

## Article

# The Facebook Feeding Frenzy: Resistance-through-distance and resistance- through-persistence in the societied network

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### Abstract

This article presents a case study into the massive online demonstrations that occurred on *Facebook* (an online networking platform much like *MySpace* or *Bebo*) during Autumn/Winter of 2006 as a vibrant and contemporary example of resistance in action in the online domain. The demonstrations were carried out in response to the introduction of Facebook's 'News Feed' and 'Mini-Feed' pages which greeted users upon signing in and presented a wealth of information about their friends and their online activities, seemingly without any form of privacy control. The pages even listed details of personal relationships and sexual orientations; both highly contentious issues. The response to this perceived intrusion on users' privacy was staggering. Groups were set up overnight to pillory the Facebook News Feed, massive petitions that numbered hundreds of thousands were set up across international boundaries, online blogs and message boards became filled with incandescent comments.

Eventually, Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook's founder and himself a former Harvard student) was forced to issue a public apology and then amend the News Feed to allow users the opportunity to edit their privacy settings. No longer would such information be so publicly accessible. No longer would privacy be taken so lightly. The student body used the very means by which they were being *surveilled* (that is, the cyber-synoptic infrastructure of the Facebook network) to organize an internationally resistant movement to support their right to privacy. This confrontation provides an engrossing example of the World Wide Web being used as a powerful tool to mobilize many bodies against a perceived force of oppression and subjugation. This was a clear demonstration that the *politics of surveillance* (Haggerty 2006) and the politics of the self matter greatly in present climes; where issues of privacy and the sanctity of the virtual realm are never far from the headlines. As such, it provides an excellent empirical backdrop to a conceptual analysis of *resistance-through-distance* and *resistance-through-persistence* (Collinson 1994) in the virtual realm.

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### Introduction: Conceptualising Resistance in the *Societied Network*<sup>1</sup>

The notion of resistance has received considerable attention in the recent literature on surveillance and organisation studies (Thompson & Ackroyd 1995, Webb & Palmer 1998, Fleming & Sewell 2002, Mann et al. 2003b, Hollander & Einwohner 2004, Bigo 2006, Bogard 2006, Haggerty 2006, Los 2006). From the introspective metaphor of the panopticon and the 'Foucauldian turn' to the expansive analogy of Deleuze's rhizome and the *surveillant assemblage* (Haggerty & Ericson 2000) power, resistance, control and surveillance have all been entwined in an immanently embodied and discursive quadruple helix, forever repelling and reproducing one other ad infinitum. At the same time however, the literature on surveillance studies has yet to embrace the online phenomenon of social networking, despite its

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'societied network' is a rhetorical mirror of the 'networked society'; a play on words I have coined to reflect how in the virtual realm it is the electronic network that came first and society later; as opposed to the corporeal realm where society was established first and then became networked by electronic means.

prominence in the national press (at present, the social network that is Facebook is never far from some tabloid scandal involving identity fraud, illicit affairs, illegally ‘gate-crashed’ Birthday parties and even murder). This could be because online networking (in its bounded, societal form) is a relatively recent leisure pastime (Facebook itself was only created in February 2004). As such, the literature on computerised resistance has often been restricted to factory and call-centre settings or online political demonstrations (Sewell 1998, Webb & Palmer 1998, Ball & Wilson 2000, Klang 2008). The present study instead highlights elements of both ‘in your face’ (Mann *et al.* 2003b) online demonstration and virtual ‘escapism’, synergizing the two through the online ‘society’ that is Facebook.

Whilst resistance is a broad concept with a spectrum of locations and applications (Hollander & Einwohner (2004) categorised seven different types of resistance alone) for the purposes of this study, two particular manifestations shall be picked on. These are *resistance-through-persistence* and *resistance-through-distance*, terms first coined by David Collinson in 1994:

Resistance through distance’ describes the way in which subordinates try to escape or avoid the demands of authority and to ‘distance’ themselves, either physically and/or symbolically, from the organization and its prevailing power structure. By contrast, in ‘resistance through persistence’ subordinates seek to demand greater involvement in the organization and to render management more accountable by extracting information, monitoring practices and challenging decision-making processes. (25)

Collinson neatly explicates these manifestations of resistance by means of two case studies. To demonstrate *resistance-through-distance*, he chose a blue-collar scenario where male factory workers chose to obviate managerial prerogatives by discursively and physically re-appropriating the shopfloor ‘space’ by resisting the use of newly-introduced managerial language, withholding technical information from their supervisors up the hierarchy and utilising a degree of Goffmanesque ‘appearance management’ by which they were able to use their superior technical expertise to fool their new managers into believing certain processes demanded a great deal more time and effort than was actually required; thus allowing them to reclaim time and space for their own use. To highlight *resistance-through-persistence* a white-collar setting was offered whereby a female employee in an insurance company had been overlooked for a high-profile promotion and was at the point of taking her employers to an industrial tribunal on grounds of sexual discrimination. As opposed to the previous scenario where the workers actively withheld information from management, *resistance-through-persistence* involved taking her employers to task on their own grounds. The employee did this by actively seeking out legal advice and extricating more detail from her employers to support her claim, whilst systematically dismantling the case made for the promotion of the less-experienced and less-qualified candidates chosen over her.

In Collinson’s typology therefore, *resistance-through-persistence* is resistant action carried out through direct confrontation and political means; “Resistance through persistence... may involve the acquisition of further information and knowledge in order to develop a critical analysis of organizational practices.” (1994: 50) It is an in-your-face reaction to feelings of oppression, subjugation or moral turpitude. It can be at a microscopic level (as in Collinson’s white collar study of the individual employee) or at the macro level, as in the online demonstrations in the virtual ‘society’ presented here. Whilst not an organisation in physical space, Facebook could be deemed an ‘organisation of bodies’ just like any other online business, network or social sphere. Resistance on this occasion meets power and control head on, at the moment of conflict that generates it.

At the other end of the spectrum comes *resistance-through-distance*. In this instance, resistance “...through distance involves a denial of involvement or interest in key organizational processes. It is very much an ‘escape attempt’.” (1994: 50) As elaborated later on in the case of Facebook, *resistance-through-distance* involves an *active disengagement* (Fleming & Sewell 2002) from the power/resistance binary. It is necessarily located away from the point of conflict when *resistance-through-persistence* may be too costly in terms of personal resources or identity effects. In other words, Collinson was keen to stress that

*resistance-through-distance* involved *restricting information* from subordinating forces as opposed to *resistance-through-persistence* which involved *extracting information* (1994: 28). This is similar to Hollander & Einwohner's contrast between *covert* (through *distance*) and *overt* (through *persistence*) forms of resistance (2004: 545). The second 'type' of resistance is therefore utilised in an attempt to subvert, sidestep or outflank the machinations of power and control.

Whilst agreeing with a number of authors that it is too naive and too facile to limit the conceptualisation of resistance to just two 'types', it is a useful exercise for two reasons. Firstly, both are easily recognisable in the present case study and therefore readily elaborated with theoretical and empirical evidence. Secondly, they are both very *human* reactions. Even though the present investigation is located in the ephemeral domain of a virtual network, it must not be forgotten that resistance is a naturally occurring and tangible reaction to feelings of oppression, control or subjugation. By drawing out a conceptual analogy with the organization studies literature, this case study places the articulation and realisation of resistance firmly in the sphere of human behaviours, even when located online. Resistance therefore, represents the *rehumanization* of the virtual.

