*Article*

# Conceptualizing social media sub-platforms: The case of mourning and memorialization practices on Facebook

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## Abstract
This article offers a conceptual framework of Facebook's sub-platforms: Profiles, Groups, and Pages. We demonstrate the crucially different affordances that these sub-platforms possess, and the various resulting social practices and dynamics that they enable. With mourning and memorialization as a case study, our findings point at emergent practices ranging along a personal-to-public spectrum of communicative functions and media uses: Profiles offer a personal quality, albeit differently for the bereaved's Profile and the deceased's Profile; Groups possess a hybrid nature, combining self-expression alongside public aspects, reviving thus premodern bereaved communities; and Pages possess a distinctly public quality, serving as online memorialization centers where the deceased becomes an icon and a resource for mobilizing broad social change. This comparative and integrated approach may be applied productively to other contexts and other social media (sub-)platforms.

The relations between affordances and social practices are an essential feature of media, and a crucial detail in the larger picture of the social construction of technology (Latour and Woolgar, 1979; Oudshoorn and Pinch, 2003; Pinch and Bijker, 2012 [1984]). Siding

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with Hutchby (2001), in this article, we focus on the technological shaping of social practices. Writing about social network sites (SNSs), boyd (2011) describes a process that begins with structural affordances and architectural features and continues with the social dynamics they give rise to, and which in turn shape users' participatory practices. "Participants," boyd (2011) argues, "are implicitly and explicitly contending with these affordances and dynamics as a central part of their participation" (p. 55). At stake are specifically *participatory affordances*, which shape how users are invited, and indeed allowed, to partake in communication spheres, and the kinds of uses, social actions, and discourses that users may and do generate publicly (Noy, 2016).

Viewed through this interlinkage of affordances and uses, Facebook emerges as a complex multifunctional platform that includes *several communication channels* patently differing from each other in terms of their participatory affordances. Yet, most of the research treats Facebook as a single unitary entity. Notable exceptions include Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn (2011), who approach to Facebook as a toolkit, or a collection of tools, rather than as a single, one-dimensional medium. They enumerate six such tools: status updates, responses, Wall posts, private messages, chats, and groups. More recently, Sabra (2017) outlines four interfaces: People, Pages, Groups, and Events. In this article, we propose a distinction between *tools* that are embedded throughout the Facebook platform and serve as *features*, such as Wall posts (replaced by Timeline in 2011), responses (comments), and Events, and Facebook communication *channels*, which serve as *sub-platforms* rather than features. We define sub-platforms as distinct communication channels which, while operating under the roof of a single social media platform, possess crucially different affordances, and as a result allow different social dynamics. The same features may appear in different sub-platforms (one can post or comment in Profiles, Groups and Pages), yet the latter are exclusive (they cannot over-lap: a Facebook Page cannot be a Facebook Group, etc.). This distinction differs from the above-mentioned suggestions in that it avoids mixing features with sub-platforms (Wall posts and responses are features while Groups and Messenger are sub-platforms, and likewise, Events is a feature, while Pages or Groups are sub-platforms).

The sub-platforms on Facebook are Profiles, Groups, Pages, and Messenger. Briefly, *Profile* is a personal account that serves as the entry step to all Facebook activities; it allows its owner to connect with Facebook Friends (maximum 5000), join Facebook Groups, and follow or like Facebook Pages. In a Profile the user shares posts, photos and videos, stories and life events, serving as a representation of the (Facebook) self. *Groups* allow interaction of several users, ranging from dozens to thousands. Groups have admins, who can control the Group's privacy settings (public or private), invite and approve new members, and manage posts. Facebook Groups usually revolve around a variety of shared interests. *Pages* enable public figures, organizations, businesses, and the like, to establish public presence and connect with fans and audiences. Pages are visible to anyone on Facebook by default and have unlimited number of followers. Pages' admins control the contents of the page as they publish their own posts and/or share others' contributions. Followers, visitors, and other users are unable to post on Pages directly. Finally, *Messenger* offers a private communication channel, which usually serves between two individuals or entities (we presently avoid discussing Messenger due to accessibility and privacy/ethical considerations).

As mentioned, Facebook research typically does not account for these different affordances and dynamics, nor does it examine phenomena across Facebook sub-platforms. This limits its ability to reach a more complex, nuanced, and broader picture. In this article, we seek to fill this lacuna by adopting a *panoramic perspective*, which comparatively examines users' dynamics and practices across these three sub-platforms. We argue that the different sub-platforms serve different communicative functions and generate distinctive social arenas, along a personal-to-public spectrum. We take as our case study communication concerning mourning and memorialization on Facebook in Israel. We note that mourning is associated with personal loss and the emotional processes the bereaved individual undergoes, and memorialization concerns public remembrance, legacy, and collective memory. Our findings suggest that the different sub-platforms on Facebook afford different emergent practices: Profiles afford personal mourning logs (on the bereaved's Profile) and online mourning guestbooks (on the deceased Profile), Groups afford the revival of bereaved communities, and Pages afford the creation of online memorialization centers, where the deceased is publicized, becoming a collective icon.

