



PHD

**Care as a Lens: An Investigation of Normative Processes in Online Community Moderation**

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# Care as a Lens: An Investigation of Normative Processes in Online Community Moderation

submitted by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of the

University of Bath

Department of Computer Sciences

January 2021

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## Abstract

Online communities provide spaces and channels for people to share and exchange thoughts, opinions, and information. People gather in an online community with a purpose, but also need to abide by the norms and guidelines of the community. While content moderation in online communities helps maintain the quality of discussion, moderation in online communities can not be easily summarised with responding to problematic behaviours by removing undesired content or people from the community. In this thesis, we aim to explore the normative processes in human-centred moderation in online communities and its relationships with the maintenance and developments of community norms.

We first explore the normative moderation processes by closely working with MetaFilter, an online community that has established moderation culture being praised as the basis of the high quality of content that it produces. We introduce a novel angle using *care-as-nurture* as a lens to explore normative processes in online community moderation. Care can be treated as an attitude: it is routinely exercised by people in daily life and surfaces when challenging incidents are encountered. This approach allows us to see moderation as a *care* work beyond just removing undesired content or people from the group, but also proactively engaging with the community to maintain and develop the community norms. We then take our *care-as-nurture* lens and apply it to explore moderation in Facebook Groups. Our investigation suggests moderation on Facebook Groups expand in other dimensions, challenging the boundary of online communities, as careful moderation activities may happen outside of the online space to where the community expand to.

This thesis addresses the importance of *care* in online communities, and what it might mean to approach an analysis of online moderation practices by applying care as an attitude of nurture. Although we provided a list of observed care-in-moderation actions as guidance for online community owners, moderators, and platform designers to consult, we argued that moderators should not take a textbook approach to apply them in their communities, rather treating each case with regards to community health and vision. Finally, we consider how CSCW researchers might make use of *care-as-nurture* when exploring normative processes in online communities and designing support for online communities and in particular for the moderators who care for them.



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# Publications

The contribution of the work presented in this thesis has been recognised through peer-reviewed publication in the following scholarly outlets:

- Yu, B., Seering, J., Spiel, K., & Watts, L., 2020. “Taking Care of a Fruit Tree”: Nurturing as a Layer of Concern in Online Community Moderation. In Extended Abstracts of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI EA '20), Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 1–9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3334480.3383009>

Summaries of this work were also accepted for presentation at the following workshops and doctoral consortium:

- Yu, B., Spiel, K., & Watts, L., 2019. Caring About Dissent: Online Community Moderation and Norm Evolution. In Volunteer Work: Mapping the Future of Moderation Research – Workshop at CSCW '19. Austin, TX, USA. 2018
- Yu, B., Spiel, K., & Watts, L., 2018. Supporting Care as a Layer of Concern: Nurturing Attitudes in Online Community Moderation. In Social Technical Systems of Care – Workshop at CSCW '18. New York, NY, USA. 2017
- Yu, B., 2017. An Investigation of Design Parameters for Constructive Online Discussion Environment. ECSCW 2017 Doctoral Colloquium. August, 2017. URL: <https://dl.eusset.eu/handle/20.500.12015/2948>



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Thesis Overview

The extraordinary penetration of the internet into everyday life has made it much more convenient for people to share their feelings, opinions and perspectives online than doing so in person. People gather from all points of the compass through the internet, seeking a space in which they may freely express their thoughts, giving them life and a chance to be recognised. Chief amongst these spaces are online communities; dedicated asynchronous communication environments with global reach offering people with common interests a platform to create and swap ideas. Preece (2000) introduces online communities as,

*a group of people who interact in a virtual environment. They have a purpose, are supported by technology, and are guided by norms and policies.*

Contemporary online communities provide social space and channels for people with varied interests. People exchange thoughts, opinions and information on the internet not only with social media, but also with a certain group of people in online communities. As with all communities, exchanges between members of online groups are governed by norms of acceptable conduct. Norms in online communities evolve as times goes by, and perhaps reflecting the wider social and cultural changes as new members become established. Kim (2000) emphasized that *successful communities evolve to keep pace with the changing needs of members and owners*. Members' contributions can be the lifeblood for online communities and, as Preece (1998) has often argued, represent empathic responses in the context of community discourse. Community sustainability and growth depends on understanding this dynamic (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009)

but norm evolution as part of member interactions has been less researched.

