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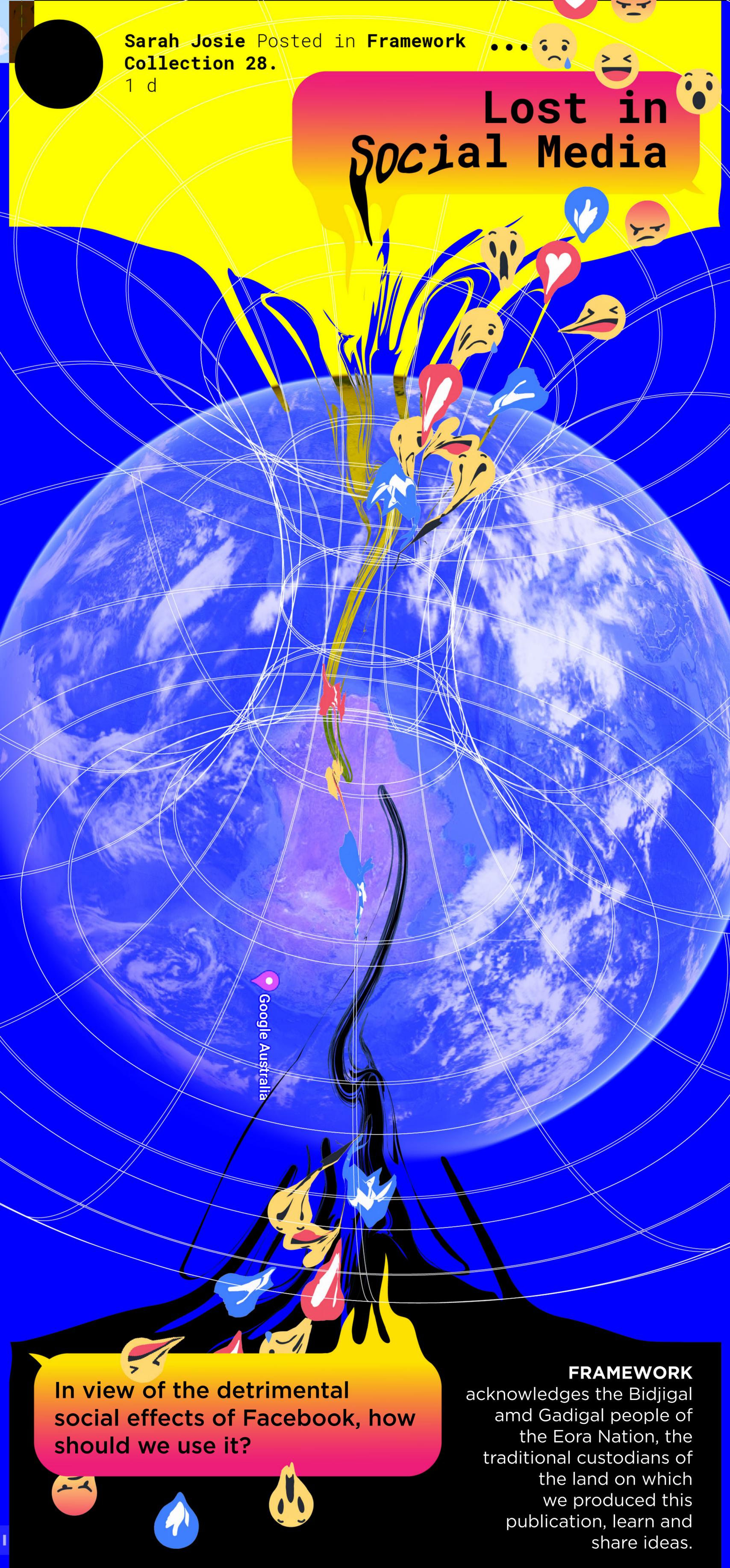
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Lost in Social Media



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In view of the detrimental social effects of Facebook, how should we use it?