Rather than pore over these two definitions at great length, it would be more fruitful to highlight where such concepts might be located in the virtual realm and where they might be used differently to the corporeal one. As noted by Koskela (2006: 73): "While it is evident that the internet does not provide such an idealistic open, democratic forum than was previously thought, it still has a role in creating and organizing resistance and forming new identity politics." As such, the *societied network* that is Facebook and the actions of September 5<sup>th</sup> 2006 form an excellent backdrop to this conceptual analysis of *resistance-through-distance* and *resistance-through-persistence*. It is to this *Facebook Feeding Frenzy* that we now turn.

## Welcome User!

To the internet novice, Facebook is a social networking site such as *MySpace*, *Friends Reunited* or *Bebo* where individuals 'log in' (that is, they sign up with a registered e-mail address and password of their own choosing) to a virtual 'domain' where they are each allocated web space that they are free to decorate (within a preset template) with personal information such as nicknames, Birthday details, e-mail and personal addresses, favourite films/quotes/books and artefacts such as photo albums and videos of travels and pastimes. It is this latter facility that was the founding premise upon which Mark Zuckerberg and a selection of his fellow Harvard students created Facebook; to develop a site that simply gave students the forum to share photos of college activities quickly and cheaply; a kind of 'social scrapbook'. More recently and having undergone several facelifts, Facebook now (amongst other things) allows users to set up *Events* (such as Birthday parties and other functions) to which they can invite friends; and *Groups* (such as charitable causes and favourite sports teams) which allow members to rub shoulders with other users with similar political affiliations and personal interests. In sum:

Facebook is a social utility that helps people better understand the world around them. Facebook develops technologies that facilitate the spread of information through social networks, allowing people to share information online the same way they do in the real world. Anyone with a valid e-mail address from a supported organization, company, college or high school can register for Facebook. They can then create profiles to connect with friends, share interests, join groups, send messages, write notes and post photos. Facebook launched in February 2004 and the website now has over 9 million registered users across more than 40,000 regional, work, college and high school networks. According to comScore, Facebook is the seventh-most trafficked site on the web and is the number one photo-sharing site. (*Facebook Overview*, 2006)

Facebook, however, is different from other social networking sites in two key respects; it is free to join (unlike many older subscription-based communities) and, when first conceived, it was created exclusively

as a college/university network; only those with “.edu” or “.ac.uk” e-mail addresses (and their international equivalents) were entitled to sign up. Even though it has recently ‘gone public’ (its membership now somewhat diluted by several rounds of expansion including occupational networks and then wider national networks) Facebook still has a higher proportion of 18-25 year olds than other social networks (*Facebook Press Room*, 2006).

Built on these parochial lines, when Facebook was first set up the network was considered something of a student haven; a community seemingly outside the auspices of the university establishment and secluded from the broader World Wide Web, realm of the ‘common man’. In actual fact, Facebook now exceeds 175 million users and is the most used people search engine (Argawal 2007) and the number one photo sharing application in the entire World Wide Web (*Facebook Press Room*, 2006).

In short, Facebook now rubs shoulders with the likes of MSN, Ebay, Amazon, MySpace, Wikipedia and Google as one of the most trafficked websites in the world. With an already staggering market valuation of US\$15 Billion (having recently sold a 1.6% stake to Microsoft for US\$240 million), Facebook is no longer a quirky college community; it is a global phenomenon. As such, it provides the perfect backdrop to an exploration of *resistance-through-persistence* and *resistance-through-distance* (Collinson 1994) in the virtual realm, as part of a wider investigation into privacy and the *politics of surveillance* (Haggerty 2006, p.30) in online social networks. When Mark Zuckerberg and his closely-knit board of web developers and ex-Harvard cronies gave Facebook its *Facelift* (Sanghvi 2006) on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2006, the integrity of this once closely-knit ‘society of friends’ was severely tested.

## Methodology

The material for this case study was derived from an archival analysis of the many blog entries, web articles and other online writings at the time of the Facebook *Facelift*; on September 5<sup>th</sup> 2006. It is laid out in a point-counterpoint chronology to give the reader a feel for the temporality of that *Facelift* and the immediacy of the backlash that ensued. In an effort to condense the many, many responses to the incident (and these numbered in the tens of thousands) the most pertinent blog entries are presented here by the major protagonists; those students most vocal in their opposition (and most representative of the critical masses, as several of them were the instigators of the online groups that pilloried the Facebook *Feeds*), counterbalanced with the major entries in *The Facebook Blog*, where the developers (including Mark Zuckerberg himself) posted their suggestions and replies. The limitations of this ‘snapshot’ approach are all too evident, but such is the transient nature of online blogs, groups and ‘wall postings’ (they are taken down as quickly as they are put up so it is nigh on impossible to get a wholly accurate representation of public opinion) it would be foolhardy to even try to collate anything more than the most pressing themes, opinions and objections.

## Feeding Time

On September 5<sup>th</sup> 2006, the Facebook administrators introduced two new features known as the *News Feed* (Figure 1) and the *Mini-feed* (Figure 2).