## Media, mourning, and memorialization

The association between death and communication technologies is as ancient as it is essential, with death signifying transience and loss, and communication media and practices offering continuation and permanence. From stonework and sculpture, through writing, print, and photography, and up to the Internet and newer digital media, each technology has significantly improved human commemoration capacity and amplified the social presence of the dead. If stonework and sculpture first brought the dead into the public sphere via tombs and monuments, and modern mass media makes their presence felt in the living room, new media ventures further, offering new ways for storing the memory of the deceased, making it accessible anywhere and at any time (Walter, 2015; Walter et al., 2012).

This amplification of the social presence of the dead is significant because it runs against modernity's norms of death sequestration. In modernity, dying and the dead have been institutionally sequestered or removed to, and secluded in, special places such as cemeteries and hospices (Mellor and Shilling, 1993). Modern death and dying have been transformed from public and communal events to private and personal ones. Accordingly, coping has also become a private matter. And so, while premodern death produced *a bereaved community*, modern societies tend to produce *bereaved individuals* (Mellor and Shilling, 1993; Walter et al., 2012).

New media have challenged this sequestration of the dead, moving death and mourning out of modernity's protective shell. SNSs play prominently here and are key sites for public displays of mourning and memorialization (Giaxoglou and Döveling, 2018; Giaxoglou et al., 2017 Marwick and Ellison, 2012; Mori et al., 2012). "In these sites," Walter et al. (2012) contend, "pictures of the dead, conversations with the dead, and mourners' feelings can and do become part of the everyday online world" (p. 285). Recent studies inspired by the Continuing Bonds Theory offer that the continued communication with the dead through social media platforms enable sensemaking,

maintaining relationship, and forming new coping practices (Bouc et al., 2016; DeGroot, 2012; Kasket, 2012). In this vein, scholars argue that SNSs influence the social experience of death both online and offline (Brubaker et al., 2013), and that the use of these sites for mourning and memorialization purposes may change existing sociocultural norms (Carroll and Landry, 2010).

## Mourning and memorialization on Facebook

With over 2.8 billion active users per month, Facebook is currently the most popular social media platform (Chaffey, 2021). Yet alongside the platform's ongoing growth, over 10,000 Facebook users die every day (Hiscock, 2016). According to the forecasts, Facebook will become the largest cemetery in human history (Ambrosino, 2016), a digital graveyard that will contain endless archives, biographies and testimonies, obituaries and eulogies, traces of social bonds. As Moreman and Lewis (2014: 4) stress, "if there was any one anchor—a current center of gravity—to the discussion of mourning and memorialization, it was easily the social networking site Facebook."

Studies looking at the connection between Facebook and mourning and memorialization practices have already identified multiple practices and uses. These include posting death announcements and information about the memorial services (Carroll and Landry, 2010); visiting the deceased's Profile (Pennington, 2013); having unexpected "encounters" with the deceased through pop-up reminders or personal mourning posts (Brubaker et al., 2013; Rossetto et al., 2015); joining memorial Groups (DeGroot, 2014; Kasket, 2012); and following or creating memorial Pages (Kern and Gil-Egui, 2017; Marwick and Ellison, 2012). This multiplicity is surprising when considering that Facebook was not initially designed for engaging with death, all the more so as this variety of practices involves Facebook's three main sub-platforms—Profiles, Groups, and Pages. However, the distinctions between the different sub-platforms, and with them the consideration of their affordances, have not been made. In what follows, we look at the three sub-platforms, and describe the ways they affect social dynamics among the users and emergent practices. Typical of qualitative work in digital media studies (and beyond), our findings report on descriptive figures combined with theoretically driven qualitative analysis of posts' texts. Text examples are used to support the analysis and illustrate key findings.

## Method

Our research sample includes 40 cases of mourning and memorialization on Facebook, encompassing the three sub-platforms: 15 Profiles (9 Profiles of bereaved users and 6 Profiles of deceased), 10 Groups, and 15 Pages (Table 1). The sampling method consists of a direct search using Facebook's search bar for Hebrew keywords and phrases related to death, mourning, and memorialization (Kern and Gil-Egui, 2017; Marwick and Ellison, 2012). These include formal and formulaic expressions (such the Hebrew equivalents of RIP, OBM), alongside more informal and colloquial expressions ("You're gone," "We'll never forget you,") in order to avoid monotony and obtain diverse results in sociocultural terms. In relation to Profiles, Facebook policy is that dead users' Profiles

**Table 1.** Research sample.

| Facebook Sub-platform | Profiles | Groups | Pages |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of cases in the sample | 15 (9 of bereaved users and 6 of deceased) | 10 | 15 |

become memorialized accounts, which are then "frozen" or managed by a Legacy Contact (if the user had appointed one beforehand). These accounts have different affordances such as the lack of birthday notifications and the unavailability to add new friends. However, the deceased Profiles selected for our sample were not memorialized (not frozen) by Facebook. The bereaved Profiles are active and display causal/everyday content alongside mourning posts.