FRAMEWORK acknowledges the Bidjigal and Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we produced this publication, learn and share ideas.

MAY 7, 2020, 6:00 PM

Recent years have seen the issue of a lack of user privacy on social media platforms raised. In particular Facebook, since 2018 has faced damage control. Besides the issues of privacy, Facebook now faces damage control after the Cambridge Analytica Scandal in 2018. While some people have flocked to some other social media platforms to replace Facebook I want to ask the question...why replace Facebook?

In an NBC news article they did a survey called a Ponemon survey. They found that Nine percent of those surveyed by Ponemon had already stopped using Facebook. Another 31 percent said they were very likely to stop using or to use it less In this survey they said 66 percent of people were losing confidence in the Facebook company The reason being is that social media users care deeply about privacy and some would even vote to leave the site.

At first I changed my settings on Facebook so that I saw fewer posts by people ranting about their lives and more art news to better my artistic practice. I'd forgotten about the social aspect of the site. I soon discovered that seeing fewer posts inspired me to start more conversations with friends in messenger. I found myself needing to ask questions like 'How are you?' and 'What have you been up to lately?' I found more of a need to socialise this way after seeing a statistic on the Project suggesting that people are less sociable these days and no one drops by a friend's house anymore. People generally have fewer friends, they said.



When I scrolled down my news feed I found that some people were posting about ways to love yourself. I found their unsolicited advice invasive. Then I noticed a lot of people had a formula in what they posted; most people about topics like politics, art, animals, murder cases, others posted milder statuses about themselves.



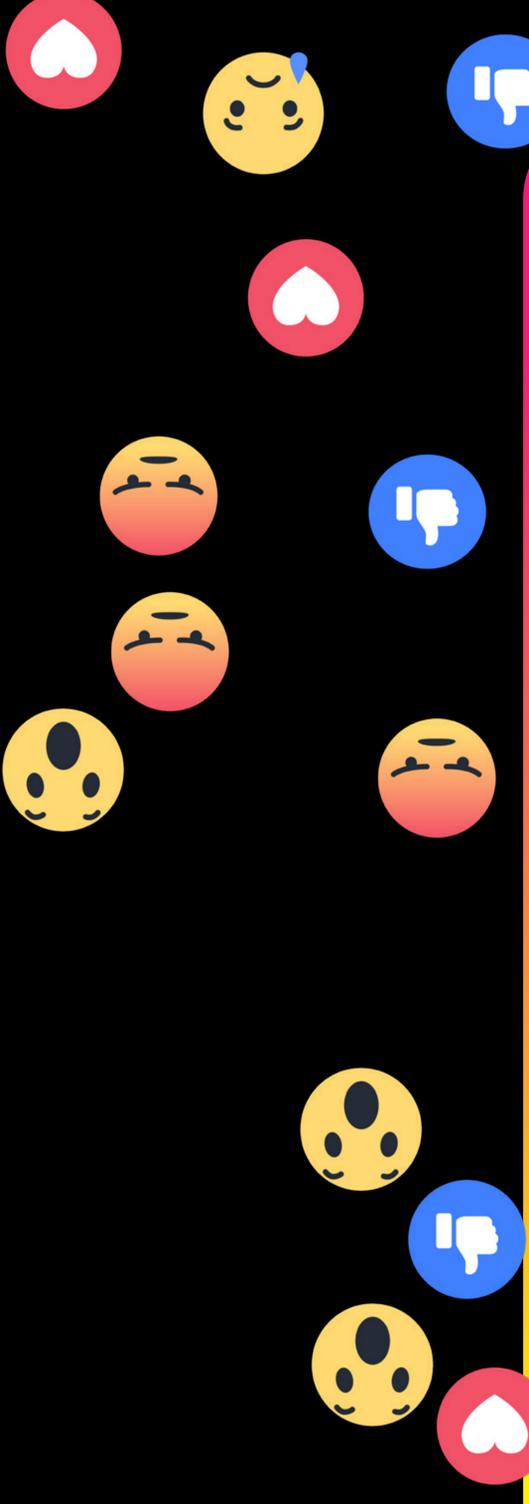
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Having a formula to follow with posts starts to paint a picture that you only want to talk about certain subjects and this antisocial behaviour of not adapting to others and their interests can start to bleed into your day to day life.