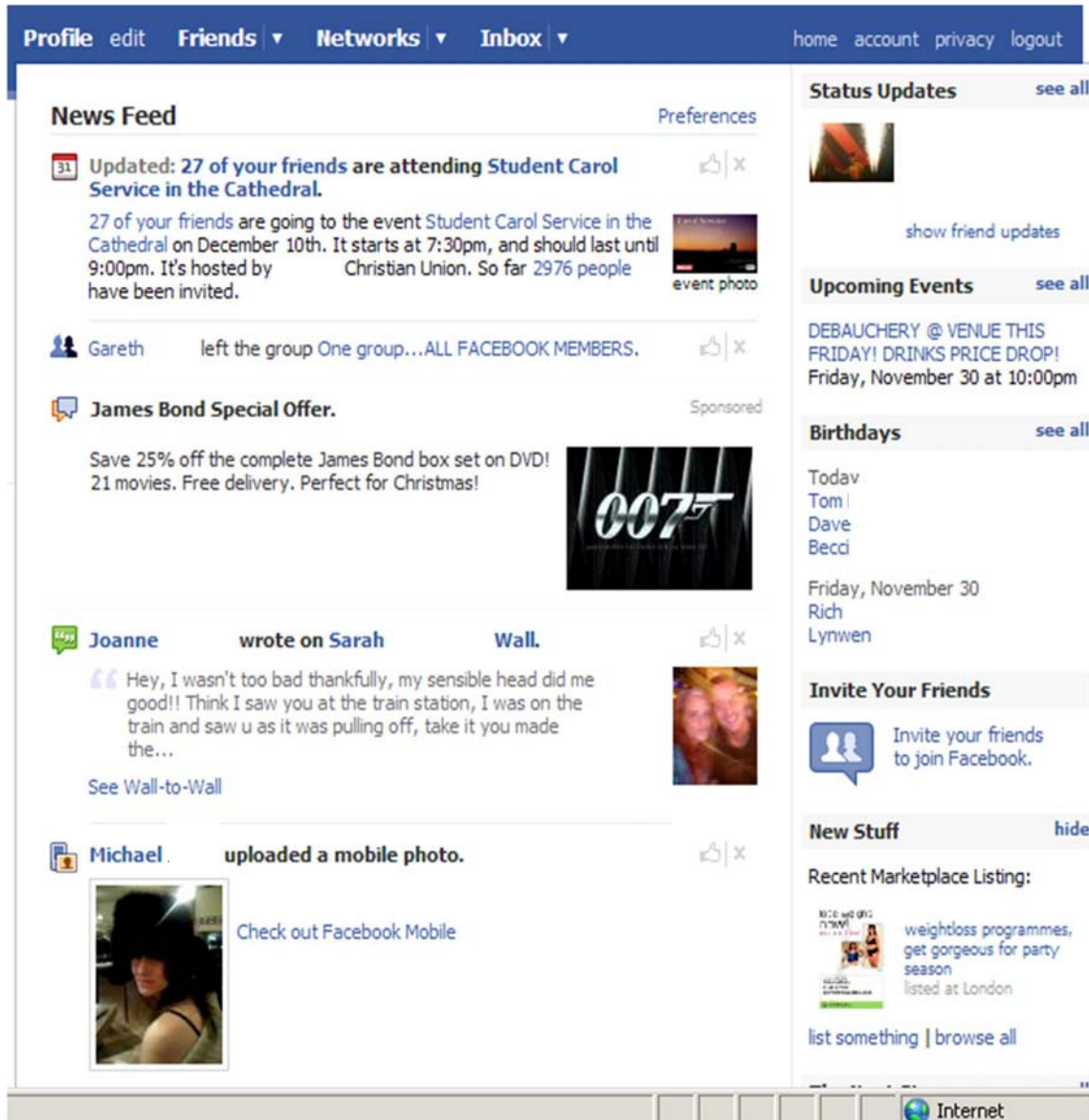


Figure 1: A Typical News Feed<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The identities of the users have been changed or blanked out to preserve anonymity.

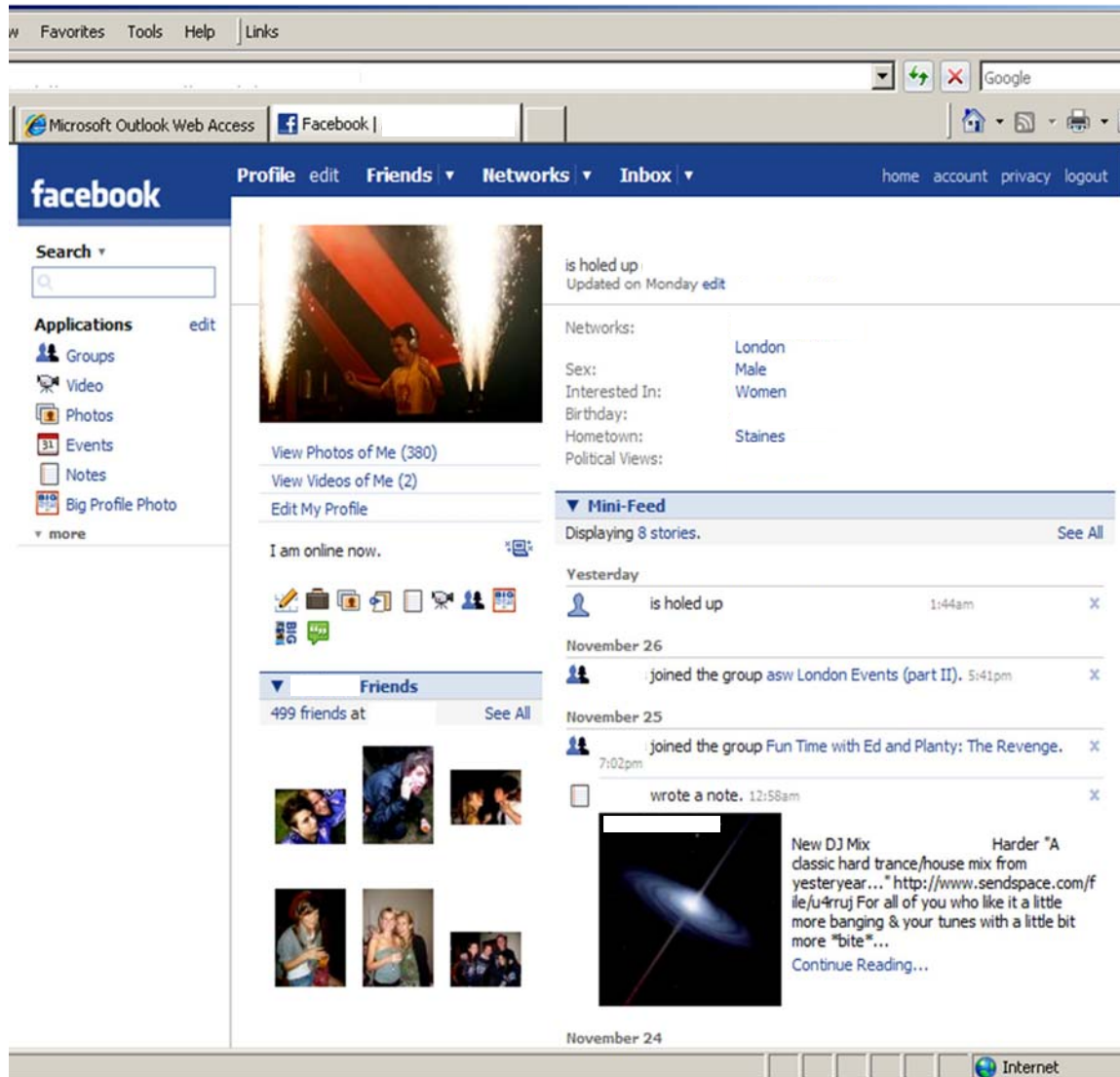


Figure 2: A Typical Mini-feed

The two additions were set up as a type of ‘broadcast’; updating other members in the same College or University network about particular users’ whereabouts, which social events they were attending, which groups they were joining and which new friendship ties they had brokered:

Facebook said the changes were aimed at advancing the core mission of the site, which is to keep people abreast of their friends’ lives. “What we wanted to create is a news ticker, if you will, of the activity of people’s friends in their network,” Facebook’s Director of Marketing, Melanie Deitch, told CampusProgress.org. (Webster, 2006)

Today the *News Feed* greets the user upon signing in (operating as a type of Facebook ‘homepage’, where previously the user’s own profile was their ‘homepage’) and the *Mini-feed* is located at the top of each

member's profile entry, detailing viewers about that user's most recent activities and profile *updates*.<sup>3</sup> In the words of the News Feed Product Manager, Ruchi Sanghvi (2006):

You've probably noticed that Facebook looks different today. We've added two cool features: News Feed, which appears on your homepage, and Mini-Feed, which appears in each person's profile. News Feed highlights what's happening in your social circles on Facebook. It updates a personalized list of news stories throughout the day, so you'll know when Mark adds Britney Spears to his Favorites or when your crush is single again. Now, whenever you log in, you'll get the latest headlines generated by the activity of your friends and social groups. Mini-Feed is a new part of the profile that shows all the latest stuff someone has added on Facebook. Mini-Feed is similar, except that it centers around one person. Each person's Mini-Feed shows what has changed recently in their profile and what content (notes, photos, etc.) they've added... We hope these changes help you to stay more up to date on your friends' lives.