Though people gather in an online community with a purpose, they themselves still represent a different order of attunement: with mixed cultural, temporal, geographical and technical modes, and these can be obscured by the properties of communities being “online” (Yu, Spiel and Watts, 2018). Some prior research in computer-supportive cooperative work (CSCW) has focused on the medium problem as a matter of if and how *common ground* (Clark and Brennan, 1991) could be influenced by communication with technologies (Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2003). Textual interaction requires both more work and higher awareness of potential message ambiguity, resulting in additional crafting of contributions to online discussions so that they may convey appropriate social information (Walther, 1992). The missing interaction cues such as facial expression, gestures, make it harder to interpret information in online communities, unless this additional crafting work is accomplished (Preece, Maloney-krichmar and Abras, 2003). They can all-too-easily be subject to misconstrual or misunderstanding, which can then lead to significant conflict between community members. Community members in reader roles also must invest interpretive work when encountering messages, especially when feelings are highly charged, which in turn require careful management to resolve differences in a way that itself respects the nature of the medium (Billings and Watts, 2010). Dissent is sometimes unavoidable in daily interactions; all the more so in online communities. If it is seen one-dimensionally, dissent can be perceived as a threat to a member or a group. Dissent is often tied to situations in which members question aspects of the inner workings of a given community, perhaps legitimately, or reinforce a discourse that was once commonplace, but has since been collectively reevaluated as unacceptable (Yu, Spiel and Watts, 2019). It can easily be misconstrued as destructive behaviour and result in conflict but this need not be the case.

Moderation on platforms aims to manage the quality of comments and the discussions they constitute. As commercial and legal interest in online community exchanges has grown, so has the understanding of the vital role moderators can play. For example, Facebook planned to hire more content moderators and aim to have 20,000 by 2018 (Knight, 2018). A moderated environment may appear to be attractive to some community members if it provides them with the opportunity to stay closer on topic within a given discussion without an unacceptable loss of freedom of expression (Wise, Hamman and Thorson, 2006). There is a constant tension between the attraction of an environment that supports unfettered freedom of expression and regulation of types or styles of contribution that community members may find offensive or irrelevant. So whilst moderation is a familiar part of online community life, and its importance seems

to be ever more recognised, how it might be conducted and supported is anything but clear. The dynamics of moderation practice, if better understood, could enable platform designers and owners to better frame the grounding problem for those who want to engage with it. In this way, they may be able to reinforce engagement, whilst appreciating the human context of exchange, leading to reduced cross-posting and increased constructive, more meaningful messages (Whittaker et al., 1998).

Different communities have different views on if and what kind of behaviours are normative (Kraut and Resnick, 2012). It even differs in different eras in the same community that what behaviours are believed to be normative. Norms would normally evolve as communities move on. Newcomers of specific online communities can learn about existing norms by observing other people and the consequences of their behaviour, reviewing explicit instructions or codes of conduct, or acting and directly receiving feedback (Kraut and Resnick, 2012). Different levels of norms can be existed and nested, and they can be adopted from various places such as social context (Chandrasekharan et al., 2018). Having understandable and clear norms cannot only help newcomers engage more productively with a community, but also help in governing conflicts better overall, even when longer-term members are involved (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009).

*Care* has a powerful influence on potentially disruptive social encounters because practising care means exposing a group's core values (Yu, Spiel and Watts, 2018). Online community moderators have different metaphors about their activities (Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor, 2020). Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) researchers argued that, in makers and contributor communities, care is a key driver of sustainability (Toombs, Bardzell and Bardzell, 2015). Within HCI and CSCW, care has been analysed in contexts for example in the maker spaces (Toombs, Bardzell and Bardzell, 2015), and as inherent in citizens responses to an earthquake (Wong-Villacres, Velasquez and Kumar, 2017). It is yet to analyse that what if online communities understand moderation as a practice of care, and how it would affect moderation activities and community norms if adding care as a layer of concern in online community moderation.

