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# THE PROBLEM OF FACEBOOK AS AN EXTENSION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE: THE HYPERREAL PERSPECTIVE

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*This paper explores the possibility that social media, such as Facebook, can serve as an extension of the public sphere. This has been the contention since 2002. This paper argues that cyberspace cannot be an extension of the public sphere. To substantiate the claim, this paper utilizes Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality. Hyperreality on Facebook cannot be an extension of the public sphere. The hyperreal context can be explained as follows: First, there is the simulation that occurs on Facebook through absences and disconnections, and the impact on mental health and well-being. Second is the sign-circulation affecting political engagement on Facebook. Third is the distrust that arises regarding public trust in archiving on Facebook. With these explanations, the hyperreality occurring on Facebook results in incarceration and pseudo-omniscience of the people. Ultimately, Facebook exacerbates the failures of the public sphere by simulating participation while intensifying fragmentation, surveillance, and self-alienation.*

*Keywords: Cyberspace, distrust, hyperreality, public sphere, sign-circulation, simulation*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Zizi Papacharissi published an essay titled "The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere." Here, he laid out the following considerations in understanding the features of cyberspace from different points of view. Cyberspace is considered both a public and a private space. Its emergence gave way to an action and a place (Papacharissi 2002, 20). As an action, one can innovate one's life in the context of public and private spaces, and as a place, it provides a new playing field for the familiar struggle between the personal and collective identity (Papacharissi 2002, 10). Meanwhile, the public sphere pertains to a citizenship shared by all and observed by all (Papacharissi 2002, 11). To better understand the implications of these notions, Papacharissi published an essay in 2005 titled "The Real-Virtual Dichotomy in Online

Interaction: New Media Uses and Consequences Revisited." The following notions were expounded when it comes to the use of cyberspace:

1. People became more creative in their online communication, given the lack of non-verbal cues (Papacharissi 2005, 231). This shows that people develop strategies when discussing with people online. Since there is a limit to what can be expressed, icons depicting emotions can be seen as a way to compensate for the lack of non-verbal cues.

2. People socialize and obtain information online to enhance their capabilities, but, as a negative result, this can also lead to loneliness and depression (Papacharissi 2005, 231). In this manner, one can see how the internet can be a double-edged sword if the person using it is not cautious enough about the implications of excessive information and socialization.

Given these situations regarding the use of the internet, one can argue for the role of cyberspace in creating spaces for people to communicate. Communication extends across cyberspace (Papacharissi 2002, 21). In 2010, the concept of networked publics was raised. Social media and its genres have become widespread, blurring the distinctions between publics and networked publics (Boyd 2011, 54). In this manner, extension makes people more knowledgeable about and aware of situations affecting people they do not know, because the use of social media and social networking sites allows them to connect with others.

Meanwhile, there is skepticism about whether cyberspace can truly be an extension of public life. Real-life social relations virtually and in reality halt the existence of a public sphere (Papacharissi 2002, 21). From this argument, one can see the impossibility of making cyberspace a true extension of the public sphere, since the public sphere is marred by problems. This is crucial when it comes to the expression of dissent. The global visibility of these expressions on Twitter is highly appreciated, but their local context must be acknowledged (Papacharissi 2015, 118). A good example of this is Twitter's effect on the Egyptian Revolution. In an article by Nahed Eltantawy and Julie Wiest, titled "Social media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory," the authors recognized the role of social media in fostering collective action. Activists in Egypt played a crucial role in social media in raising sociopolitical discussions and debates, leading to a revolution (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011, 1218). In this context, the authors showed that the promise of social media to revolutionize people can be realized. However, Papacharissi also sees the irony embedded in such action. The hashtags that supported the Egyptian protests that led to the removal of Hosni Mubarak came from people both inside and outside Egypt (Papacharissi 2015, 117). A reality check on the situation on social media was offered, noting that non-Egyptians have become participants in the revolution. However, the particular context should also be underscored when making sense of the situation, rather than being swept away by online calls.

Going back to Papacharissi's 2002 article, one is asked about the possibility of cyberspace as an extension of the public sphere. Looking at the established discussions so far, the latest analyses by Papacharissi, published in 2005 and 2011, remain consistent with the claims he made way back in 2002. True enough, cyberspace is populated by the bourgeois. It is populated by elements removed from the mainstream

political discourse but manipulated in online communication to replicate it (Papacharissi 2002, 21). This only shows that cyberspace is not really feasible when it comes to being an extension of the public sphere. Only those who can afford internet services can decide what should matter. This can only lead to the exclusion of public life from the people who cannot afford the said internet services. Given current events, is it still feasible to agree with Papacharissi's argument that online political experience can only provide a public space, not a public sphere?

We agree with Papacharissi's claims because they are more relevant than ever in today's world. Moreover, cyberspace cannot be an extension of the public sphere because cyberspace has become a hyperreality. Crucial to the discussion of hyperreality is Jean Baudrillard, who argued that advances in communication technology broke the traditional linguistic relationship between sign and meaning, parallel to reality (Morris 2020, 3). In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard expressed this in relation to the collapse of a system. The whole system is subjected to indeterminacy, through which reality becomes hyperreality, operating through code and simulation (Baudrillard 1988, 120). Indeed, Facebook functions not as a neutral public space but as a hyperreal environment in which political engagement is mediated by selective visibility, performativity, and distrust.