For this comparative intra-platform study, we refined the search technique by using the Facebook "filter" that allows to classify the results according to a list of categories (Posts, People, Photos, Videos, Marketplace, Pages, Groups, Events, Apps, Links). We chose the categories "People," "Posts," "Groups," and "Pages," according to the sub-platforms we examined. Data mining on Facebook is notoriously challenging, and one of the obstacles we encountered was that Facebook does not display the number of results found in the search. We thus had to count the cases manually, paper and pencil in hand (the phrase "remembering . . ." [*zochrim et*, in Hebrew], for example, turned up the following results: about 60 Pages, about 80 Groups, and only 8 Profiles). Another challenge was the lack of clear criteria according to which Facebook displays the search results (probably unknown algorithms adjusted to the author's social network). In order to avoid or "counter" possible biases, we conducted random sampling within the results displayed for each filter.

Out of hundreds of results, we randomly sampled 65 cases (countering possible sampling biases by Facebook), of which 40 were selected for analysis by using "intensity sampling." Intensity sampling focuses on the relevance that specific cases possess for the study, the wealth of information they contain, their degree of suitability, and their expected contribution (Suri, 2011; cf. Skjerdal and Gebru's, 2020, similar use of purposeful sampling of Facebook Pages). An additional factor we added was heterogeneity, because we sought to collect diverse cases in terms of the cause of death, the age of the deceased, their gender, and so on. For example, our initial search for Pages resulted mostly with memorial Pages for male soldiers in their twenties. Although we retained a number of cases of soldiers in the study, the representation of different groups in the sample disproportionately favors diversity.

The causes of death in our sample are truly diverse, including road accidents, natural disasters, murder, suicide, medical issues, military service, old age, and more. In seven cases (17.5%), the cause of death is not mentioned. The sample contains 23 men and 20 women (three cases refer to the death of more than one person, for example, female and male spouses), ranging in age between 14 and 86 (with an average of 36). All of the deceased were Israeli and accordingly, the texts are predominantly in Hebrew (additional languages included Arabic, Russian, and English). All the quotes in the article were translated by the authors.

In the course of about a year (June 2018 to April 2019), we observed thousands of texts taken from all 40 cases (Profiles, Groups, and Pages), new as well as old. The method of analysis we implemented was qualitative thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which seeks to identify patterns and define common and relevant categories, the connections between them, and the construction of conceptual frameworks. We applied a twofold complementary approach, combining data-driven ("bottom-up") and theory-driven ("top-down") facets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As per the first facet, during the aforementioned year, we observed the texts as they were posted, recorded them in paper notebooks, screenshots, and Facebook's Collection feature. Throughout this phase, repeated words, themes, and expressions were recognized and demarcated using high-lighters. In the next phase, themes were reviewed and refined until we arrived at stable, well-defined, and relevant themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 20).

As per the theory-driven analysis, we searched for themes and discursive structures, which we deduced from the concepts of Jacobson and Goffman. In order to identify com-munication functions and participatory dynamics we used Jakobson's (1988 [1960]) communicative act model, and Goffman's (1981) notion of "participation framework." Roman Jakobson's model identifies six cardinal functions of verbal communication (ref-erential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic) among other dimensions that characterize specific communication events. We find Jakobson's "exhaustive" typology (inspiring theoretical innovation in the field, see Helles, 2016), helpful in discerning between different communicative functions and uses. Erving Goffman's notion of par-ticipation framework offers a view of communication-as-participation, highlighting structures and roles in communication events. According to Gerhardt and Frobenius (2014), Goffman's work is the "most influential deconstruction of the speaker and hearer dichotomy to date." The new participatory designs and affordances that social media make available, fueled a reinterest in Goffman's focus on participation frameworks and roles, directed at types of involvements in interaction between users (Dynel, 2017; Thornborrow, 2015). Jakobson's and Goffman's theories are productive in rethinking different forms of particpation and related social practices across Facebook's sub-platforms.

On a mezzo level bridging theory and method, we examine users' posts using Bakhtin's (1986) notion of addressivity. For Bakhtin, addressivity is part of a dialogical view of language and communication, where communication is always and essentially addressed to someone. Addressivity highlights who is communicating with whom, cap-turing the communicative context and participants' "ways of evoking their readers and suggesting particular modes of reception and engagement" (Barber, 2009: 32). The con-cept is employed widely in studies of media and communication that examine participa-tion and interaction, mostly when the interactions are mediated and participants need to explicitly signal who they are communicating with (Norwood and Baxter, 2011; Noy, 2009; Nozawa, 2016; Rosamond, 2018). Studies of Facebook RIP Pages use addressiv-ity, too, noting it plays a central part in their analysis (Kern et al., 2013; Klastrup, 2015). We find as well that addressivity is key, illuminating the posts' different communicative functions in the three sub-platforms.

