
Extended Abstract

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Those Eyes Brooding Over Us: Possibilities of Resistance in and through Facebook ¹Gunarathne J.

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1. Abstract

The very fact that there is much scholarly discussions and research conducted on social media bears witness to the multifarious influence and impact of social media on our mundane life. Among many popular so Facebook occupies a central space and it has received much value especially since its crucial involvement in Arab Springs. Although many Facebook users who endorse its radicalism think that Facebook has opened avenues for the obliteration of parochial ideas and values, detractors of Facebook reject it as a pernicious material. The main objective of this study was to identify whether Facebook opens up space for the annihilation of parochial values and ritualized practices. Although Facebook is associated with modernity, youth, knowledge, freedom, change and so on, it was found that Facebook perpetuates sexism, homophobia, religious-chauvinism, ethnocentrism and reaffirms stereotypes. And it was also found that the rapid invasion of parochialism in Facebook influences the political, cultural and even economic making of Facebook users. By and large, the present study argues that resistance in and through Facebook is subdued in the Lankan context by the instantaneous overflow of counter-resistance of the majority of users who are nationalist, sexist, homophobic, and so on. Consequently, opportunities to problematize sense and transcend dogma in the Sri Lankan society in this manner are quite limited.

Keywords: discipline, Facebook, gaze, resistance, social control

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

Facebook plays a significant role in conditioning how people perceive life and society. Not only do common beliefs and popular opinion, but also forms new realities and makes them available for mass consumption. Similarly, Facebook plays a significant role in shaping and reshaping the identities of Facebook users.

Facebook is not merely a virtual space where “friends” share information and interact with one another but has become a simulacrum of the mainstream society. The main objective of this study was to identify whether Facebook opens up space for the annihilation of parochial values and ritualized practices. Researches conducted in order to examine various aspects of Facebook but there is a relative dearth of studies which show how Facebook has been used to reinforce and

perpetuate popular opinion and beliefs. Fast Stephanie analyzes the structural and methodological parallels present between facebook and the

Panopticon. The stance of her researcher is that Facebook bears an uncanny resemblance to the pano extention the present research problematizes the claim that Facebook has opened up avenues for radi and space to critique parochial values.

3. Research Methodology

This is a critical discourse study – a study which endeavors to “systematically explore often opaque re of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social a structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power” (quoted in Terry Locke132). Als from Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* and *Archeology of Knowledge*. According to Foucault do are made through Panopticon Schema, hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examinatio data were collected using interviews with 50 Facebook users. 70 Facebook accounts were observed ov of 6 months regularly and, particularly the responses of Facebook users to controversial issues wer Since information shared on Facebook is meant to be public property, ethical consent was not obtained their day to day activities on Facebook. Furthermore, such a request for approval or consent would ha the findings since the selected Facebook users could have monitored or censored their activities on Fac

4. Results and findings

This study identifies and discusses the following key areas: a)

Propagation of a middle class sensibility

As a result of the increasing division between the rich and the poor the majority who has access to internet in Lanka clearly belong to the middle class (lower and upper) and the upper class (this cuts across the divide). The lower class which is a product of the vicious systemic inequality in the Sri Lankan society is minimally exposed to social media. This situation has created a conducive space for a narrow, national class sensibility to develop. On Facebook, sharing and tagging pictures, videos, and news items is done for reasons: 1) to show one's awareness, 2) to provide important information, 3) to share important events and so on. However, many individuals who use Facebook seem to be using Facebook as a means end. Although there is freedom for an individual to share his or her ideas and views on Facebook depending on what gets accepted, promoted and rejected by the majority. What one uploads next time on Facebook depends on the maximum number of likes this time. When one goes through his/her Facebook account s/he comes to the reality that in addition to the "cute" and "funny" pictures or videos of pets one gets more likes for his (particularly those which are taken at parties, parks,) in short those pictures or videos that reflect a narrow class sensibility. According to this study it is clear that what gets accepted or acknowledged by the majority seems to be apolitical or neutral. Yet it reflects their positioning in the larger political landscape. Since there is a competition to get as many likes as possible one might always upload things which have a substantial amount of likes. This situation has discouraged people from uploading pictures, videos and posts that have an outright political significance. In other words, this is a process of disciplining everyone to a narrow middleclass code of conduct.

a) The dominance of the English Language

Socio-linguistically too Facebook has become a very interesting site. It is true that there is much Facebook users to break linguistic rules, particularly in terms of lexical innovations, use of acronym contracted forms. Even though there are provisions to use Sinhala when commenting on Facebook the demand to use English (which is the norm) as the language of communication on Facebook. This reinforces the authority of the English speaking class.

b) Male gaze, hetero-normativity and homophobia

In Facebook, from material that idealizes motherhood to sexist and abusive material women are subjected to constant scrutiny of "male gaze". There are innumerable examples which not only reflect the values of a dominant society, but also contribute to naturalize violence and other more subtle forms of abuse against women. Facebook is just another space where "obedient subjects" are formed through the use of coercion and power. The following case portrays how resistance operates through Facebook. When the US government legalized same sex marriages many people used the rainbow filter to paint their profile pictures on Facebook with LGBTQ flag colors. In interviews, interviewees said that they were afraid of the consequences and did not want to be humiliated; therefore not change the profile picture even though they have no objection to same sex marriages. 70% of the respondents said that they oppose homosexuality and 5% of the participants said that they did not bother about it and boldly changed their profile pictures to support the radical move. According to respondent (E); "I changed my profile picture in order to support LGBTQ people. But within several

hours I received very nasty com my Facebook friends. Those comments were abusive and vulgar. I decided immediately to remove picture because I was afraid of being labeled as a gay person” (Field Data, 2016).

c) A counter gaze against power and authority

Facebook has formed a platform for people who are in relatively “powerless” positions to act out their For instance, we are well aware that there is too much power vested upon the repressive state apparatus and the army. But those who have the power to punish are challenged in various ways by the relatively “ masses. One such method is using photographs and videos of police men and army personnel who viol order. Even though one can argue that this a violation of fundamental human rights, here counter-gaz curb the “absolutism of power” legally conferred on personnel. Usually, police-violence passes as false if evidence is not provided, yet here one does not need other evidence to prove that the police officers the law do not worth their salt. This shift in relation to the “subject” of gaze has contributed to a certa control the level of harassmet faced by “ordinary” people, or those who have limited access to structure Posts such as these serve the purpose of educating the masses against the tyranny of power and ignoran

5. Conclusions, implications and significance

This study concludes that Facebook plays a key role in social control and is marginally used to counterac values and parochial norms. Although, there is potentiality for Facebook to be used as a radical means of and has made a plethora of unconventional material available for consumption, often it is used tconventional values and to hail people to be subjects of the dominant culture – most of the Facebook use or unwittingly reinforce mainstream cultural values and norms. Those who oppose such values and norm condemned, criticized and even subjected to cyber harassment. Consequently, opportunities to pr common sense and transcend dogma in the Sri Lankan society in this manner are quite limited

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