In the following discussion, I focus on experiences posted on Facebook, or that occurred there, to show that it cannot be an extension of the public sphere, as cyberspace has become hyperreality. The problems of hyperreality on Facebook can be explained by visibility, performativity, and distrust. When it comes to visibility, there are absences and disconnections, and mental health and well-being. Meanwhile, performativity pertains to the political engagement. Lastly, distrust centers on the future of public trust in the archive. These explanations show how simulation dominates Facebook. Moreover, these activities on Facebook have become more real than reality itself, thereby disqualifying cyberspace as an extension of the public sphere.

To map out the explanations, this paper has three sections. The first focuses on Facebook as occurrences of visibility, performativity, and distrust. In this section, a detailed discussion of the activities on Facebook that result in visibility, performativity, and distrust is laid out. The second focuses on Facebook and hyperreality. In this section, further explanations about Facebook as a hyperreality are posited. Lastly, the conclusion of the discussions.

## FACEBOOK: VISIBILITY, PERFORMATIVITY, AND DISTRUST

Facebook was founded at Harvard University by Mark Zuckerberg while he was studying there (Philips 2007). Since then, it has become one of the leading and most widely used social media platforms. There are three elements that may characterize Facebook as a social media platform: visibility, performativity, and misinformation. First, I discuss the visibility that occurs on Facebook through absences and disconnections, and its impact on mental health and well-being. Secondly, I underscore the performativity that occurs in Facebook through political engagement. Lastly, I discuss about the distrust that arises on Facebook through the Archive.

## Visibility

Visibility on Facebook engages in a form of simulation. This simulation results from the generation of models with no origin in reality (Baudrillard 1994, 2). This means that Facebook generates models driven by digital infrastructure that may have no original reality. However, in a virtual world, there is no alienation because the very notion of negativity is removed (Baudrillard 2000, 47). This means that any Facebook user can alter what others see if it is not beneficial or pleasurable to them. What is happening here is the murder of the real. To better understand visibility, examples of absences and disconnections, as well as mental health and well-being, are provided. First is the absences and disconnections happening on Facebook through job security and positive self-imagery. Second is the mental health and well-being issues on Facebook, driven by activities that distort reality and by a commitment to false self-representation and the projection of well-being. Third is the synthesis of how job security and positive self-imagery lead to image curation online, while activities that distort reality and commitment to false self-representation and the projection of well-being result in a problematic sense of reality in a person. Moreover, these activities are products of simulations on Facebook.

### *Absences and Disconnections*

Since its launch in 2004, Facebook has promoted an ethos of sharing and connecting with friends. From this primary objective, the platform has commenced, and one can see certain scenarios in which the platform has become apparent. One of these is absence. Absence can happen on Facebook when it comes to delicate topics such as breakups, failures, and death (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 170). Besides these, absence occurs when digital traces of personalities on Facebook are edited or removed for the sake of future employment (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 170). This is similar to the article published by Brown and Vaugn in 2011 entitled "The Writing on the (Facebook) Wall: The Use of Social Networking Sites in Hiring Decisions." The authors argued that the use of social networking sites will not be a fad but something that employers should harness by understanding the legal and ethical considerations (Brown and Vaughn 2011, 223). This suggests that, as early as 2011, there was already recognition that one could know the "true" personality of a potential candidate in their workplace by investigating their Facebook profiles. This means that Facebook is crucial for a person's job security.

Meanwhile, disconnection on Facebook is used when it comes to healing. By doing this, former romantic relationships are removed to lessen not only painful memories but also to appease potential future partners (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 170). In this way, breakups and fallings-out can be properly mended, not just offline but online. From these absences and disconnections, one crucial act that people engage in on Facebook is the scroll-back method. This method is a process coined by Robands and Lincoln for conducting research on social media. This is a tool that can utilize discussions about the private and public lives of people, as seen and documented on social media (Robards and Lincoln 2019, 51). Using the scroll-back method reveals an aspect of a person through their social media activity. One example of this is the use of unrelated images posted on one's Facebook profile to show the hardship a person

might be experiencing (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 171). Another example is the analysis of behavior categorized as disconnection and absence on Facebook. These are understood through a sequence of "erasing, hiding, de-friending, blocking, muting, and filtering out" (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 171). From the examples so far, one can see the delicate nature of Facebook, with which a person opens up and closes off to others online. The death of a family member could be a key moment in a person's life, but showing this on Facebook may not be advisable because it destroys the performative ideal of the person (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 172). This shows that Facebook is important for a positive self-image.

The analyses above explain why Facebook cannot really provide an authentic platform, since interests are at play that every user of the social media recognizes. From examples of job security and positive self-imagery, a person creates absences and disconnections to prioritize how others perceive them. Absences and disconnections on Facebook create a certain distorted perception that someone's life is overflowing with positivity and not marred by problems. Overall, these create an online image curation.