Over all, we cataloged and analyzed approximately 30 representative posts for each theme, from which the examples below are taken.[1]

## Findings and discussion

### Participants and forms of participation

We begin with the number of participants. These we needed to assess differently in the three sub-platforms, because of the differences in their structural affordances that shape how participation can be performed and measured. On Profiles, we measured participatory actions, including likes, comments, and shares, as performed in relation to the mourning posts we sampled.[2] Findings show that the number of participants on Profiles range between several dozen (20–70) and about 200. On Groups, we assessed the number of participants based on the number of members, because Group membership requires users to perform the participatory act of requesting to join the group (Facebook's "+Join Group" button). Here the average number is 728, ranging between 49 and 3984 with a median of 268. These figures are high when compared to Profiles, but are significantly low when compared to figures on Pages, which we assessed by the number of followers (Facebook's "people follow this" indicator)—approximately 14,500 on average (3415 minimum—38,920 maximum) with a median of 7564.

These significant quantitative differences point at different qualitative forms of participation, which accord with Facebook's designations of participants across the three sub-platforms: users on Profiles are labeled Friends, on Groups they are labeled Members, and on Pages—Followers. Indeed, social dynamics between the users, levels of familiarity and intimacy, levels of involvement and commitment, and their participatory roles and actions differ between the sub-platforms. To stress, *all those elements that comprise and define participation change systematically across Facebook sub-platforms.*

We examine these differences analytically using Bakhtin's (1986, above) notion of addressivity. In what follows, our depiction moves from who is addressed to who is addressing, discerning, and briefly discussing five addressivity structures that are laid out according to their different addressees.

### Who are the addressees?

*The deceased.* Addressing the deceased directly and explicitly comprises the most widespread addressivity structure in the posts we examined (concurring with previous studies; see Dobler, 2009; Kasket, 2012). This appears on all three sub-platforms, yet it is prominent on Profiles, where mourning posts are *consistently and almost exclusively addressed to the deceased.* Consider a few short examples, followed by a more elaborate example: "Mom . . . I want to tell you how much I miss you, how much I miss your hug [. . .], how much I miss saying the word M-o-m," and "I just can't believe you're not here anymore [. . .] rest in peace. I love you Daddy."

Example 1

[N.R.N. January 2014]

Mom, it's 22:50 [and] I'm sitting and thinking of you [. . .] I'm sitting with tears in my eyes, because I know that this will never happen, I miss you. [. . .] Mom, with every passing day I realize that you're the greatest figure for me to admire. [. . .] You don't leave my thoughts even for a second, it pains me more with every passing day [. . .] I feel lonely. If you are anywhere and you know what I feel now, help me Mom. I love you from the depths of my heart and soul . . .

These emotive posts address the deceased explicitly, establishing an addressivity structure that dramatizes the text and conveys a sense of closeness (a "present-ness") with the deceased. This addressivity structure also constitutes the audiences as overhearers and witnesses to a close, at times intimate, emotional communication.

*Open addressivity.*  The second addressivity category refers to posts that are *not* addressed to an identifiable addressee, or that their addressee is not explicitly stated; rather, they possess "open addressivity" (Noy, 2015). This genre of writing is reminiscent of the genre of a diary, exhibiting a dominant personal tone, often describing short mourning experiences and stories.

Example 2

[N.R.N. April 2014]

At times crying is liberating, at times it hugs and caresses. Sometimes it simply means I hurt too much to bear [. . .] I only wish the most banal wish—I want my Mom.

Example 3

[O.H. April 2015]

So I walked up to the grave, and I stroked it. I told him I hope he's feeling well up there [. . .] and I asked him to take care of Mom for me, and of my brothers [. . .] and time? It isn't making things any easier, and it isn't healing. It just emphasizes the absence.

Such posts are most characteristic of Profiles, which is a sub-platform that focuses on self-expression, eliciting "an explicit act of writing oneself into being in a digital environment" (boyd, 2011: 43). While the first text is an introspection that reports on the user's mourning experience and feelings, and the second text is a micro-narrative that depicts actions (visiting the grave and talking), both texts do not specify an explicit addressee.

*Acquaintances.*  This addressivity structure entails directly addressing a group of people who are not otherwise or were not beforehand institutionally organized. It appears only in Groups, where mourners—that is, people who know or knew the deceased—are sought and addressed. This kind of addressivity is often employed when pursuing practical matters, usually memorialization initiatives and offline gatherings: "Hi guys . . . the day is coming up, should we set Friday as the date of the memorial service? Or some other day? I can make it on Jan 11 or after Jan 20. What do you say?" Here the address

term "guys" serves in establishing the social group or affiliation, as precisely that, that is, a cohesive group whose members' affiliation has not been hitherto named. Such terms discursively transform individual users who are members of a Facebook group, into a social entity. Another way of addressing acquaintances in Groups is the "poll"—a clear participatory affordance that enables to post a question with several possible answers, and which allows Group members to vote in favor of their preferred option. In the context of memorialization gatherings, polls serve to involve users in planning and scheduling events. In this way, members are afforded an opportunity to participate actively, while Groups develop social dynamics of a team or a community.