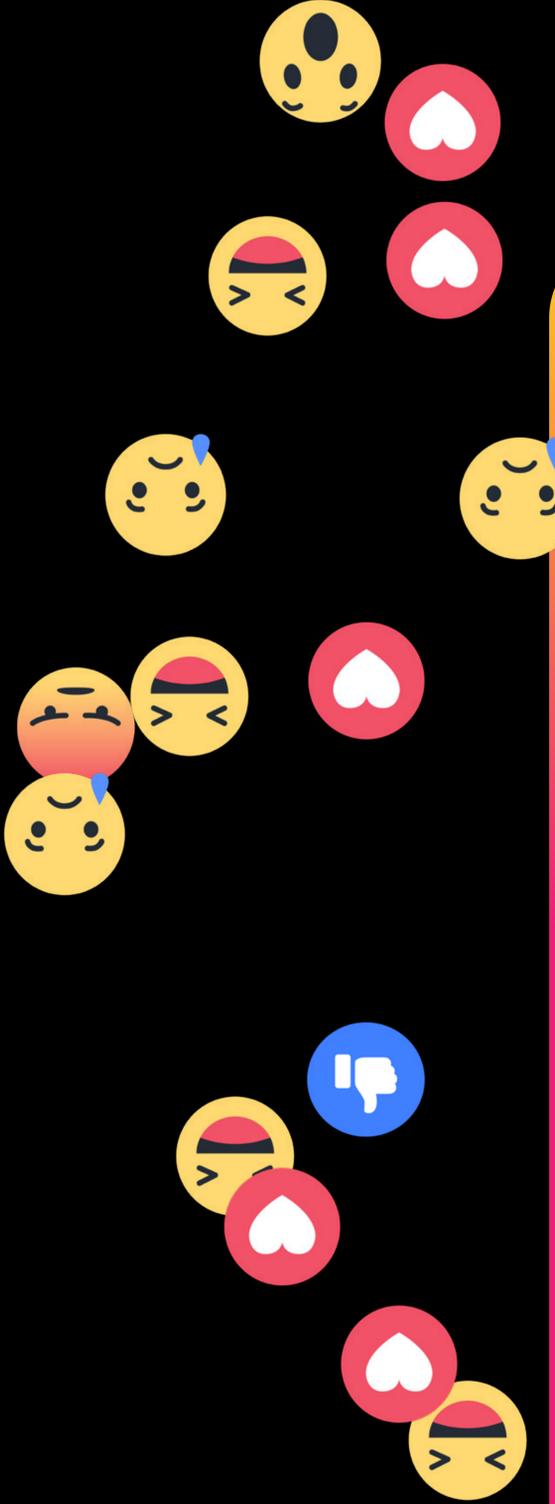
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I eventually got to a point where I couldn't have a Facebook profile anymore as there were people who would not respect my boundaries by spying on my profile despite my lack of desire to have contact with these people. I only kept my messenger account so I could keep in touch with friends. I kept 2 Instagram accounts for business reasons but I wouldn't post about my personal life. I decided to keep a very low internet profile and increase my face to face communication with people.