### *Mental Health and Wellbeing*

Using the scroll-back method, Robards and Lincoln assessed mental health and well-being. In absences and disconnections, techniques, such as erasing, hiding, unfriending, blocking, muting, and filtering out, are crucial for one to maintain mental health and well-being on Facebook. These examples can be comprehended as ways to maintain good mental health because disconnection reduces drama and distraction (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 172). These strategies only show how Facebook is a source of poor mental health, wherein people's drama is either magnified or intensified (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 179).

In a study by Michelle O'Reilly, Nisha Dogra, Natasha Whiteman, Jason Hughes, Seyda Eruyar, and Paul Reilly titled "Is Social Media Bad for Mental Health and Wellbeing? Exploring the Perspectives of Adolescents," the authors interviewed adolescents about their reception of social media. Participants demonstrated that social media are direct causes of depression and suicidal ideation because they have become addictive (O'Reilly et al. 2018, 9). The study's findings show a similar stance regarding the effects of social media, especially among adolescents. The authors also emphasized the problem of sleep loss caused by social media. Besides the sleep problems, addiction is also recognized as caused by social media (O'Reilly et al. 2018, 9). These findings only emphasize that too much use of Facebook can indicate signs of addiction that could lead to more serious problems, such as sleep deprivation, depression, and suicidal ideation. This shows that activities on Facebook distort reality, potentially leading to behavioral problems.

Expanding on mental health and well-being, a study by Elizabeth J. Wright, Katherine M. White, and Patricia L. Obst titled "Facebook False Self-Presentation Behaviors and Negative Mental Health" explored how one can engage in self-presentation on Facebook. Liking behaviors online provide more opportunities for false self-preservation (Wright, White, and Obst 2018, 6). The results of their study show that mindless reactions to whatever is presented online lead to problems with the presentation of the self. False self-presentation was more acceptable on Facebook than

in real life (Wright, White, and Obst 2018, 7). This analysis is crucial to understanding why such false self-presentation online is seemingly allowed. Self-esteem was a crucial indicator of liking behaviors, as long as it was not the real self (Wright, White, and Obst 2018, 7). The authors' analysis shows that posting online can be linked to low self-esteem, whereas, interestingly, liking a post can indicate a positive display of self-esteem. In addition, individuals with higher self-esteem receive attention through indiscriminate "liking " actions on Facebook (Wright, White, and Obst 2018, 7). From this study, the problem of self-esteem on Facebook arises when people problematize how they represent themselves online. This is also applicable in projecting well-being. This projection can be associated with the study by Elizabeth J. Wright, Katherine M. White, and Patricia L. Obst on the dynamics of reacting to a post and the self-esteem of both the responder and the poster. Still, one could argue that this may not always be the case, since one has to update one's profile given a new milestone in life. Well-being can mean different things to people at times (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 180). Though there may be skepticism about the authenticity of one's social media posts as a way of projecting well-being, it is the responsibility of platform users to control their reactions. This underscores how Facebook can lead a person to engage in false self-representation and project well-being in order to give others a positive impression of them.

In addition to what Robards and Lincoln have established, the aforementioned research connects well with the issues of unhealthy body image comparison, poor sleep quality, anxiety, and depression. However, the authors sought a non-biased argument in light of these issues. In this way, social media must not be blamed solely for all of these, since it is part of the socio-cultural assemblage regarding mental health and well-being (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 181). The same applies to Michelle O'Reilly, Nisha Dogra, Natasha Whiteman, Jason Hughes, Seyda Eruyar, and Paul Reilly. Blaming social media is an oversimplification. Adolescents must take responsibility for their online behavior and ensure they remain in control (O'Reilly et al. 2018, 10). This only shows that people should regain autonomy in using social media by being mindful of its effects on them. In this case, the use of Facebook must be restrained. If people cannot control their usage of Facebook, their mental health and well-being can lead to a distorted sense of reality, producing behavioral problems, and their perception online must be done through false self-representation and projection of well-being. Overall, these create a problematic sense of reality in a person.

From image curation and the problematic sense of reality that a person creates and experiences, simulation has taken on a different direction online. Visibility happens through absences, disconnections, and mental health and well-being. Online image curation has become a benchmark for determining an individual's professionalism. Image curation on Facebook has overcome the actual cross-examination of the individual. This shows how our online versions of ourselves have become more real than our physical selves. Besides job security, the image curation on Facebook happens as a form of positive self-imagery. Posts and life updates that could show vulnerability are deliberately not shared as part of image curation. Again, this shows how our pristine online versions of ourselves have become more real than our messy ones.

The problematic sense of reality in online spaces has shown how distortion affects individuals. Behavioral problems emerging from low self-esteem, false representation, and projection of well-being online have shown how people have prioritized online presence rather than physical presence. Activities on Facebook have become more real than the actual ones. In addition, the false presentation and projection of online well-being have become more real than people's authentic offline presentation and well-being.

Overall, this image curation and problematic sense of reality in a person are products of digital models that run Facebook. These are propelled by digital infrastructures with little to no origin in reality; these show how Facebook users can alter their online personas for their own benefit and pleasure.