*The general public.*  This addressivity structure is employed where posts are directed at as many people as possible, or in other words at the general public. We found it almost exclusively on Pages, where posts often involve invitations, requests and instructions to participate in social actions of various types. These include offline actions that demand users' physical presence at memorial events ("It's important that there to be a large crowd, so the event feels respectable"), online participatory acts ("Let's show the entire internet that Shelly Dadon's death has not been forgotten!! [. . .] Let's flood Facebook with this picture! [. . .] Everybody share the pic!!!!"), and participatory acts of a cognitive or emotional nature ("Never forget—Yosef is a victim of police violence," or "Your [pl.] love and warm embrace give us the strength to go on"). Such requests both accord with and enhance the participatory role of users on Pages as "followers." Combined with Pages' publicity and large audienceship, the address to the general public aims at propelling large-scale social impact.

*Authorities and public figures.*  Finally, we found this addressivity structure on Pages where institutional authorities and people in positions of power are addressed. Such appeals usually take the form of protests against injustice that is related to the death story, calling on authorities to be accountable and to amend their wrongdoing. This addressivity accords well with the affordances of Pages, which, as previously acknowledged, is a public sub-platform that enjoys a high number of followers and a potentially large reach. Interestingly, in many cases we found that memorializing the deceased on Pages becomes a resource for catalyzing processes of social change, whether aimed at reducing police violence, amending the low status of the Druze minority in Israel, or implementing a more aggressive State treatment of terrorists, as shown below. Example 4 is taken from the memorial Page of Zidan Saif, a Druze policeman who died in the line of duty, and Example 5 from the memorial Page of Yosef Salamsa, a young Israeli of Ethiopian descent who fell victim to racist police violence.

Example 4

[In memory of Zidan Saif, July 2017]

Who needs further proof that the members of the Druze community are very loyal to the State of Israel and are proud to risk their lives and physically protect the citizens of the State of Israel? Respected Leaders of the State of Israel, it is time to increase funding for local councils, [and] to promote education.

Example 5

[In Memory of Yosef Salamsa OBM, October 2018]

#CorruptPolice Hope someday it will all blow up in your faces!!!

Both posts illustrate instances where laypeople address governmental agencies ("#CorruptPolice . . . your faces") and figures ("Respected Leaders") directly and explicitly. These messages take the shape of pleas, requests, and demands (Example 4), or alternatively of straightforward criticism (Example 5).

## Who are the addressors?

To complete the analysis of addressivity in the sub-platforms, we turn from addressees to addressors. On Profiles, looking at addressors reveals an interesting distinction between *the deceased's and the bereaved's Profiles*. In both cases, the tone is personal, and mourning posts typically address the deceased or possess an open addressivity sturcture. Yet while on the deceased's Profile these posts are composed by multiple addressors, on the bereaved's Profile they are written by a sole addressor. The addressors on the deceased's Profile are friends and acquaintances from different life contexts, who visit her or his Profile on dates of special significance, or alternatively do so spontaneously, when they remember or miss the deceased. On the bereaved's Profile, however, the sole addressor is the Profile owner, that is, the bereaved her/himself. The mourning posts in this case present the bereavement chronology (Facebook's "Timeline"), from his or her own personal perspective.

Profiles thus afford and possibly invite the emergence of new mourning practices. First, the deceased's Profile becomes a visiting site or more precisely *an online mourning guestbook*, where each visitor leaves her or his mark on the virtual wall, amounting to a rich collection of mourning posts that add up to a new and unique variation of an e-guestbook. Facebook encourages this practice by adding this label to the deceased Profile: "We hope people who love [name of deceased] will find comfort in visiting his/her profile to remember and celebrate his/her life." We can see the interlinkage between Facebook affordances and design, on one hand, and the emergent practices of its users, on the other hand. Second, the bereaved's Profile is used as *a personal mourning log*, which displays a sequence of the user's mourning experiences, feelings and thoughts over a course of time. Here, as well, Facebook encourages the practice by embedding the question, "What's on your mind?" on the top of the Home page, exactly where users' posts need to be composed.

On Groups, we find multiple addressors, who are the group members. Facebook Groups have Team Members (admins and moderators), who appear publicly in the Group's About section. Yet, the structural affordances of Groups allow all members to post directly without admin's approval or intervention, resulting in a spontaneous, multiparty, and multivocal communication.

On Pages, all the posts appear under the Page title, that is, they have been posted or approved by the Page moderator(s). The Page moderators sometimes appear in the Page's

About section (linking to their personal Profiles accounts); in other times, only partial information is supplied, either in the About text or elsewhere on the Page ("My name is Hodaya [the Page admin] and I created this Page following the death of David-El Mizrahi, OBM"); in yet other cases, Page moderators are completely anonymous and no information about them is available. This latter finding concurs with Marwick and Ellison's (2012) findings, who report that in the memorial Pages they studied, the identity of the moderators was often veiled. In fact, the moderatos were often strangers to the deceased and had "unclear" motivations (p. 388) for creating and running these memorial Pages.

