previous conditions. Individual like Mark Zuckerberg and those who helped shape Facebook leave their mark on the technology as they respond to user wants and needs. While Facebook does not possess the entire attention of the Internet, the massive amounts of daily activity carried out within the digital space are profound. What makes Facebook a powerful actor is its ability to seamlessly integrate the social and emotional aspect of private life into the public commercial sphere. The power of Facebook lies in the sociality embedded within its infrastructure. Facebook has the ability to dictate the flow of activity and how individuals relate to one another. The capacity to tap into the rich social networks created by Facebook, matched with the ability to control how individuals experience such spheres, reveals a new hypersocial media experience, which is seamlessly perceived as mundane. While media has always been social, the speed and fluidity mediated by Facebook transforms traditional relationships between individuals and producers. Here marks a shift away from mass media towards social media.

Facebook’s advertising model creates new possibilities for audience research. The more likes acquired by a company equals more knowledge of an audience. What is revolutionary about Facebook is its ability to harness the social energy of users at instant speed. Such precise and immediate information is invaluable to both users and corporations. For consumers, their engagement with producers does not appear to be
work. Individuals engage with producers insofar as they extract value from their relationship. Users gain valuable capital whether it is material (i.e. rewards, discounts), knowledge (tutorials, facts), or social (popular culture, taste preference, identity). By providing the content of user entertainment, commercial groups can reach consumers on a personal level, integrating their message into the consumer’s social flow. These incentives for advertisers have always existed and have been tirelessly pursued, but for the first time, Facebook provides a platform for audience engagement that is not only observable, but also recordable and quantifiable. The advertising model presented by Facebook acts as an extension of earlier models. Advertising layered on top of Facebook’s powerful social infrastructure heightens the relationship between consumers and producers, making such relationships more meaningful.

At the heart of Facebook’s participatory economy is the hyperactive market of social capital. The participatory nature of Facebook enhances modes of production and consumption existing within the external world. Facebook creates an environment where the consumption and production of content occurs in massive volumes at lightening speed. Facebook allows an immediate experience of popular culture. For producers, commercial presence is seamlessly integrated into the experience, allowing corporations access to rich audience information. For users, commercial content takes on vital social value. Individual participation is monitored through public activities making their actions part of their digital persona. As individuals engage with popular content and publicize their social knowledge, such content becomes important social capital. Boyd suggests, “People relish personal information because it is the currency of social hierarchy and connectivity” (boyd 17). Social hierarchies surrounding class and taste that dictate the physical realm persist
within the digital sphere. As commercial content becomes the tools in which individuals relate to one another, we see the fusion of social and emotional life with the economics of commercial life. The result is an environment of compulsive producing and consuming.

By combining social and emotional experiences of life with the commercial and economic, Facebook has created a model of great success. Dana boyd considers: “In an unmediated society, social currency is a means to building a relationship. People reciprocally tell each other about their family, thoughts, and desires. Friendships are built on mutual knowledge of each other’s lives and the lives of those they know. Social and emotional support is one of the outcomes of such friendships” (boyd). What happens when our social and emotional lives are mixed with the public nature commerce within a highly mediate space? Individuals now have to balance these separate identities and funnel them all into one coherent, public identity. Commercial groups are given a personal presence as they are embedded within the social and emotional lives of users. Stalder suggests that the power of corporations lies in their ability to become a part of individuals’ daily consumption of social media: “More important is the fact that it is easy to pass off institutional contributions as personal ones” (Stalder 246). This phenomenon makes the commercial nature of Facebook appear natural. Consumption is inserted into the social fabric of Facebook’s networks: Facebook facilitates the fusion of public and private seamlessly by tapping into the hyperactive social market.

What I believe makes Facebook an interesting focus is its ability to unite the social, emotional, and economic. It is human nature to crave and pursue knowledge about those close to us and far away. Facebook collapses the physical constraints of social life, and delivers a compact and precise network of relations, making connections effortless. The
power of this platform is its ability to control to actions of users through infrastructure. As explained above, the News Feed feature allows individuals to be aware of everything happening within their network, creating a more transparent experience of social life. While many find this hyperactive social market place destructive to social life, I believe Facebook has provided a vibrant space for cultural play. The presence of commerce and surveillance does not hinder public life. The presence of commerce within this highly social context expands our horizons. Adding a commercial layer to the sociality, Facebook allows for public negotiations of status, identity, knowledge, etc. The transparency provided by Facebook’s public interface allows a diverse array of relationships to prevail. What makes all of these interactions so meaningful is their connection to real life: the push for online identities to match their physical identities contextualizes digital life. This rootedness in the real exposes the nature of the Internet as being directly influenced by the physical world. Facebook is not an alternative sphere of public life, but a digital organization and extension of existing relationships. Real world economic and political forces directly shape and influence the dynamics of online experiences: Facebook just provides new ways of relating to one another.

The Future

In my work, I have presented my observations and analysis of the complex, 2013, Facebook experience from both the consumer and producer perspective. It is critical to remember the highly fluid nature of social media networks: the cultural meaning extracted on May 2013 can be completely different in June. The social, political, and economic dynamics are in constant flux and flow at any given moment, many times as a consequence
of external forces. Despite these inconsistencies, one feature I found most intriguing when thinking about the future of this platform is the idea of the universal Log-In. Applications like Facebook Connect allow individuals to sync their online shopping activity with their Facebook account. All or some activity is automatically publicized on a consumer’s profile when purchasing a product. Additionally, consumers can sign-in with their Facebook user name and password rather than making a new account. The push for single, authentic individual profiles serves the needs of universal log-ins perfectly. Facebook’s social networks work to legitimize individuals by contextualizing their activity among friends. I see these efforts as part of Facebook’s goal in making their platform a completely contained universe.