## Performativity

Performativity in Facebook is anchored on the notion of sign-circulation. The advent of Facebook and other social media platforms came from the notion of the digital. Digitality permeates the stream of messages and signs in society through stimulus-response dynamics (Baudrillard 1976, 82). This stimulus-response pattern can be seen on Facebook, especially in political engagement. When Facebook becomes the source of news, consumption happens. News becomes a consumption of signs constituted of images, information, and facts in place of the real (Baudrillard 1970, 51). The presence of news on Facebook becomes a circular consumption of signs. However, this consumption can intensify in the context of political engagement.

To further develop this part, the following are discussed: First, political engagement on Facebook that results in a questionable notion of solidarity, and the inclusion of comments as part of news delivery. Second is the synthesis of the questionable notion of solidarity and the inclusion of comments as activities, creating political confusion among people; these activities are products of sign-circulation occurring online.

### *Political Engagement*

Using the scroll-back method, Robards and Lincoln gauged political engagement. Although they did not investigate political party participation, rallies, and civic engagement through sharing memes or changing profile pictures dedicated to a cause, there are examples of each (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 179). In this manner, everyday political actions on social media should not be grand to create awareness. This is consistent with the article by Ariadne Vromen, Brian Loader, Michael Xenos, and Francesco Bailo titled "Everyday Making through Facebook Engagement: Young Citizens' Political Interactions in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States." In this essay, the authors showed that political engagement among young people on Facebook has become a daily source of political news and information, creating a personalized symbolic solidarity (Vromen et al. 2016, 11). This only shows that political engagement on Facebook is concerned with being knowledgeable about the situation at hand and with one's personal approach to offering support on the platform. However, can solidarity be reduced to mere being knowledgeable of a situation? Can it also be reduced to provide support on an online platform? Though the

majority may view these things as valid solidarity, there should be proper action and intervention to address them as solutions. Though symbolic solidarity is commendable, is it really being in solidarity with a person or a group of people? In this case, Facebook can create a questionable notion of solidarity.

Though young people might see that Facebook, as a social media platform, can be a good source of credible information, there are also ways to deceive people. In an article by Michail Tsikerderkis and Sherali Zeadally titled "Online Deception in Social Media," the authors analyzed the nature of deception on different social media platforms. The techniques that are used in social media include "bluffs, mimicry (such as mimicking a website), fakery (such as establishing a fake website), white lies, evasions, exaggeration, webpage redirections (such as misleading someone to a false profile page), and concealment (such as withholding information from one's profile)" (Tsikerdekis and Zeadally 2014, 72–80). Given these techniques, one should be especially careful with the content one encounters online. At present, these techniques can be grouped under a single term: misinformation. However, understanding misinformation can reveal new insights into people's behavior rather than the content they consume.

In a study done by Anspach and Carlson (2018) with a title "What to Believe? Social Media Commentary and Belief in Misinformation" they argued that the 2016 Gallup Poll survey done in the USA showed that trust in news outlets has reached an all-time low, especially in mass media, with the proliferation of misinformation on social media, propelled by social commentary when individuals share news articles (Anspach and Carlson 2018, 713). According to the survey, many Americans do not believe in the role of mass media "to report the news fully, accurately and fairly," with this belief at its lowest level, at 32%, as of 2016 (Swift). It is noteworthy that the authors underscored the role of comments in the consumption of information in mass media. In this case, social media has provided a platform where the audience is not just a silent receiver of the news but is actively engaged with the information. However, the problem with this is enormous since it also shows the disposition of the people not just to read the news but to read the comments as well, whether they believe in the information they have read or not at all. Meanwhile, it is also true that users of social media platforms would just read the title of the information being relayed and consequently jump into the comments without actually reading the whole output. From these examples, Facebook has made comments a crucial part of online news delivery.

Given the direction so far, there should be a warning about political engagements on online platforms. Risks have been present in the public sphere, but online platforms have exacerbated these risks (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 151). Given the new way by which people consume news along with the comments, one enters a new scenario of political engagement by recognizing the possible biases not just in the news but also in people painting the news in a different way to create confusion. Though political engagement in the public sphere is complicated, it becomes more complicated and worsens through social media platforms such as Facebook. Facebook has made solidarity a questionable practice online. In addition, Facebook has made comments an integral part of current online news delivery. Overall, these activities created political confusion among people.

### *Political Confusion*

In the context of political engagement, sign-circulation has taken a new turn on Facebook in terms of performativity. This can be seen in the political confusion arising from the questionable notion of solidarity, as well as in comments on Facebook news articles.

The political confusion stemming from the questionable notion of solidarity shows how symbolic solidarity has been reduced to a sign that people continually consume on Facebook. This solidarity has become a set of stimuli and responses that people follow with pleasure. In this case, knowledge of an issue trumps taking action to solve it. This only means that symbolic solidarity is a performance online, raising awareness about an issue without participating in the messy execution of an action to solve it. This means that raising awareness on Facebook has become more real than participating in the messy execution of an action to solve an issue.

The political confusion in the comments on the news article on Facebook shows how online commentary has changed. Because Facebook operates on streams of messages in sign-based stimulus and response, the comments under news have become a crucial part of the news. Online comments have become so prevalent that they are more than just opinion pieces. They have become parts of the news, *per se*. This development only shows how Facebook turned news into a set of images, information, and facts for people to consume. However, with the advent of the comment section, online news consumption changed the implications of these signs. Now, it is not just the images, information, and facts that people check to verify the news. Online comments have become critical, consumable signs of validity that people recognize. This only demonstrates how the comments about the news have become more real than the news itself.