Known or anonymous, Page moderators play a dominant role as the *central, if not exclusive, addressors* responsible for posting messages on Facebook memorial Pages to an average of 14,500 followers. The moderators do not generate all the contents published on the Page, and often contents are received from various contributors. These must send their contributions to the moderator, who reposts and promotes them as she or he sees fit. Contributions are usually posted along with a note that presents their sender (name or tag), thanking her or him for their participation. For example, "Israel Primo. Sculpture artist [. . .] surprised us with this post, about the sculpture installed today in Nes Tsiona. [. . .] Thank you, a thousand thanks to this magical man [heart emoji]," or "Hello everyone, I'd like to share the following post by [full name, Facebook tagged] A dear woman, a moving and meaningful exhibition which she produced [. . .] moving to tears! [crying emoji] Many thanks to [full names] from Tel Aviv Museum of Art for their support in the protest that is so important to us all."

The Memorial Page moderator functions not only as the addressor of his or her personal messages, but also as a *curatorial authority* that assembles, sorts, organizes, and posts contents from multiple participants. Kaun and Stiernstedt (2014), who examine a Facebook commemorative Page, likewise observe that moderators sort (and partially edit) the materials they receive, in effect serving as gatekeepers for "objects of remembrance" displayed on the Page (p. 1163). Moreover, these moderators also establish the followers of the Page as a new social group that possess a sense of "us-ness." Moderators do so routinely and repeatedly by reiterating indexical terms such as first-person plural pronouns ("we" and "us," as in the examples above). In sum, the addressor affordances and the actual addressivity categories found in the different Facebook sub-platforms reveal users' forms of participation and related social dynamics.

## Emergent practices

The significant differences in the addressivity structures and participation frameworks shed light on users' emergent practices, which the Facebook sub-platforms afford. In what follows, we describe and conceptualize users' practices across the three sub-platforms. On Profiles, as indicated earlier, the emergent practices involve the publication of mourning posts. These posts may best be characterized as serving an emotive (expressive) communication function (Jakobson, 1988 [1960]), conveying the addressor's feelings and emotions. Consider Example 1 (above), where the addressor communicates her grief experience and emotions by using first-person pronouns together with an emotional register ("I feel lonely [. . .] I love you from the depths of my heart and soul").

These mourning posts are visibly stylized. Bereaved users endow their posts with a poetic quality using repetition, rhyme, short lines, multiple metaphors, and frequent quotations of literary and biblical sources (which also establish intertextuality). These, and other devices, serve as users' basic "poetic toolkit." Consider a typical example—a poem post written by a bereaved mother.

Example 6

[S.E. November 2018]

I gave birth to you

you were born.

When you died

I died.

You gave birth to me

I was born.

The poetic function (Jakobson et al., 1990) serves to stress these posts' personal, authentic, and emotional nature. Mourning posts on Profiles point at the emergent practices as follows: on the bereaved's Profile they are laid out chronologically and amount to a *personal mourning log*; while the deceased's Profile becomes a site of visitation and an *online mourning guestbook.* In both cases, however, users' communication accords with the type of self-expression that Facebook Profiles sub-platform encourages and elicits.[3] Viewed through the lends of the Continuing Bonds Theory, we suggest viewing these posts as serving also the phatic communicative function (over and above the emotive and poetic functions)—a way of maintaining the communication and the relationship with the deceased.

On Groups, our findings point at three central practices: emotive communication and emotional sharing, collecting personal memorabilia and memories, and producing small-scale memorial events and offline gatherings. Akin to Profiles, Groups present an emotive-expressive type of communication through sharing emotions and experiences related to bereavement (a dream about the deceased, an unplanned visit to her grave, a conversation about her). These elicit sympathetic and supportive comments, which generate discourse of social solidarity and intimacy among the Group members. While all (or most) of the members knew the deceased, they do not necessarily know each other, and would not have been able to do so but for the memorial Group itself. Through the memorial Groups, members get to know and be acquainted with each other, gradually sustaining a sense of community. From the historic perspective of Walter et al. (2012), Facebook memorial Groups *afford the revival of bereaved communities*, such as those that were commonplace in premodern societies, where now co-presence replaces co-residence.

Memorial Groups also serve as a (sub-)platform for searching, collecting, documenting, uploading, and sharing personal memorabilia and souvenirs (letters, pictures, and more), as well as encouraging the articulation of meaningful personal memories. These practices are often cued by the admins in these Groups' About section, where conative communication (where addressees are called to act; Jakobson, 1988 [1960]) is employed in order to guide members how to act ("You're invited to upload memories, pictures, texts, emotions, reflections, and anything on your heart"). These illustrate the social nature that mnemonic functions of media have acquired in the digital sphere (Kaun and Stiernstedt, 2014).

Finally, Memorial Groups practices extend beyond online spheres by producing small-scale offline gatherings and memorial events (a short hiking trip or a birthday event in honor of the deceased). These small gatherings possess a close and friendly quality, as evinced in the number of participants and the location of the events, that is, 10 friends of the deceased come together in one's living room to share a homemade birthday cake and blow out candles in her memory. The highly close and communal nature of these events is powerful in that it affects their scheduling, contents, and structure ("Whoever wants to will be able to address the participants. According to the number of people that will show up and their wishes, we'll decide whether to conduct some kind of workshop after the ceremony"). Organizing and orchestrating these activities involve conative communication (instructions, requests, etc.), which, despite the existence of admins, often originates with Group members. It is noteworthy that mourning practices are culturally grounded, and that Jewish mourning possesses distinct communal characteristics (Malkinson et al., 1993; Birnhack and Morse, 2018), which affect the social dynamics of the practices we observed.