Applications like Facebook Connect create a dynamic where all activity outside the confines of the platform is linked back to Facebook. This phenomenon reflects Facebook’s objective in increasing transparency among individuals. At work is what Joseph Turrow refers to as a walled garden: “A walled garden is an online environment where consumers go for information, communications, and commerce services and that discourages them from leaving for the larger digital word” (Turrow 116). If Facebook acts as the central social and commercial force within the digital world, there is great potential to control other aspects of the Internet. Within the past couple of months, users can now buy consumer goods directly on Facebook, rather than having to leave the site. In this sense, all activity is contextualized within a larger social network. Adding the hypersocial layer embedded within Facebook, the potential for a completely contained digital universe does not seem impossible. Facebook would then be a contained space where advertising and monetary transaction occur within the same space, right alongside social and emotional
activity. Commercial activity would be connected to an individual’s social and emotion network, delivering producers even more in-depth consumer knowledge. The possibilities are vast.
FIGURES

(Figure 1)
BIRCHBOX
February 20

We're chatting live with Ojon's lead stylist Gwynne Mims! Join us on Twitter via hashtag #AskOjon (http://ow.ly/hTFDl) to pose questions for Gwynne about anything from perfecting the pin curl to how to get the most out of your Ojon products. By using the hashtag you'll be entered to win this collection of haircare staples from Ojon! Click through for all the details: http://birch.ly/ZfJgB

(Figure 2)
Viva young.

"Viva Young" | 2013 Taco Bell Game Day Commercial

(Figure 3)
If you put Old Spice Matterhorn products on your snowman, he won't turn into a real man, but he will grow abs and a mustache and one singular left earlobe. We're looking into why it's just the one.

http://instagram.com/p/Uy2IRZtNWZ/

(Figure 4)
Thank you, your order has been placed.

An email confirmation has been sent to you. New! Sign up for delivery updates by text for this and future orders.

Order Number: 112-0323212-2037038
- 1 item will be shipped to Amanda Scott by betterworldbooks. Estimated delivery: Jan. 28, 2013 - Feb. 12, 2013

Order Number: 112-2629766-7388221
- 1 item will be shipped to Amanda Scott by A Scholar's Tale Booksellers. Estimated delivery: Jan. 28, 2013 - Feb. 12, 2013

Order Number: 112-2721174-5181858
- 2 items will be shipped to Amanda Scott by indoobestsellers. Estimated delivery: Jan. 28, 2013 - Feb. 12, 2013

Order Number: 112-2797195-2976239
- 5 items will be shipped to Amanda Scott by Amazon.com. Estimated delivery: Jan. 23, 2013
- 1 item will be shipped to Amanda Scott by Amazon.com. Estimated delivery: Jan. 29, 2013
- 1 item will be shipped to Amanda Scott by Amazon.com. Estimated delivery: Jan. 23, 2013

Order Number: 112-3888012-1458242
- 1 item will be shipped to Amanda Scott by Collegebooksless. Estimated delivery: Jan. 28, 2013 - Feb. 12, 2013

Order Number: 112-5144180-6509828

(Figure 5)
Today's Birthdays

**Get Free Shipping**
Send a gift at any price and get free shipping.

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**Camila Soriano**
Write a birthday wish on her timeline...
- Send her FEED Bags & Totes

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**Meghann King**
Write a birthday wish on her timeline...
- Send her NARS Blush

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**Amanda Wigen**
Write a birthday wish on her timeline...
- Send her NARS Blush

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**Caitrin Hall (22 years old)**
Write a birthday wish on her timeline...
- Send her Platinum Beaded Friendship Bracelet

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**Courtney Mallin**
Write a birthday wish on her timeline...
- Send her I Choo Choose You Women's Tee

(Figure 6)
Top your Eggo with something other than syrup. Check out the new Drizzlers icing topping.

"Like" if want to try chocolate, "Share" if you prefer vanilla.

(Figure 7)
I’d trade __________ for an ice cold Coca-Cola, right now!

(Figure 8)
catption contest

(Figure 9)
Top 10 Recipes of 2012 (10 photos)
To toast to the future, let’s take a look back at our past. Here's our top 10 recipes from 2012, decided by you!

SMIRNOFF TOP 10 RECIPES OF 2012

BLUE HAWAIIAN
- 1 OZ SMIRNOFF® ORANGE FLAVORED VODKA,
- 1 OZ BLUE CURACAO
- 2 OZ ORANGE JUICE
- 1 OZ PINEAPPLE JUICE
- 1 SLICE(S) ORANGE

Fill glass with ice. Add SMIRNOFF® Orange Vodka, blue curacao, orange juice, and pineapple juice. Stir well. Garnish with orange slice.

Like · Comment · Share

(Figure 10)
What tips can you share for photographing interesting and memorable photos of your pets?

Like · Comment · Share

Facebook post by Nikon on February 15, 2018

651 people like this.

View all 357 comments

(Figure 11)
LIKE if you think all cats should come with a Swiffer.
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE IT RIGHT, MAKE IT RIGHT BY RISING ABOVE IT.
Bibliography