As touched on here, when first introduced the new features also made public more sensitive information such as relationship status (“*you’ll know when your crush is single again*”) and even changes to sexual orientation. Instead of being “*cool*”, together the features behaved like some gross digital megaphone: “*Hi, my name is John and I’ve just broken up with my girlfriend. This is probably down to the fact that I’ve just come out; let’s shout it from the rooftops!*” The new features were passed through so hurriedly and the developers so convinced that they would be wholly embraced that they overlooked one major concern; privacy. According to Gibbs *et al.* (2005: 47):

Most definitions of privacy invoke one or more of the following three key elements: anonymity, solitude and/or secrecy (See for example Johnson 2001 and Spinello 2000). These elements are often expressed as rights of the individual: the right to act anonymously, the right to *live free of unwanted harassment*, and/or the right for individuals to *choose how they present themselves to others*. When discussing privacy and information technologies, the last of these listed rights is often restated as the right for individuals to *control the access others have to their personal information*. (Emphasis added)

By introducing the *Feeds* without any in-built safety features or privacy controls,<sup>4</sup> Facebook Towers (*sic*) had removed or reclaimed the ability of its members to present themselves in a particular light. In her statement Sanghvi even seemed to be inviting personal harassment, stating that now; “...you’ll know... when your crush is single again.” Implying what indeed? Open season for online stalking and personal abuse? The introduction of the *Feeds* meant that control and distribution of personal information was taken out of users’ hands, becoming centralised and randomised for public consumption instead. Rather than other users physically having to search out changes in their *databased selves* (Simon 2005), these changes were cast out into the public domain without any regard for sensitivity or intent. That security blanket offered by the insular student environment was suddenly taken away, allowing changes to personal circumstances and sensitive information to be scrutinized by not only your ‘virtual friends’ but also their friends and their colleagues. The *News Feed* net was cast far wider, turning each user into a kind of virtual ‘celebrity’, with all the pressures of public relations that implies. As noted by David Lyon (2002: 245):

<sup>3</sup> *Updates* can entail anything from changes to personal details (such as new e-mail addresses), relationship status (single/in a relationship/engaged/married), personal interests (such as favourite films, television programmes and quotes) and even sexual orientation (interested in men/women).

<sup>4</sup> The term *Feeds* shall be used to imply the *News Feed* and the *Mini-Feed* collectively.

Privacy, which so often is felt to be endangered by these developments, can equally be considered as a key generator of surveillance. As the more anonymous arrangements of the modern ‘*society of strangers*’ emerged, and privacy was more valued, so the reciprocal *need for tokens of trust grew as a means of maintaining the integrity of relations between those strangers* (Nock 1993). (Emphasis added)

The *Feeds*, therefore, damaged the relationship of trust and *hospitality* (Oguru 2006) between the users and developers (as the changes were not democratically introduced but imposed by central administrators) as well as irreversibly damaging the exuberance or effervescence once exhibited by this frivolous online community. Through the *Feeds*, the developers had turned the cyber-panoptic gaze back on all users; rendering all their actions and reactions visible for all to see. It is not surprising therefore that these overnight additions, coupled with the increasing tide of *massification* in the site,<sup>5</sup> prompted unease and acrimony amongst the student body. By rapidly expanding the web of possible members, the developers turned what was previously a ‘society of friends’ into a ‘society of strangers’. Nothing, however, could have prepared Mark Zuckerberg –Silicon Valley’s billion-dollar *wunderkind*– for the backlash that would follow.

### The Reaction: *Resistance through Persistence* in the Virtual World

Overnight, an international maelstrom gripped the network. The tinder had been lit under a hugely combustible fire, as the swell of public opinion turned against Mark Zuckerberg and his Harvard ‘cronies’. The reaction was unprecedented, unforeseen and unmitigating. Groups were set up immediately at universities across the USA, UK and further afield, calling for an immediate cessation to the *Feeds*. One in particular, the “*STUDENTS AGAINST FACEBOOK NEWSFEED (OFFICIAL PETITION TO FACEBOOK)*” group, managed to secure over 450,000 members (as of mid-September 2006)<sup>6</sup> which at the time represented 5% of the entire Facebook population. 111,000 users also went on to sign the official anti-Newsfeed petition (Martinez & Pelzer 2008). Campus Newspapers and online forums were filled with student ire, videos vilifying the changes were posted on YouTube (Younes 2006) and even a day boycotting Facebook was proposed (*Day without Facebook*, 2006).

Although the full extent of the backlash cannot be seen in statistical terms (since groups can be deleted as easily as they are set up) news of the outburst reached the national press, with coverage in Time Magazine (Schmidt 2006), USA Today and even The Times in the United Kingdom. A list of common complaints was given by one member of the largest group:

Sure, if someone updates a particular photo album or writes a new blog entry/note, I might be interested in seeing it, but *I really don’t want to see if someone added a movie, or tweaked their profile a little bit* (added or removed interests, changed relationship status, etc). If I’m really close friends with the people, I probably know about these changes in their lives and the people on my friends list I’m not that close with I don’t really care that much anyway. *We should be given the decision over what changes we are notified about and to what extent people are notified about us. My Facebook page now looks too cluttered* with information about people I haven’t seen since high school updating their

<sup>5</sup> *Massification* entails the constant and potentially excessive expansion of the Facebook network without regard to users’ backgrounds. By continually enlarging the Facebook network to improve access from non-student users (presumably to maximize the market capitalisation of the company and increase global coverage of the network), Facebook’s original student populous has become very dilute in the 18 months hence.

<sup>6</sup> Since members are free to leave groups at will, it is difficult to estimate the peak membership of any group. The group currently stands at approximately 200,000 in number.

favourite movies. (*Emphasis added.* Posted by GWU, “*Facebook Against Student Newsfeed*” September 6<sup>th</sup> 2006)

On top of this cybernetic lobbying, several users even went a step further and threatened to shift their allegiance to rival networks such as *MySpace* and *Bebo*. With the pecuniary costs of changing affiliation next to zero (the marginal costs being the time and effort spent on signing up to a new account, sounding out old and new friends and re-decorating that account) this was deemed a very immediate threat and prompted a quickfire response from the Facebook CEO himself, Mark Zuckerberg (2006a).

Within 24 hours of introducing the *Feeds* and in the face of this international backlash, Zuckerberg was forced to address his 10 million-strong community directly. However, his statement only served to incite greater anger and resentment (so much so that he briefly removed his own profile under the weight of complaints he had received). Perhaps Zuckerberg couldn’t see the irony and paradox in his own writing? Just as the Newsfeed Manager Ruchi Saghi had all but legitimized the use of the *Feeds* for ‘online stalking’ and other potentially sinister interaction, the CEO himself then exposed his naïveté for all the world (wide web) to see. In his own words, that members “*used to dig*” for such information (as posted in the *Feeds*) surely implied that it was in some way previously hidden from view, or that it needed to be ‘unearthed’ in order to be retrieved? Surely then that would mean it was in some way private or at least, *not* for public consumption? A ‘wall posting’ (where one member makes a comment on another’s profile, like a diary entry) or an event invitation were previously bilateral interactions reserved for the two users in question; with the addition of the *Feeds* they now became multilateral engagements, complete with ‘viewing gallery’.