## Distrust

Distrust towards information begins in the notion of the archive. The archive can be understood as a museum that houses a collection of objects. However, for Baudrillard, the museum is present everywhere. The museum is no longer a site but a dimension of life (Baudrillard 1994, 9). This is true for Facebook. Social media platforms have become open museums about people for everyone to see. Moreover, virtuality makes the subject perfect, but it also renders the subject an object at the same time (Baudrillard 2002, 176). This means that Facebook has made people an open museum for everyone to see. The worst-case scenario is that it makes a person an object even if he/she may feel perfect on the social media platform. There are two elements of this distrust: the future of the public trust in the archive, as it unfolds on Facebook, and the resulting data breaches and digital trauma.

### *The Future of Public Trust in the Archive*

Using the scroll-back method, Robards and Lincoln gauged the future of public trust in the archive. It would be naïve to think that under Capitalism, access and participation in Facebook are free (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 183). When it comes to privacy issues, Facebook has been a constant recipient of such problems. As early as 2006, it already faced serious backlash from its users (Edelson 2018). In 2010, it was

discovered that many Facebook applications were sending data to tracking and advertising companies, violating the rule against sharing information with third parties (Karppi 2018, 30). In 2011, the California State Senate introduced Senate Bill 242 to place privacy protections on sites like Facebook by establishing strict private settings that would not reveal a broad range of information (Marichal 2012, 147). There have been scandals involving Facebook users, but the most devastating was the 2018 Cambridge Analytica Scandal (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 183). Mark Zuckerberg faced the United States Congress, where the potential for abuse on Facebook was emphasized, and the founder agreed that some regulation was necessary (Confessore 2018). Public and private lives must be distinguished in the wake of this debacle. Facebook supports legislation that prohibits non-Facebook entities from accessing user data while resisting legislation that restricts how it uses data (Marichal 2012, 147). However, this only shows that, in the 2018 Cambridge Analytica Scandal, Facebook doesn't want regulation of how it uses its data. Worst-case scenario, Facebook paid a fine that is just a fraction of what it earns (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 184). In 2021, a report by Heather Kelly and Emily Guskin in *The Washington Post* showed how Americans distrusted Facebook. Across all ages, Americans do not trust information from social media, as well as invasive targeted ads (Kelly and Gustin 2021). This means that Facebook has committed a data breach among its users. Moreover, people have become disillusioned with the idea that the company will be responsible for what it should be accountable for. In the end, paying a fine of a fraction of their revenue will not hurt them.

Besides the security issue on Facebook, another consideration is Archive Drift. Instead of limiting the archive to cultural artifacts, a different methodological approach is needed for social media, as it affects the cultural archive through the violence of digital technology (Kroker 2014, 80). This concept, coming from Arthur Kroker, shows that the reality of social media, especially Facebook, would create a rethinking by which one re-understands the meaning of form and content in a fluid setup like social media compared to traditional cultural artifacts as sources of information. However, the concept of the Archive drift has two meanings. The digital archive is in drift on social media, driven by code drift (Kroker 2014, 80). The word "code drift" is crucial in understanding "archive drift." It is a political concept tied to mobility, which will be a dominant form of subjectivity through the enhanced data bodies of augmented reality, with the human condition experiencing digital trauma (Kroker 2014, 50). Given the fluid situation online, Facebook has introduced digital trauma to people.

Through code drift, one can see the unquestionable fluidity of digital reality, as experienced in a virtual world such as Facebook. Since everything is on drift in the virtual world, there is no stability, resulting in one's loss in the sea of changes. Reflecting on this, it is not even considered healthy. As mentioned earlier, in Kroker's words, it is a digital trauma. Given this expansion of code drift, one can see how archive drift is built on code drift. These ideas connect very well with what Robards and Lincoln have established so far. Updating status, posting images, sharing links, meeting people, organizing events, forming group chats, reacting to posts, and participating in comment threads are a longitudinal record of people's lives online through social media platforms (Robards and Lincoln 2020, 53). The emphasis on using Facebook as a record of one's life is crucial to safeguarding this archive. As established so far, Facebook has made a

data breach of its users and has introduced digital trauma to the people. Overall, Facebook has become a problematic record of a person's life.

***Data Breach and Digital Trauma***

From the discussion of the future of public trust in the archives, it is evident that distrust has become more prevalent online. This can be seen in the problematic record of a person's life on Facebook, happening through data breaches and digital trauma. The distrust following a Facebook data breach shows how online platforms have turned their users into open museums. This means that Facebook users have made different aspects of their lives open not just to their personal connections but also to companies with specific interests that Facebook's management deals with. These show that our online identities are compromised, especially when it comes to consuming online content. Moreover, our online identities have become more real than our complex physical selves.

In addition, distrust stemming from digital trauma on Facebook shows how online platforms have transformed their users into data. Facebook users have become objects online that can be manipulated and exploited. People have become codes through which Facebook managers can study online consumption. Unfortunately, our objectified selves online have become more real than our real physical subjectivity.