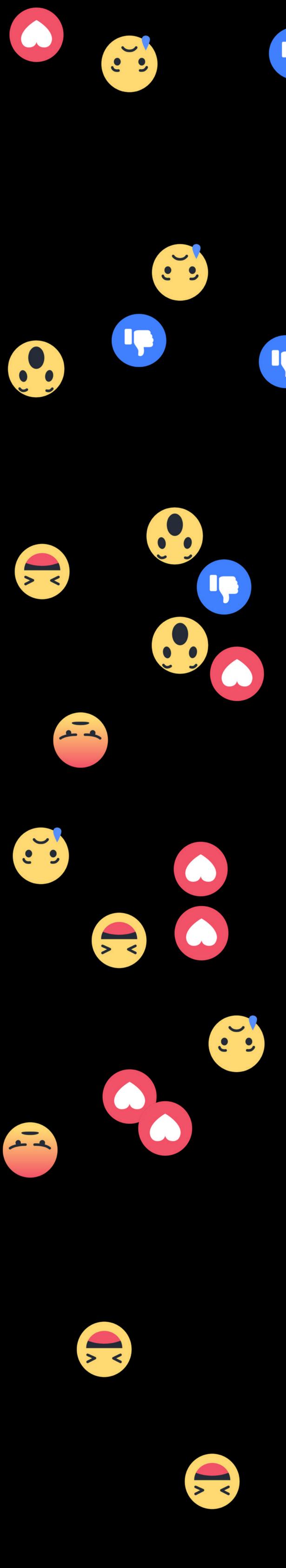
But no matter how much you try to avoid Facebook there are still so many people who heavily rely on it and this makes it hard to avoid. You might ask for help about certain things and there are still lots of people who only have Facebook solutions. I did briefly open my Facebook to keep in touch with a business opportunity but as soon as I did that I felt extremely uncomfortable with it. Once I'd been on there for a month and kept the new job I deleted my profile again. Nowadays a lot of people live their lives on Facebook and you end up being asked "Did you see when I posted this on Facebook?" This can be isolating and at times I feel left out a bit. Yet I still don't regret my decision deleting my Facebook profile.

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To me Facebook is like alcohol. It was fun once but I don't miss the hangovers. I don't miss the power play, the emboldening of bullies by anonymity; the lack of accountability and responsibility on the part of users and Facebook itself. Facebook is a very popular place in cyberspace for arguments to take place. People can attack you for having any kind of opinion at all in a way they might not do publicly. The protection of a computer screen has created keyboard warriors. Social media is lacking in the social interaction we need and when we live out our social lives on social media we become lonely, isolated and feel even more awkward in real life.





Another dilemma we face when using Facebook excessively is that when we post video's and photos of events in our lives we look back on those events and focus less on the present moment. We start deleting photos we don't look our best in even if that photo made us laugh or cry. We start editing our own experiences and we forget how they originally looked and felt. We do this because we want our lives to look perfect and powerful instead of appreciate our lives as they are.

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We can get dependant on positive reinforcement by obsessing over how many likes we get on a post. If we become too dependent on other peoples approval of ourselves we lose ourselves in others expectations.

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Excessive use can also lead to time wasting where you could have been using your time to work on more constructive things or uni assignments. It can also be a motivation killer as it can potentially destroy your productivity and self-esteem. We find ourselves constantly comparing ourselves to others. In a 2013 study from the Journal PLOS One, they discovered that avid Facebook users feel less satisfied with their jobs, and lives in general. They also discovered that people who frequently use Facebook are lonelier, have lower self-esteem and feel less supported. People who rarely use their accounts have reported that they are more fulfilled and confident.



Then there's the issue of Mark Zuckerberg's greedy business ways and whether he can keep selling your data to other companies. It's a gross invasion of privacy. But whether he can or will keep doing that, you don't know what he'll do next and your personal information is still out there for all to see. It's not just Facebook you have to worry about, Zuckerberg also owns Instagram. So you're not sure what he does with your information on Instagram as well. Whatever happened to photo albums? We digitise everything and we lose the tangibility of physical objects.