Haggerty critiques the simplistic model of the panopticon, pointing out that; “The multiplication of the sights of surveillance ruptures the unidirectional nature of the gaze... undermining the neat distinction between watchers and watched through a proliferation of criss-crossing, overlapping and intersecting scrutiny.” (2006: 29) That Zuckerberg had to temporarily take down his profile under the weight of complaints received highlights the multilateral and even rhizomatic nature of the network, where even the ‘powerful’ developers are surveilled by the ‘powerless’ users.

While the heavily dystopian (and sometimes overly alarmist) imagery of the panopticon is used for such hegemonic relationships where the masses are often monitored by the few (*Big Brother Britain* and so forth), in this scenario Facebook offered spaces and opportunities for resistance and therefore detracts somewhat from the Benthamite ‘ideal’. As noted by Mann *et al.* (2003a):

The prisoners in Bentham's panopticon were aware that they were being watched by the guards, although each prisoner remained isolated from all the other prisoners. The modern panopticon of cyberspace is a reversal of Bentham's original. The guards are hidden from our view and our consciousness, although we are not only aware of the other prisoners, we are encouraged to connect to them (394).

On this occasion perhaps the dramatic metaphor of the *Panopticon* (where a handful of viewers monitor and control the many; so often used in case studies on surveillance) should be complemented or even replaced in the virtual realm by the alternative construct, the *Synopticon* (Boyne 2000); where many individuals have the opportunity to monitor the actions of a handful, (or in this case an individual) through the peepholes termed *Feeds*. Elsewhere, the *Feeds* also rendered individual action more visible by highlighting negative actions or inactivity. For example, whilst your friends are invited to a Birthday party or other notable event (the *News Feed* giving you timing, details and guest list of the item in question); thanks to the *Feeds* your invite then becomes conspicuous by its absence! By forcibly making the previously reserved and conservative environment more open and public, the *Feeds* had ironically intensified feelings of alienation and isolation. The more pernicious effects of this public ‘outing’ were picked up by another disgruntled member:

The thing that scares me, though, is each individual user's "feed," which lists every single action that they undertake on Facebook. *It would be easy to draw negative conclusions from some of them (like declining an invitation to charity events or what have you).*

(*Emphasis added.* Posted by Nick, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2006  
<http://www.campusprogress.org/features/1138/big-brother-is-poking-you>)

As a result of this dramatic change, Facebook users soon grouped themselves into two tribes; the outraged 'cynics' and the docile 'pragmatics'; the battle lines drawn up over the extent to which Facebook should be considered a 'public' domain. To the cynics, the concern was over 'data mining' and the breakdown of integrity between both users and developers:

...I don't want a list of the people that I added to my friends list in the last few days. That's just a little unnerving. I also don't want a lot of the groups I decided to leave available. I don't want links to all the forum posts I make or image comments I make right there on my main page... Not only does this create unnecessary clutter, it blatantly advertises the changes in my life I feel comfortable documenting, *but do not want highlighted.* A break up is a good example. *It's a big brother thing.* I know there are property records listing my name and address, and that's okay. When my county posts an easily searchable database on the front of their main webpage, it makes me a little more uncomfortable... It's a similar concept, people do not want to feel like they're being watched and monitored. It's human instinct –and while it might seem a little hypocritical because you're making the information public– no one wants someone watching their every move... It's all pieces of a puzzle that leaves me feeling just a little exposed.

(By adf2006 (998737); Tuesday September 5th 10:46PM.  
<http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=06/09/06/011223>)

Clearly part of the negative sentiments directed at the *Feeds* were attributed to Facebook becoming more public and less insular. The cosy, student-orientated interactions were thrown wide open to be scrutinized under the public gaze, damaging the *sanctity* and *sovereignty* of the individual (Baez 2002). This addition, however, damaged *both* that sanctity and sovereignty as it invaded privacy without compensating users with autonomy and choice over how (and with whom) their information would be distributed. Another issue that further fuelled the uproar was the fact that these additions were imposed unilaterally, not democratically. No pilot testing was carried out during the prior months of July & August, no vote was taken as to the need for such changes and no messages were sent round informing users of the new addition. Indeed, the *Facebook Blog* (where updates & news are recorded by the administrators, itself a page only frequented by interested stakeholders such as potential investors and programmers) only bore the slightest indication that further changes were on the cards, less than a week before the News Feed and Mini-feed went online:

A lot has changed, and we're not done improving the site yet. We have a bunch of good things coming out soon, so we wanted to give you a heads up. *When we've made changes in the past, a lot of people have gotten upset and emailed in asking us to change the site back. Change can be disorienting, but we do it because we're sure it makes the site better.* It may have felt different at first, but things like photos, events, groups and the wall have all made Facebook a more useful and interesting site. It's our goal to provide a tool that helps people understand what's going on with the people around them; all of our additions and changes contribute towards this goal. The new things we're going to launch will do the same. (Zuckerberg 2006b)

Clearly the sense from *Facebook Towers* (*sic*) was that this change, whilst imposed on their members, would be for the better and as such it should be wholeheartedly welcomed. However, unlike Ruchi Sanghvi, Zuckerberg acknowledged that the changes they had imposed in the past had been met with some

resistance. So why press on with such a divisive addition, if Zuckerberg knew it would be met with such vitriol? It almost seemed as though the co-creators and developers of Facebook were still entwined in their little student clique at Harvard; shaping their decisions (that would affect billions of online interactions) over coffee-table banter in their student houses. For being valued at over US\$15 Billion, the whole operation seemed a little chaotic. This question of democratic accountability to their customers, the end-users, was neatly raised by another concerned member:

*I don't like how about a week's worth of recent events were already on our News Feeds before we had a chance to approve it. Some people who still have not logged into their Facebook accounts for a couple of days have recent activities being broadcast to their friends list because of a feature they never approved.* (Emphasis added)

(Posted by Crashnbur (127738) Wednesday September 6<sup>th</sup> 02:41PM  
<http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=06/09/06/011223>)

It is clear from this entry that the *Feeds* had opened a deep cleavage within the Facebook community and that an acute anti-establishment sentiment was brewing amongst the students. Facebook, once the bastion of student independence and rebellion, was now just another means by which they could be monitored and controlled. Words cannot do justice to the visceral extent of the student demonstration; that it took on an international dimension (with groups such as “*STUDENTS AGAINST FACEBOOK NEWSFEED*” and “*I Don't Want the Newsfeed to Eat Me!*” being set up on both sides of the Atlantic and coverage reaching the American national press) is as much a testament to the ease of communication by which the resistant message was transmitted as it was evidence of the passion and vitriol shared by the transatlantic student corpus. Much of that anger was directed at Zuckerberg himself, who, through the increased visibility of his actions and online ‘presence’ had overnight gone from student champion to establishment *pariah* (Haggerty 2006).

This moment of confrontation also provides an interesting practical backdrop to a more pressing theoretical concern; to what extent are such social networking sites a part of the public domain? The News Feed critics expressed concerns over ‘stalking’, ‘broadcasting private information’ and the ‘dehumanizing’ effect of the random algorithm used to distribute the information.<sup>7</sup> The less sympathetic members (the pragmatics) argued that once you log in to Facebook (or any similar social network) then you become part of the public arena and as such one must firstly be responsible for one’s own behaviour, secondly be more conscious of the consequences of these actions and thirdly, be more conscious the public ‘gaze’ in which those actions are scrutinized:

If you don't want to be stalked, don't put your personal information online. All of the data these “feeds” display can be found through browsing anyways. This just centralizes it. I rather like this feature myself.