Overall, these activities on Facebook result in a problematic record of a person's life online. We can feel that our subjectivity is strengthened online, even as we are reduced to data and digital phenomena. These reductions show how people can be transformed in cyberspace, potentially affecting transactions in the outside world.

## FACEBOOK AND HYPERREALITY

This section has two parts. The first part discusses Disneyland's role as "more real than the real." This emphasizes how Disneyland is both a concealment and an illusion. The second part emphasizes Facebook's hyperreal characteristics. This underscores how Facebook has become an incarceration and a site of pseudo-omniscience for the people.

### Disneyland as "More Real than the Real"

To understand hyperreality, we focus on Baudrillard's notion of simulation, which he illustrates through Disneyland. According to Baudrillard, simulation can be seen in Disneyland (1988, 171), a fantasy representation of reality in which the simulation of the real was taken to extremes (Lane 2000, 84). One of these entangled orders is the third Order of Simulation. Simulation is governed by the code, which has become a powerful figure in contemporary times (Baudrillard 1988, 120). Simulacra is mathematically generated with the code as its foundational element[1]. Simulation creates hyperreality by which "more real than the real" is manifested (Pawlett 2007, 71). False representations of reality are no longer questioned because the real is no longer real (Baudrillard 1988, 172). This explanation carries a big weight from what has been established so far. In this way, Disneyland is no longer about the case of truth or falsehood. However, its function

is to make "more real than the real". One may ask, what makes Disneyland more real than the real? Baudrillard gave two answers to this question.

First, Baudrillard argued that Disneyland conceals itself as a real country, similar to the social aspect of prison (Baudrillard 1988, 172). Baudrillard uses the examples of prisons, which create a belief in freedom because people only lock criminals away (Lane 2000, 87). Looking at the statements coming from Baudrillard and Lane, one can see that the idea of a locality is a form of incarceration that one can feel through the very notion of "more real than the real." In this case, Disneyland is the "more real than the real" America. Though it is a place that operates through imaginary characters, it also shows the American situation of "imprisoning" people. This is similar to what Michel Foucault established in the essay *Panopticism*. The panoptic schema was spreading socially as it became a generalized function (Foucault 2014, 660). In this manner, the panoptic scheme of imprisoning people will not just be exclusive to the official sanctioning organization, like the government. One can also experience being imprisoned in unofficial ways, as seen in Disneyland. In this manner, Disneyland is exercising power over its consumers without the consumers knowing it, to take hold of the make-believe scenario.

Second, Baudrillard argued that Disneyland curates an infantile world to create an illusion that adults are elsewhere by concealing the reality that adults have become childish (Baudrillard 1988, 171). Disneyland has been present not just to show that rationality and childishness cannot coexist within its walls, but also to show that childishness has been replaced by rationality (Lane 2000, 88). Looking at the statements by Baudrillard and Lane, one can see that the idea of childishness has been put on display in a theme park. This is, again, a recall of the idea of panopticism from Michel Foucault. Though in this case, it is not just imprisoning the people but imprisoning the very idea of childishness as if childishness does not exist outside of Disneyland.

Given the establishment of the hyperreal so far, one can see this in the use of Facebook. Facebook is also a form of simulation. Earlier, this was emphasized as a code. Expanding on this, it is a substitution of signs concerned with the real to replace reality itself, relying on programming and technology (Baudrillard 1988, 140). Given the technological sophistication people enjoy today, it is clear that code is crucial for programming applications that connect people wirelessly. As mentioned earlier, Facebook started in a similar scenario, as it was a product of Mark Zuckerberg's coding. Though the initial intention for Facebook, way back in 2004, was to augment connections people could have, one can see today that the hyperrealism of Facebook is no longer about augmentation but about replacing the very act of communication people have. One could see today how glued people are to their smartphones, even if they are talking to someone physically. Undeniably, Facebook has reached the status of being "more real than the real." Nobody questions the existence of Facebook as an alternative to one's everyday conversation. Using the ideas expounded by Baudrillard, one can also have two ways of expanding the meaning of such a statement.

## Facebook as Hyperreality

First, Facebook has become a form of incarceration, as it already manifests being "more real than the real." Baudrillard expounded how Disneyland has become more real

than America. This is the same with Facebook, which has become an omnipresent and a symbol in society, as it has become more real than an actual conversation. In this manner, Facebook has shown that what is physically far can be virtually nearer and what is physically near can be virtually far. These two notions are crucial to the way Facebook has become critical in everyday relationships. However, these notions also imprison people in the application, preventing them from ever logging out.

In the study titled "Modeling Reality: The Connection Between Behavior on Reality TV and Facebook," Ferrucci, Tandoc, and Duffy argued that certain television genres follow a pattern of problematic Facebook sharing, as indicated by the study's participants. When it comes to Facebook, the associations in strongest terms came from romance, competition, and drama-based programming (Ferrucci, Tandoc, and Duffy 2014, 105). It is interesting that singing competitions are not yet associated with Facebook. When it comes to competition, the shows considered Facebook-associated are *Survivor* and *The Amazing Race*. In these competitions, bending the rules has become the norm among contestants, along with the negative discussion of the opponents (Ferrucci, Tandoc, and Duffy 2014, 105). From this assessment, one can see that Facebook provides the same platform where people can bend the rules and discuss negative things about others. Romance, meanwhile, shows human bodies in sexual encounters (Ferrucci, Tandoc, and Duffy 2014, 105). From this assessment, one can see that Facebook is also laced with situations in which sexual depictions are also emphasized. However, the overall concept that would encapsulate these two is drama-based programming.