On Pages, the emergent practices entail the creation, promotion, and documentation of offline memorialization actions in the shape of talks at schools and youth movements, sporting events, inaugurations of Torah scrolls in synagogues, and so on. These give the impression of a larger social movement, an organization, or a nonprofit group. Indeed, in half of the cases we studied ($N = 15$), a nonprofit was established in memory of the deceased; and in other cases, the users themselves mistakenly believed that such an organization exists. On one occasion, the admin of the Page In Memory of Yosef Salamsa OBM reported a telephone call she received, in which the caller explained that "I understand you're some kind of organization or nonprofit leading the protest, right?" To this, the admin replied, "there's no organization or nonprofit involved here whatsoever, it's just me and my brothers leading the protest by ourselves."

This last example reveals another salient aspect of the emerging practices on Pages, namely, that at stake is a social struggle or a protest. Indeed, it is through Salamsa memorial Page that his story became a national icon of and for the protest against police brutality directed at Israelis of Ethiopian descent. This Page serves as a vehicle for locating and presenting multiple stories of other victims of police brutality (the admin addresses the public: "I'm calling on you, anyone who has ever encountered violence from a policeman [. . .] please leave your contact details in a private message and we'll contact you as soon as possible"), publishing protest events, and bringing the issue to public awareness. The words "struggle," "justice," and "power" are keywords in 70% of the Pages we examined. The causes vary, ranging from struggles against bullying and

road accidents, to struggles for the rights of the Druze minority in Israel. However, as the examples show, memorial Pages function *not only in a memorialization capacity in relation to the deceased, but also as sites of digital activism and mobilization of social movements*. Social activism in these Pages, which are titled "in memory of," is intertwined with and builds on the personal memory of the deceased individual.

Even when the Pages do not voice an explicitly political or social struggle, the abundant memorialization activity invariably establishes the deceased as a *public figure*. Approximately half of the Pages include descriptions of the deceased as "an Israeli hero," "the country's little angel," and collectivizing slogans such as "Shelley's blood is my blood," "We are all Yosef Salamsa," or "We are all the Henkin family"—which function as declarative communication. These findings confirm previous views of the role of memorial Pages in raising public awareness (Marwick and Ellison, 2012), which is centrally accomplished through the use of declarative and conative communication functions.

To conclude, the death stories which the memorial Pages mediate, are framed as bearing significance and relevance not only to the relatives of the deceased but also to society at large. Memorial Pages come to serve as *online memorialization centers*, where the deceased becomes an icon, used as a collective resource to mobilize larger crowds to generate a broad social change. In this way, memorial Pages join and add on to a series of historical technologies that amplified the social presence of the deceased (Walter, 2015; Walter et al., 2012). Yet memorial Pages add a layer in that they not only extend the public presence of the deceased (as do Profiles and Groups) but also actively *publicize* him or her as carrying wider social significance and consequence. This is accomplished through the sub-platform's affordances which include public visibility, large-scale followers and audiences, and the "full control" of the admins over the content and the structure of the Page (Kaun and Stiernstedt, 2014: 1163). The large-scale followers and audiences—which we addressed earlier as figures concerning the number of participants—generates a "quantifiable metric," which attests to the impact and importance of the deceased and her popularity (Marwick and Ellison, 2012: 386). This corresponds with Phillips's (2011) notion of "RIP fan pages," where being a fan affirms our earlier argument regarding different forms of participation (followers, members, friends) as afforded and performed in the different Facebook sub-platforms.

## Conclusion

This article offers a panoramic study of Facebook's three main sub-platforms—Profiles, Groups, and Pages—their affordances, uses, and the social dynamics they afford. By taking mourning and memorialization as a case study, we combined different intersecting aspects, including a quantitative aspect concerning the number of participants, a discursive aspect concerning addressivity, and an examination of the emergent practices and uses for which the sub-platforms are employed. Table 2 summarizes these different aspects, leading to the bottom row where we conceptualize the emergent practices.

The Profiles column in Table 2 shows that Profiles afford the emergence of two practices. First, the bereaved's Profile turns with time into a *personal mourning log*, capturing and displaying a sequence of the bereaved user's mourning experiences,