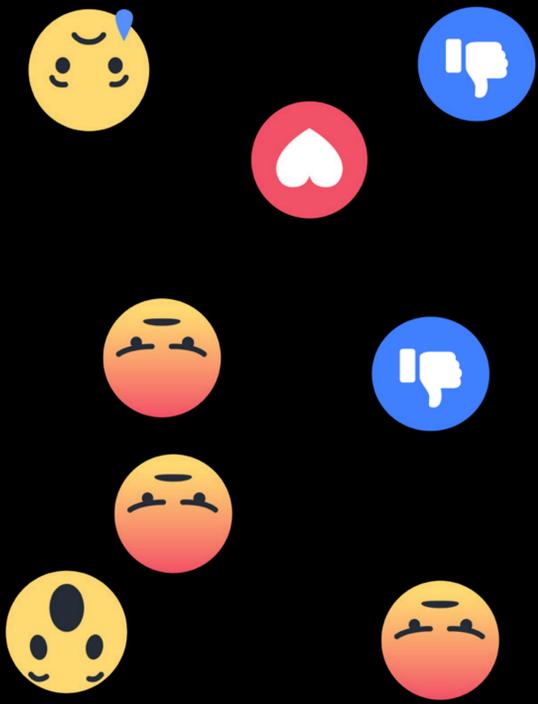


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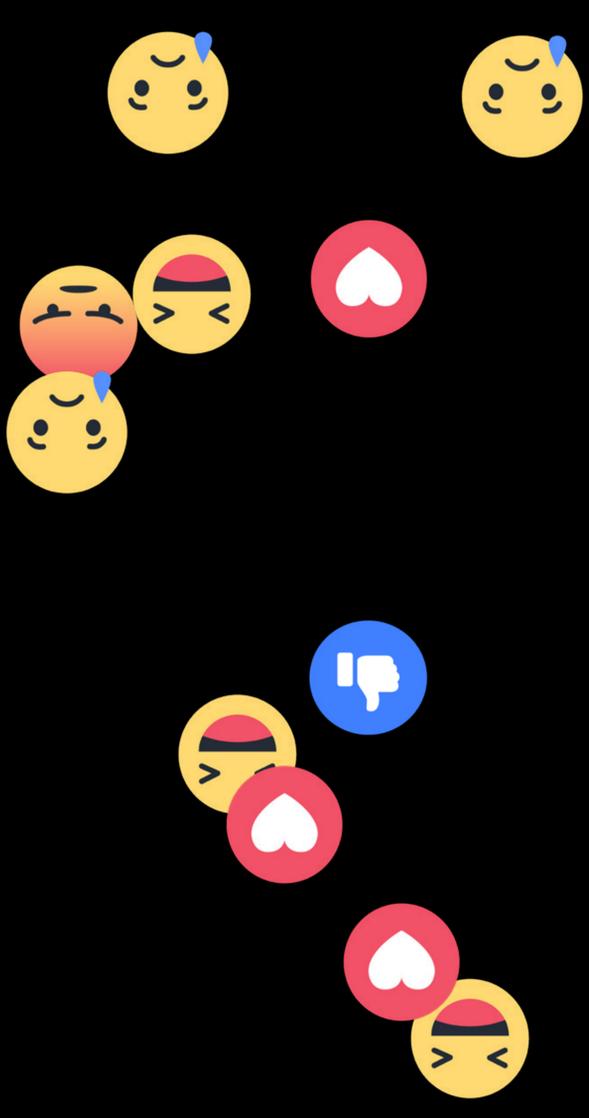
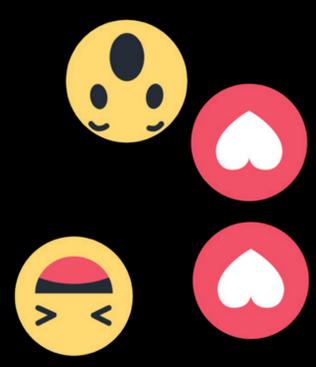
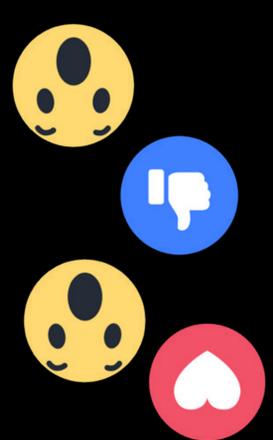