(By MankyD (567984) Tuesday September 5<sup>th</sup> 10:23PM  
<http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=06/09/06/011223>)

But what of 'logging in' in the first place? Doesn't the necessity for a valid e-mail address and privately given password entail that this network already exhibits a degree of exclusivity? The Facebook administrators got into hot water because they had taken for granted the feelings of their public; whilst they wanted social networking but in a private domain, the cynics wanted individual protection over social

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<sup>7</sup> The ironic thing is that whilst some users thought the *Feeds* would increase online ‘stalking’ (through its public demonstration of actions and movements), it can be argued that the introduction of the *Feeds* has helped to combat ‘stalking’ as it increases the transparency and accountability of one's actions; it spreads the ‘gaze’. Whilst the News Feed and Mini-feed brought certain actions to light, it also rendered potentially harmful wall postings and photo messages transparent and therefore equally subject to public scrutiny. As such, it can be argued that these two additions reduced the opportunity for stalking and harassment (by rendering *all* users’ actions more transparent and more accountable) rather than increasing it.

interaction. This paradoxical state was the major sticking point between the Facebook creators and the Facebook users. In an effort to embrace the public; the developers had forgotten the private. One of the more outspoken replies from the above user actually called for disgruntled members to turn tail and leave Facebook altogether:

Publicly advertising on a PUBLIC WEBSITE makes it easier to find. Seriously people- if you don't want people to find out, remove yourself from this public space.

(By MankyD (567984) Tuesday September 5th 10:58PM  
<http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=06/09/06/011223>)

As noted earlier, whilst some users did do this out of protest, this perspective is morally indefensible and should not be the default option of all disaffected users; “This seems to make the principled but practical critique of surveillance [*and potentially surveillant technologies such as social networking sites*] even outside welfare democracies, really quite difficult, since it would appear to demand nothing less than complete withdrawal from society.” [Added] (Boyne (2000: 302) Indeed, the position espoused by the user *MankyD* flies in the face of the unqualified right to access that Facebook (and the internet as a whole) offers. Such access should not come at a cost to personal freedoms. Somewhat ironically, this is even set out in Facebook's two *Core Principles* (Facebook Principles 2006).

As such, this writer allies somewhat with the cynics; how come there are provisions and protections for downloaded content (such as antiviral measures, pop-up blockers and firewalls) but no such safeguards offered for uploaded material? This view is reiterated by Ogura (2006: 280) who says; “Given computer communication, rights for self-control over personal data have been regarded as an effective protection measure against the violation of privacy.” What the user *MankyD* advocated was a kind of ‘internet fascism’; if you don't like it, then don't sign up; and once you sign in, be ready to give up your right to private conversations, gossip and personal invitations. However, this not being the case in the corporeal domain; why should it be so in the virtual one? Just because a person leaves the front door doesn't mean they obviate the right to clothes; just because you shop in public doesn't mean you display your card details for all to see; “An individual who shows their face before the general public does not necessarily intend to give their name, address, phone number or more sensitive personal data to others” (Ogura: 281).

Interestingly enough, the flipside to this surveillant ‘coin’ meant that the conduits of this ostensibly surveillant and hegemonic online network became inverted; allowing the backlash to gain weight in number and scope. In other words, the machinery by which the users were being monitored and put on display (the introspective additions they complained about; the *News Feed* and *Mini-Feed*) gave them opportunity to interact swiftly and easily and allowed them to spread the ‘anti-News Feed message’ across the Atlantic. Again, this is another reminder “...that social orders most generally crumble (and are patched-up) from within.” (Boyne 2000: 288) Indeed, the principal reason why British users were notified of this international backlash (apart from physical word-of-mouth) was down to the News Feed itself! User *ff3j* (767130) picked up on this twist:

From the feed... *6 of your friends joined the group This New Facebook is Creepy.*  
9:40PM. *6 of your friends joined the group The ‘News Feed’ on Facebook is creepy and I hate it.* 9:11PM. [NAME] joined the group “People Against the Facebook News Feed.  
6:38PM. [NAME] joined the group Facebook: Data Mining Since 2004. 5:14PM.  
[NAME] and [NAME] joined the group Facebook Sucks now. 3:46PM.

(Emphasis added. Posted on Tuesday September 5<sup>th</sup> 11:13PM  
<http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=06/09/06/011223>)

Rather than being passive subjects of this virtual 'gaze', the protesting students were active agents in bringing about a transatlantic online revolution. Ironically, by using these conduits of power that were challenging their freedom, their resistant mission was able to gain weight and force with alarming speed. In the end, on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October (less than 72 hours after the *Feeds* were first introduced) the great

Mark Zuckerberg, the brain behind Facebook and Microsoft's prodigal son, was forced into a humiliating public apology (Zuckerberg 2006c).

The cynics had triumphed through *persistent* resistance, but it was a pyrrhic victory. Privacy Controls were introduced to full effect, allowing each user to specify exactly which pieces of information they wished to share with the wider community via the *Feeds*. Eventually, Anti-Newsfeed groups died down, recalcitrant users reactivated their dormant accounts and Facebook pressed on with its global expansion. However, never again would Facebook be the vibrant and quirky student community it once was.

## Discussion

What can be gauged from this intense confrontation and what contribution can be made to the debate on the efficacy of *resistance-through-distance* versus *resistance-through-persistence*? While Zuckerberg's contention that people "used to dig for this information on a daily basis" is correct, to assume that it should therefore be "readily available" is not. That the Facebook CEO had so blithely disregarded the privacy of his members by claiming this information "wasn't being broadcast" when his own Director of Marketing had admitted it was meant to be a type of "news ticker" was both alarming and infuriating. Also, to impose a new feature that would affect not some but *all* of the multi-million users without so much as a few days' notice was disastrously naïve and that alone mitigates the incandescent response from the students. It was clear that the lack of democratic accountability (for example, not putting the *Feeds* to a members' vote or testing them through pilot groups) had angered the students almost as much as the perceived intrusion on privacy. Where Facebook had become authoritarian and hegemonic, the retaliation was democratic and multilateral.

As such it is clear that, when engaged, the international student corpus is capable of great resistant moment. Armed with a cyber-synoptic framework which they can manipulate to their own ends and the collective number to transmit that message to a global audience, the student body becomes a potent and *persistent* force for change. Indeed, the merest glance at some of Facebook's largest groups is evidence of this political will (cf. "*For Every 1,000 That Join This Group I will Donate \$1 to Darfur.*") and has itself been noted by the Facebook administrators (Cox 2006). It is often alleged that today's students are politically ambivalent and not as militant as they once were. What is clear, however, is that the field has moved, the goalposts have changed and the student corpus now has the means to play *politik* on their own terms, as "...modern surveillance technologies can offer the chance of social inclusion, of consumer choice and democratic rights." (Green 1999: 29)

The second lesson to take away is that online privacy, being contested in a virtual, ephemeral realm, is not a case of 'black & white' but 'shades of grey'. As noted by one critical observer, there is a pivotal difference between ones information being 'not private' to it actually becoming 'announced';

...it shows things that you might not really like broadcasting to the world, *even if you don't feel like it needs to be a secret*. For example, when a couple splits up, everyone in your network gets a message saying 'John Smith has changed his status from 'In a relationship' to 'Single'... there's such a lack of respect or discretion for the real world situation that it's just incredibly dehumanizing.