The genres depicting problematic behavior can be exhibited by people as a form of modeling (Ferrucci, Tandoc, and Duffy 2014, 105). From this understanding of the data they gathered, the group was able to show how situations on television can be transferred to social media, as there are already established tropes to follow. In this manner, reality as understood through television and consequently, projected into social media, happens through tropes. Another implication of the impact of Facebook on society is the body of laws enacted, given the influence of Facebook and other social media applications today.

In “Facebook and the European Union (EU) Law: How the Social Network Reshaped the Legal Framework,” Philippe Jougleux (2022) raised the following concerns. First, the legal issues related to social media activities include personal data, IP law, raw data, defamation, misinformation, hate speech, and e-commerce law (Jougleux 2022, 269). Given the plethora of realities involved in using Facebook, one can see how it also affects people's non-virtual lives, especially when it comes to speech on the platform. Second, by forcing the EU institutions to intervene in protecting the digital market, the unforeseen consequences of the EU's deepening participation in various social media platforms increase (Jougleux 2022, 269). This only shows how a social media application can turn a simple intervention into a double-edged sword. This shows that the EU has to penetrate far deeper than Facebook. Consequently, this would only make the EU a digital regulator (Jougleux 2022, 269). Tragically, every government institution has to face the reality that with the ever-growing issue of security threats when it comes to information, regulating Facebook can only make them villains in the long run if they really adhere to a strong sense of protection.

Second, Facebook has created pseudo-omniscience for people about other people, even if one can have the same conversations physically. This only shows that one cannot help but be hooked, in fear of missing out on the new things happening in the online world. Interestingly, studies about this have been done. In the article, "Motivational, Emotional, and Behavioral Correlates of Fear of Missing Out," Andrew K. Przybylski, Kou Murayama, Cody R. DeHaan, and Valerie Gladwell argued that the fear of missing out does not happen in a vacuum (2013). To understand this fear in both empirical and theoretical terms, the authors sought to identify the motivations, the emotions, and the behaviors involved in the experience of fear of missing out. When it comes to these 3 in the experience of the fear of missing out, the researchers involved different samples of participants. Using statistics, the group was able to show the following.

First, this fear of missing out is associated with the number of Facebook engagements per day (Przybylski et al., 2013, 1846). This shows that, in the sample the researchers took, participants in their study showed that Facebook engagement affects one's motivation, depending on when they accessed social media. Second, the data showed that those with heightened fear of missing out experienced mixed feelings about social media use (Przybylski et al. 2013, 1846). This shows that, in the sample the researchers studied, participants showed a pattern linking ambivalent emotions to Facebook use.

Third, the data showed that students with heightened fear of missing out were more likely to use Facebook during university lectures (Przybylski et al. 2013, 1847). This is a correlation that students who participated in their study are too distracted to learn, given the presence of Facebook at the tip of their fingers. Fourth, the data showed that heightened fear of missing out in young adults results in greater attention to emails, text messages, and mobile phones when driving, unlike their peers (Przybylski et al. 2013, 1847). This is something that people should be cautious about since driving while checking information can be a potential accident, similar to drunk driving and driving while texting. We can see that the fear of missing out is strongly evident among people who use Facebook regularly.

In another study titled "Online-specific fear of missing out and Internet-use expectancies contribute to symptoms of Internet-communication Disorder," Elisa Wegmann, Ursula Oberst, Benjamin Stodt, and Matthias Branda argued that internet communication applications are not the sole tools for initiating, staying in contact, and satisfying social needs (2017). The choice of users instead of people is a telling sign that the use of Facebook is already a medical situation in which one can really be addicted. This is a crucial reminder from the researchers that Facebook, along with other social media applications, is not the only way of socializing with people. Since Facebook and other social media applications created virtual spaces for people with limited skills in physical communication, the response was to abuse them to gratify people's need for communication.

## CONCLUSION

Cyberspace began as a question of possibility and became an extension of the public sphere. However, as time passes, the public sphere is being encroached on by

activities in cyberspace, and it is increasingly recognized by many as a salvation from what has become tiresome in the public sphere, especially in politics. As discussed, social media has been crucial to movements across the globe, both good and bad. Knowing this, people will find ways to utilize the technology, depending on the struggle. However, people mistakenly believe they can hasten the creation of a solution to a perceived problem through social media. What is not considered is that the vacuum should be artificially filled once a revolution succeeds. There should still be a form of respect within the global community toward local issues, in which local people must solve problems without interference from foreigners, especially on social media. Though one may argue that this is simply a hasty generalization by putting social media in a bad light, this paper has demonstrated why Facebook cannot be an extension of the public sphere.