These days instead of using Facebook I try to get involved in my local community as much as I can especially the art community not just in my local area but also in the city. I have stopped comparing myself to others constantly and fed information about other people's lives without even asking for it. Of course, even without Facebook we make harsh judgements about ourselves, based on our belief that others have 'better', more exciting or successful lives. Without Facebook I compare myself to others far less. Without Facebook it seems less likely that you will be bullied, at least in the way you are online. Without the benefit of secrecy, the bullies seem less confident.





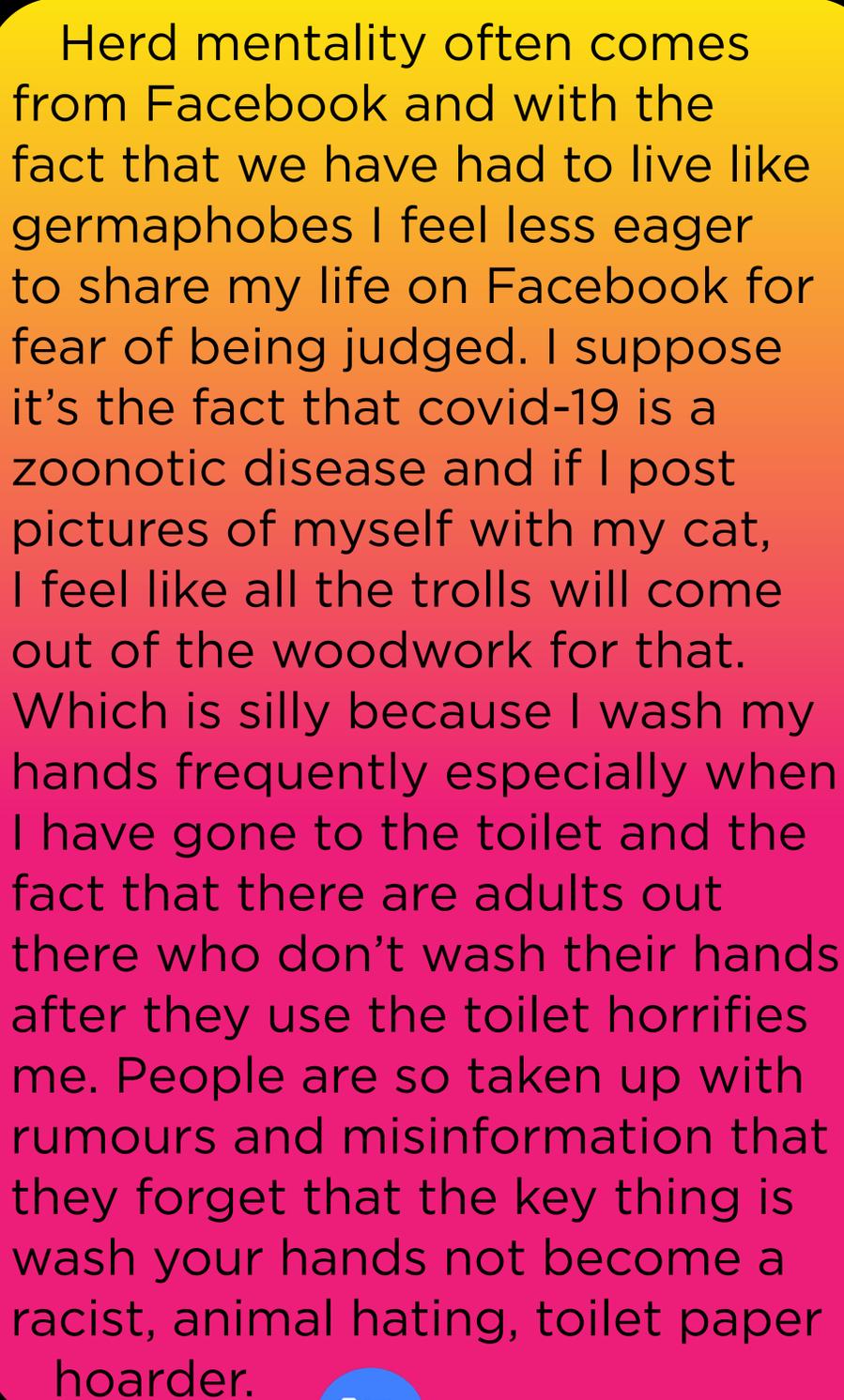
As I've been working on this essay society has drastically changed. Before some people were living partially online and in real life but now things have changed where we have had to live our lives about 85 percent online. Of course no-one can live fully online but with the closure of a lot of our social outlets such as pubs, clubs and galleries a lot of our socialisation has had to move online due to the covid-19 pandemic. I have still managed to keep my Facebook profile shut and my messenger open but as a person who prefers face to face contact over digital contact, it has been a challenge to adapt. As an artist a lot of opportunities to exhibit have been taken away and I'm sure a lot of Art and Design students are feeling that struggle. Still I have been on Instagram more than before. In my bid to adapt I have taken it upon myself to learn more about the digital world and how to use it successfully.