(Emphasis added. By wibs (696528) Tuesday September 5th 10:42PM  
<http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=06/09/06/011223>)

In this sense, it shows that users still connect the 'virtual realm' and the 'social network' to the 'personal' and the 'human'. To what extent then was this action by the Facebook administrators a tactless retreat into the 'virtual', that is, a submission to computerized algorithms as part of a conceited desire to expand the Facebook audience to include wider networks and increase global coverage (thus hugely increasing the market value of the network as a whole)? Were they forgetting the customers, the students, their most important 'stakeholders'? Have the Facebook developers irreversibly damaged the *effervescence* of this

once jovial online community? Thanks to these ‘shades of grey’ and because one’s degree of interaction and publicly accessible information came under high levels of scrutiny, as a result of these changes Facebook became considerably less user-friendly. That is, its members became definitely less outgoing with other users, for fear of that interaction becoming a revealing and embarrassing spectacle. As recognised by Zuckerberg himself, the introduction of the *Feeds* without the correct privacy controls was a horrible miscalculation.

Since then, it can be posited that Facebook members have been camped in two bands; out of the storm between the *pragmatics* and the *cynics* have come the brazen and highly emancipated users (the ‘*theatrics*’) that see Facebook simply for its playful qualities (with its newly introduced and firmly tongue-in-cheek features such as ‘Football Fan’, which allows users to show off which football teams they support; ‘Food Fight’, allowing users to virtually ‘throw food’ at each other; or ‘Zombie’, allowing users to virtually ‘bite’ each other in a networked version of the British film comedy ‘Shaun of the Dead’) and don’t care too much about publicly visible information. Alternatively, there are the reserved, battle-hardened and highly conservative users (the ‘*stoics*’) that have become very conscious of their privacy and online interaction. These two troops are comparable to the *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* ‘normal types’ (as suggested by Ferdinand Tonnies); where one group bears more familial and liberal relations with each other, the other far more formal & professional. If anything, the sad truth is that on the whole Facebook has gravitated towards the latter; in part because of this episode (and the resultant breakdown of trust between users & administrators) and also because of the inexorable ‘massification’ of Facebook to include non-students and the wider public. This dilution of membership has created further opportunities in the eyes of developers for profit-making; (with an ever increasing membership the capital value of the network has since doubled, tripled and quadrupled; some now estimate its value at anything between US\$15 and US\$30 Billion) but at the same time this unfettered expansion has led to even greater reservations about and threats to the sanctity of online interaction; the very premise upon which Facebook was built.

Rather than increase the Durkheimian *effervescence* of this community, the desire to increase the worldwide coverage of Facebook has, somewhat ironically, accentuated the sense of solitude, alienation and *anomie* within the Facebook network. The parochial ‘blanket’ that once protected the student community has been taken away, opening up liberating micro-spaces for disengagement and secrecy, in other words, *resistance-through-distance*. Instead, users can now create fictional profiles with any home-grown e-mail address (whilst retaining their old university-based profiles); giving members the ability to ‘reclaim the anonymous’<sup>8</sup> and to metaphorically ‘black out’ the cybernetic windows of the synopticon. With several fictional e-mail accounts (easily obtainable from such free providers as Hotmail, MSN or AOL) any member could possess several *databased* (Simon 2005) or *looking-glass* (Los 2006) selves. If then, these *data doubles* (Los 2006) are but simulacra of our real selves; these alternative identities become simulacra of simulacra; spawning rhizomatically outwards in the virtual domain.

In this way, the staggering figures for growth in global usage could be somewhat flattering to the Facebook developers; many of those profiles might be second or third ones belonging to *distantly*-resistant members bearing multiple identities, enjoying this newfound ability to further subvert and toy with the cybernetic ‘gaze’ of the network. This playful gaming becomes opportunity for *re-humanizing* the virtual domain.<sup>9</sup> In the web 2.0 synopticon that is Facebook, when we view another member’s profile, are we therefore really looking at embodied *selves* or merely simulacra of those *selves*? Are we watching the actors or the play? To resist these virtual gazes in a web-based game of “hide and seek” seems therefore a very human reaction to a very *inhuman* network.

<sup>8</sup> As noted by Oguru: “Anonymity is the basis of freedom in modern society.” (2006: 274)

<sup>9</sup> This is not exclusive to Facebook. Other networks such as *Second Life* and computer games such as *World of Warcraft* play heavily on this ability for the user to map out an entirely new identity in a virtual replica of the physical world.

## Conclusion and Extensions

This case study illustrates how the Worldwide Web facilitates the organisation of more direct *resistance through persistence* such as political demonstration and lobbying on an international scale (particularly through social networks such as Facebook) coupled with the opportunity for more reclusive and escapist acts of *resistance through distance*, as the mirrored society that is Facebook also offers space for gaming, withdrawal and disengagement. Which is more effective is open to contestation and clearly depends on context, timescale and the number of protagonists involved.

In this particular episode, the Facebook users were not going to have their behaviours dictated to them by some centralizing ‘force’ or hegemonic online ‘power’ (even if that ‘power’ was possessed by former students and fellow alumni). With the financial costs of leaving one network and moving to another next to zero (as long as rival networks such as *MySpace* and *Bebo* remain free to join<sup>10</sup>) it is a perfect example of the students reclaiming their *sovereignty* (Baez 2002), demonstrating *social empowerment* (Mulgan 1991) and reactivating their *critical agency* (Baez 2002).

As demonstrated by this powerful example of *resistance-through-persistence*, the internet is as enabling as it is disabling and controlling (Koskela 2006, Orguru 2006); the conduits of power that were threatening the myriad users were reclaimed, subverted and turned back on the power-bearers (Haggerty 2006). The impressive growth of the ‘anti-News Feed’ groups is a testament to the transparency offered by the internet and the many opportunities that such social networks offer to drum up international support with minimal effort. The political marches of the future will be carried out online; lobbying, demonstrations and petitions will be computerised, virtualised and dehumanized.

It is interesting to note that whilst some of the members complained about the ‘dehumanizing’ effect of the *Feeds*, it was this ‘dehumanization’ that translated into opportunity; opportunity for resistant communication, opportunity for resistant demonstration and opportunity for resistant space (in the dark niches now afforded by the massification of the network). Indeed, how hard is it to orchestrate a million bodies to march on Westminster? How much easier is it to disembodify that activism through setting up online petitions and debates to lobby central government through the virtual domain? As noted above, today’s youth are politically engaged and web-savvy. As the “*Stop the Great HSBC Graduate Rip-Off!!!*” group showed, a ‘physical presence’ may not be required to inculcate great political, economic and social change; just a ‘presence’ full-stop. The internet offers the chance to gather great political momentum across international barriers, with the marginal costs to communicating that message next to zero and the opportunity for promulgating that message to an international audience virtually endless (Oguru 2006, Klang 2008).