As established, Facebook is used for the following reasons: visibility, performativity, and distrust. When it comes to visibility, absences and disconnections, and mental health and well-being are present. On the one hand, absences and disconnections affect a person's job security and positive self-image. On the other hand, mental health and well-being occur through distortion of reality, leading to behavioral problems and commitment to false self-representation and projection of well-being. Moreover, these can be categorized as image curation and a problematic sense of reality. Meanwhile, when it comes to performativity, political engagement happens online. This can take the form of a questionable notion of solidarity and the presence of comments in online news delivery. Moreso, these can create political confusion among people. Lastly, distrust arises regarding the future of public trust in archives, especially on Facebook. This is exemplified through data breaches and digital trauma. Overall, these situations create a problematic record of a person's life.

Given the examples above, the argument that Facebook cannot be an extension of the public sphere remains strong. Papacharissi has been right to call cyberspace a problematic extension of the public sphere. However, one should also consider how severely damaged the public sphere is in shaping people's social lives. A damaged public sphere cannot be cured by cyberspace. Cyberspace would exacerbate the damage already present in the public sphere. The social activity that Papacharissi witnessed in 2002 is different but intensified today. The warning has been present since the beginning, and one cannot help but feel sorry for the situation that everyone has been grappling with. Given the examples discussed earlier, one can see that social media, especially Facebook, has become an extension of the self, as many considerations go into making sense of a Facebook profile. However, this is a matter of choice for the person using social media.

Is it still feasible to agree with Papacharissi's argument that online political experience can only provide a space, not a public sphere? There is no exact answer here, because the border between the virtual and the real has become blurry. One cannot consider cyberspace as a public sphere, but the public sphere is not even perfect, with all the issues already present. At this juncture, there should be proper restraint in the use of social media, especially since many people have become dependent on it for life updates, announcements from national or local governments, and even class-related discussions. Even television shows are getting their ideas for content from

social media activities. However, given the dependency people have on social media, especially Facebook, we are confronted with the question of how to address its hyperrealism, especially when it unconsciously shapes the public sphere.

From what has been established so far, hyperrealism can be encapsulated with the phrase "more real than the real." A good example of this is Disneyland, as expounded earlier. In this manner, there is no more question of truth or falsity, but having the experience as better than the real. However, two notions are crucial in understanding hyperrealism, especially in the context of Disneyland. One of these notions is incarceration, by which one is held captive by that which is more real than the real. This is an exercise of power that hooks one to the whole arrangement. Another of these notions is the signification of a place for a human condition. In this manner, such signification, such as childishness, can be encapsulated within a specific architecture, such as Disneyland.

This notion of hyperrealism shows that such descriptions of Disneyland can be applied to social media, especially Facebook. This is an application born of coding, which led to the use of signs as substitutes for the reality of socializing with people in a non-physical manner. However, Facebook's features have expanded dramatically from the company's original intentions. Moreover, Facebook users have used it in a manner similar to the reality shows that were in vogue on television in previous decades. Given the impact that Facebook and other social media platforms have had, one should not be surprised if laws are enacted to control people's activity, especially if crucial data is stolen. In addition, the accessibility of profiles in social media has created a certain sense of omniscience on people who can use the data in one's Facebook profile to assess the possible behavior of a person and objectify the Facebook profile as an "actual" personality. Facebook exacerbates the failures of the public sphere by simulating participation while intensifying fragmentation, surveillance, and self-alienation.

This reminds us of Hannah Arendt's words in the Prologue of *The Human Condition*. "For although Christians have spoken of the Earth as a vale of tears and philosophers have looked upon their body as the prison of both mind and soul, nobody in the history of mankind has ever conceived of the Earth as the prison for men's bodies or shown such eagerness to go literally from here to the moon" (Arendt 1958, 2). Given the discussion of cyberspace as an extension of the public sphere and a notion of hyperrealism, one cannot help but think of the buried intention of human beings to leave their bodies and the Earth in search of something new. Social media applications like Facebook are not just products that have innovated communication. There are also ways to escape our imprisonment from oneself and one's place in the physical world without realizing that these applications are also confining one's self and one's place in the virtual world – an irony that should be realized at this point in time. On the one hand, the question of the use of cyberspace as an extension of the public sphere is nothing but an attempt to escape the problematic situation of the public sphere. On the other hand, the question of using hyperrealism to make Facebook conversations feel more real than real is nothing but an attempt to escape the limitations of the self, within a place, and to reach out to others.

## NOTES

1. In "Symbolic Exchange and Death," Baudrillard discusses the first two orders of simulation, such as the counterfeit and the production. When it comes to the counterfeit, "signs are shielded by a prohibition that assures their absolute clarity: each sign refers unequivocally to a (particular) situation and a level of status." From this definition, one could see that certain signs are exclusive to specific levels of social status in society. Seeing signs outside their coupled status raises questions about their authenticity. In this manner, signs are restricted to one's influence in society. When it comes to the production, "these were signs with no caste tradition, which had never known the restrictions of status, and which would not have to be counterfeited because they were being produced on such a gigantic scale." From this definition, one can see that signs are available to everyone, regardless of one's influence in society, as long as one can purchase them, making the issue of counterfeiting less significant since everyone can have a copy of a sign.

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