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The way I have been using messenger has changed drastically as well. Before it was mainly a way I could keep in touch with friends interstate but now I have plans on using its video call function as a way of simulating face to face contact. So I have been using all my technology now when before it was collecting dust. Though I know there is a lot of Facebook that I'm not missing such as the toilet paper shortage rumours that have been circulating which I heard was shared on Facebook although I am not sure where that rumour even came from. These are shitty times and I guess people took that literally.





Herd mentality often comes from Facebook and with the fact that we have had to live like germaphobes I feel less eager to share my life on Facebook for fear of being judged. I suppose it's the fact that covid-19 is a zoonotic disease and if I post pictures of myself with my cat, I feel like all the trolls will come out of the woodwork for that. Which is silly because I wash my hands frequently especially when I have gone to the toilet and the fact that there are adults out there who don't wash their hands after they use the toilet horrifies me. People are so taken up with rumours and misinformation that they forget that the key thing is wash your hands not become a racist, animal hating, toilet paper hoarder.

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Although there are good sides to Facebook such as the fact that people create online communities, I am still uncomfortable with people I don't have any contact with finding me. Also we don't need Facebook to create an online community. There are online communities on Instagram. Maybe not in the same way but if I want to connect with my art community I feel like Instagram is the best place to do it.



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I think that social media is mainly good for business purposes. If you overuse it for social interaction you lose social interaction in the real world. We need to think about how we use social media and be careful about how much socialisation we do online. I think social media shouldn't even be called social media it should be called community-minded media as the Internet can create a platform for a community but it should not replace social interaction altogether.





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Anyhow the question has evolved much in the way that the world has changed. Now that most of us are confined to our homes is Facebook a better idea to keep in touch with friends? I still stand by my statement that it can be toxic to socialise this way. I have been becoming more acquainted with video chat and although that may be hard for those who do not have big data packages or the latest technology I would suggest to those people, use your phone more. It's not face to face contact but it is comforting to hear a friend or a loved one's voice from time to time. With our increased dependence on social media we have come to use our phones less for phone calls and because of that fact it is cheaper to pick up the phone than even to video chat. Just the other day I discovered that Telstra payphones are now offering free calls. Granted they are only 5 minute calls nonetheless it just goes to show that economically speaking it is more viable to pick up the phone than spend hours on Facebook or Skype your friends. Do people even still use Skype though? I've been using Facebook messenger video chat, Google Duo and Zoom. We now live in a time where we need to really personalise the internet and technology because Facebook and other social media platforms won't be able to sustain us as a people for long.



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