**Table 2.** Conceptual framework: Facebook sub-platforms, affordances, and uses.

|  | Profiles | | Groups | Pages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participatory role (in Facebook's terms) | Friends | | Members | Followers |
| Allowed no. of participants | Max. 5000 | | Unlimited, although after a Group reaches 5000 members, some functions become unavailable. | Unlimited |
| Avg. number of participants | 20–200 | | 742 | 14,499 |
| Addressivity structures and dominant communicative function | Addressing the deceased Open Addressivity Emotive and expressive functions | | Addressing the deceased Acquaintances Mixed functions | Addressing the deceased Authorities + Public Figures The General Public Conative function |
| The addressor(s) | Bereaved's Profile: Profile owner, that is, the bereaved | Deceased's Profile: Friends and acquaintances of the deceased | All group members | Page's Title multiple contributors but dominant moderator(s) |
| *The emergent practice* | *Personal Mourning Log* | *Online Mourning Guestbook* | *Bereaved Community* | *Online Memorialization Center* |

feelings and thoughts. Second, the deceased's Profile functions as a site of e-visitation and becomes an *online mourning guestbook*. The deceased's friends and acquaintances from different life contexts leave their marks on the virtual wall, amounting to a rich collection of mourning posts. In these two practices, the posts are directed/addressed either to the deceased or possess an open addressivity structure (Noy, 2015). The dominant communicative functions in this sub-platform are emotive and expressive (Jakobson, 1988 [1960]). Most posts are stylized (poetic function) so as to convey a personal, authentic, and emotional tone. These two online mourning practices resonate an array of offline practices, which range from poems, personal diaries, and letters to the deceased, through visiting the deceased grave and communicating with her or him directly, to eulogies.

The Groups column shows that Groups afford the revival of *bereaved communities*, which were common in premodern eras (Walter et al., 2012), where now co-presence replaces co-residence. The addressivity structure here usually entails either groups of acquaintances or the deceased. Despite having a Group admin, this sub-platform's technological affordances enable members to post directly, leading to a more spontaneous,

democratic, and polyphonic communication that indexes a sense of involvement and sprouting communal ties. The three main practices of memorial Groups include emotive communication and emotional sharing, collecting and curating personal memorabilia, and producing offline gatherings and small-scale memorial events.

Finally, the Pages column shows that Pages afford the creation of *online memorialization centers*. In these centers, posts mainly address the general public, authorities, and public figures in position of power, or the deceased. In line with their affordances, all the posts are published under the Page's title, so the moderators serve as a crucial curatorial authority (Kaun and Stiernstedt, 2014) who is responsible for assembling, sorting, approving, and reposting messages from multiple participants/contributors. The Page moderator wields "ultimate power" (Marwick and Ellison, 2012: 396) over the content of the Page. Practices and uses of memorial Pages mostly involve generation, promotion, and documentation of large-scale initiatives, both online and offline. These initiatives serve to establish the public presence of the deceased, which is enabled and enhanced by the affordances of this sub-platform, resulting in large audienceship and publicity. Here, again, resonances with offline practices come to mind, as online memorial Pages correspond with a variety of offline monuments. Moreover, in some cases Facebook memorial Pages go beyond extending the public presence of the deceased, and enable to constitute her or him as a public figure, thus resulting in *publicizing the deceased*. In these cases, the deceased often serves as an icon—a collective resource to mobilize broad social changes, which entails a posthumous transformation from anonymity to celebrity. In terms offline resonances, these online memorialization practices resemble museums and similar institutional sites of memory and commemoration.

These new and emergent practices confirm and enhance recent social trends such as the enfranchisement of grief (from personal/private to public spheres), continuing bonds with the deceased, and the expansion and amplification of the public presence of the dead (Walter, 2015; Walter et al., 2012). From a panoramic perspective, we can see the spectrum ranging from Profiles to Pages, or from the personal to the public, as additionally ranging from a more personal sphere of mourning to a larger and more institutional sphere of memorialization.

The study offers a nuanced approach to Facebook's sub-platforms as carrying different communication functions along a personal-to-public spectrum: Profiles offer a personal emphasis or quality, captured in an expressive and emotive communicative functions; Pages possess a distinctly public quality, captured in a conative communicative function; and in-between Groups, which possess a hybrid nature, combining self-expression and emotional sharing alongside more public aspects (organizing offline events and mobilizing social change) through conative communication. The point is that as a multifunctional platform, Facebook affords and synergistically brings together a variety of communicative functions, and generates distinctive social arenas. All this, under a single digital roof.

The attention to and the deeper understanding of Facebook's different sub-platforms, their affordances, designs and uses, and how they affect user's practices and dynamics, may be beneficial to a wide array of research on Facebook. This can address methodological perspectives or various themes and contexts on Facebook. Future research may also adopt the panoramic and comparative approach we offer to point at other contexts

beyond mourning and memorialization, and at other sub-platforms on different social media, to reveal how they afford and display various practices and uses.

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## Notes

1. In order to keep the authors of the posts anonymized, we employed "different layers of anonymity" (Proctor, 2018: 491): we referenced initials only, and when we supply direct quotes, a common practice in qualitative research, they are short, partial, and have all been translated (without supplying transliteration). The posts we quote were all set by the users themselves— all of whom have been active on Facebook for some time—to "public" privacy settings (cf. Proctor, 2018: footnote no. 9, pp. 491–492).
2. We could have counted the number of users in the Friends Lists, but the number of users who chose to interact with the sample posts seems a more accurate and reliable indication (Friends Lists change over time).
3. This is notable in relation to Profiles specifically, for a number of reasons: the multiple privacy settings with which the Profiles sub-platform provides the user, the limited number of friends which suggests that the Profile owner know his or her audience in person, and the fact that Profiles' owners are individual users (unlike Groups or Pages).

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