However, there is a lingering doubt as to the success of this action. Perhaps this was not so much a victory for the students but an expression of the normalising power of online surveillance rendering all the Facebook users into docile and complicit subjects. The fact that the Facebook network became discernibly less open and liberal after this incident could perhaps be a reflection of the normalisation of user behaviour, whether conscious or not:

“The question of choice thus becomes moot and the individual resistance is rendered very precarious... The fear of surveillant ostracism may lead to interiorization of the imperative to be known and recognizable by multiple surveillance systems.” (Los 2006: 82)

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<sup>10</sup> Even *Friends Reunited* has recently become a free network, removing its subscription fee.

By removing personal information and setting up the privacy controls so widely called for, individual members become much more aware of the surveillant ‘gaze’ of other members, whether actualised or not. Much like Collinson’s 1994 case study of the white-collar female employee taking out a long and protracted industrial dispute with her employers, *resistance-through-persistence* in the online domain does not come without a great deal of collateral damage. Indeed, as Foucault and his adherents (Haggerty 2006; Bogard 2006) assert, perhaps power and resistance are forever imbued with each other. While this resistant action brought respite to some and proved something of a ‘moral’ victory, to others it ultimately meant greater subjection to that gaze and the spread of online cynicism.

As such, the question of ‘at what cost?’ rears its head again. Although the highly politicized members may claim victory for civil liberties, the fact remains that Facebook now stands at over 175 million users, Mark Zuckerberg stands to become an internet billionaire and the *Feeds* remain fundamental to the network; now as much a part of the fabric of the online community as profile pages, photo albums and event invitations. Only a smattering of indignant users actually turned tail and signed up to rival networks; indeed, to organize such an exodus would require the discipline (or hysteria) of some religious cult suicide. The sensual lure of the gaze was too strong and the threat of social stigma from departure too great; again, the resistant acts were imbued with power as the desire to be ‘in’ rather than ‘out’ of the *societied network* was too seductive, too magnetic and too alluring even for the most hard-faced users. Better to be in the network than out of it. Better to be accepted than to be ostracized. Better to be a cynic than a pariah.

It is for this reason that the conclusions proffered by Collinson must be put under the microscope. Where Collinson deems the ‘success’ of resistance in terms of effecting change, it is the contention of this author that *resistance-through-persistence*, although perhaps more rewarding in terms of its pursuit of the moral high ground, comes at a great deal of personal cost that may render it impractical in reality. Indeed, whilst the female employee in Collinson’s example was ‘effective’ in terms of getting a negative promotion decision overturned in her favour (when the company in question was threatened with an industrial tribunal) he does not follow up the case to see how life had changed for the employee subsequent to that decision. Rather than demonstrate how this discursive relationship between power and resistance went on in a continuous struggle, Collinson deemed this episode closed and, perhaps naively, awarded ‘victory’ to the employee. In this sense, a longitudinal study might have led Collinson to draw altogether different conclusions as the protracted battle between the Facebook developers and Facebook users has showed. While it could be argued the users won the moral battle, Zuckerberg has certainly won the financial war.

Had Collinson instead followed up his first study some time later, perhaps he would have found the employee treated like a pedant, a troublemaker, a whistleblower. Perhaps he too would have questioned the long-term gain to be had from pursuing the industrial dispute. Whilst this instance of *resistance-through-persistence* may have been materially successful for the employee at the point of conflict, in the long-term the identity effects might well have been a lot more damaging; thus questioning the efficacy of this act of ‘in your face’ opposition. Again, these are theoretical strands that Collinson chose not to pursue, despite him touching on some high-profile cases of whistle-blowing and resistance through-persistence going spectacularly wrong in his chapter footnotes! Whilst this author does not deny the right of that female employee to challenge the grounds upon which her promotion was overlooked, the logic behind this opposition does not necessarily translate to the virtual world. Although the success of the recalcitrant students was evident in pushing Zuckerberg towards a very humbling apology and the swift implementation of the privacy controls, it cannot be denied that in the long-term Zuckerberg is better off now than ever before and the network as a whole has been materially and symbolically damaged as a result. Whilst *resistance-through-persistence* inculcated a brief moral victory for the students by directly confronting the hegemonic relationship to which they fell subject, it is the *distantly*-resistant members that have embraced the more playful qualities of this network and are subjectively more satisfied with their Facebook ‘existence’ as a result.

The second conceptualisation of *resistance-through-distance* is located in the dark, shadowy spaces between the roots of the surveillant rhizome. Whilst the shoots of the Facebook network grow ever outwards, rather than look at how resistance meets power and surveillance at the ligatures and interstices of these roots (through inversion, *persistent* conflict and an '*in your face attitude*' (Mann et al 2003b, : 347)), instead it is in the dark gaps that resistance through distance can breed and grow. As shown briefly in this piece, the *societied network* (being not corporeal and tangible but digital and ephemeral) offers spaces for mirrors, doppelgangers and reflections of the self; and it is through these *ersatz doubles* (Los 2006: 87) that the user can evade the surveillant gaze and *re-humanize* the virtual. Facebook then becomes "...a force against itself (of multiplication, deviation, seduction, inclusion)" (Bogard 2006: 98).

In this way, the virtual realm offers a re-engagement with the human. The most basic instinct of survival is embraced as opportunities for gaming and escape are unfurled. It is hoped that, whilst spatial constraints can only offer a limited treatment of *resistance-through-distance* in this article; future studies will pick up on this thread and carry out more rigorous empirical and conceptual investigations in the online domain (perhaps in other social networks and online blogs) and the opportunities it provides for such alternative, covert 'strands' of resistance.

In the end however the Feeds were cleaned up, privacy controls were introduced and the masses appeased (for example, the "*Day without Facebook*" was called off because the demands of the members were met). Has much changed? Not really, although privacy settings are now easily visible on all Facebook web pages and the developers now give a minimum of 30 days notice before any new addition. Yes, the students were able to enforce a widespread change act (in perhaps an overly-dramatic way) and, if that is the measure by which Collinson deems their actions a 'success' then resistance-through-persistence may have been deemed successful, albeit for a brief moment. Nonetheless, it must be asked: who are the more emancipated users now? The overly suspicious 'cynics' who pore over their every online trace with a fine-toothed comb and filter out every pair of unwanted eyes, or the liberated 'theatrics' who have brazenly toyed with the Newsfeed gaze by creating digital doppelgangers of themselves?

In carrying out a conceptual appraisal of resistance-through-persistence as a viable course of action, Collinson was naive when comparing the white-collar case that effected brief and immediate change (and thus appeared 'successful', for whatever that means) with the quotidian 'coping strategies' utilised by the blue-collar factory employees (which were naturally infused with elements of consent and accommodation and were mistakenly deemed 'ineffective' or 'unsuccessful' as a result) carried out over a period of time. By reversing that logic (and to demonstrate the *complete* subjectivity of Collinson's notion of 'success') it is easy to make out from this case study that resistance-through-persistence, although successful at first glance, changed little in the long-term. Resistance-through-distance (carried out by withholding key identity artefacts, giving false information and creating false identities) thus re-appropriates the 'backstage identity' of the real user in the corporeal world, living and playing this virtual game of hide-and-seek behind the mask that is their false Facebook profile. Resistance-through-distance is an otherwise effective and playful means of toying with the synoptic gaze of those Facebook feeds, thus rendering them (and the privacy controls introduced to regulate them) pointless! Whilst the student uprising led to the Facebook developers making brief accommodations, the powers-that-be ultimately restored their authority. In the virtual realm resistance-through-persistence is found wanting; it is resistance-through-distance that 'succeeds'.

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