Despite the considerable attention devoted to online communities by CSCW and social science researchers, the relationship between norm evolution and moderation practices remains unclear. Communities can have very different degrees of tolerance to postings and other behaviour that might be proscribed in offline settings (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009), directly reflecting the particularities of their community norms. Abusive language, for example, is not difficult to automatically detect and filter. But whether or not they are problematic in themselves cannot be determined so easily for any given

community. The general incidence of problematic interaction in online communities is usually not difficult to identify, by virtue of the traffic they tend to generate. Even then, there is a lack of prior work on the identification of boundaries around any given norm violation to determine whether or not they are constructively or destructively problematic. In other words, whether the effect of the interactions is beneficial or counterproductive for the community. It is important to support moderators to characterise norm violations so that they can choose whether or not to intervene. It is too easy to conceptualise anti-normative behaviour as entirely unwanted (see section 1.2.1 below). Yet an anti-normative contribution, such as a dissenting voice, could be as valuable in sustaining community values or stimulating their revision. Researchers have argued that encouraging different voices can support useful reflective public thoughts (Kriplean et al., 2012), persuasion (Tan et al., 2016), and facilitate debate where communities need it (Beck, Neupane and Carroll, 2018). However, it is still unclear how to characterise approaches to moderation sensitive to community norms, and the types and effects of moderation decisions as they pertain to community norms.

## 1.2 Research Focus and Scope

This thesis is focusing on moderation in the context of norms in small and medium online communities. In order to provide a clearer scope, this section introduces three important contributing concepts to help scope the research reported in later chapters. These concepts are dissent, moderation and online community norms.

### 1.2.1 Scoping “Human-Centred-Moderation” in Online Communities

Grimmelmann (2015) defined moderation as *“the governance mechanisms that structure participation in a community to facilitate cooperation and prevent abuse”*. The roles and core understanding of moderation differ between communities and a differently designed moderator role can have different effects upon deliberation (Wright and Street, 2007). In some, moderators are seen and act as *“censor”*. In such cases, their main activity is to delete offending comments. Alternatives to such an approach can aim at amplifying minority viewpoints (Janssen and Kies, 2005). In online public policy engagement settings managing content stream and engaging with content and participants are the core strategies of moderation (Epstein and Leshed, 2016). However, these strategies are much more suited to the interaction of limited time spans, where, as the authors admit as a limitation, allowing members to acquire long-term skills for productive online engagement is less important than the ad-hoc management of current content. Moderators in different online communities also use different metaphors to

describe their moderation work including *nurturing and supporting communities*, *overseeing and facilitating communities*, *governing and regulating communities*, *managing communities*, and *fighting for communities* (Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor, 2020). Moderation in this thesis refers to the activities that structure and maintain participation in a community. And human-centred moderation refers to moderation activities conducted or supervised by human moderators.

### 1.2.2 Scoping “Community Norms & Guidelines”

Online communities have different forms in which they may communicate expected behaviours: they may have explicit rules and guidelines or high-level norms providing general guidance (Kraut and Resnick, 2012). Norms govern behaviour in communities by setting expectations for allowable conduct and may be enforced if and when members of a community perceive that a serious violation of its norms has taken place. Expectations in online communities can be descriptive or injunctive, with implications for their clarity and enforceability (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). However, online communities need to find a balance between setting up clear and understandable norms without displaying guidelines with a surplus of details. Norms in online communities, as part of social norms, are not static phenomena (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). Unlike the enforcement of *laws*, or the relatively stable *traditions*, norms are socially negotiated and contextually dependent modes of conduct, dynamically shaped and understood through communication processes (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). In online communities, community norms depend on their varying needs regarding content structures and target audience (Kraut and Resnick, 2012). This also means they need to enforce these norms differently. The image-based bulletin board 4Chan<sup>1</sup> applies a “work safe” mode, in which content should be “safe for viewing in the average working environment” (4Chan, 2018). Content that is deemed “unsafe” in this setting has to be removed as soon as possible for members to be able to use this functionality appropriately. Slashdot<sup>2</sup> provides guidelines in its FAQ to help contributors in writing a suitable submission (Slashdot, 2018; Poor, 2005). To maintain the quality of the site, moderators review submissions before they are posted. Wikipedia asks editors that their articles conform to an objective ideal: they must convey a Neutral Point of View (NPOV), supported by legitimate and verifiable sources (Wikipedia, 2018). Contributing members resolve disputes in this regard in dedicated sections on the site with mediators aiding the process (Billings and Watts, 2010). Hence, the articulation and definition of norms and guidelines highly depend on the goal of the community, which again influences how

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.4chan.org>

<sup>2</sup><https://slashdot.org>

norms are enforced. In this thesis, community norms are referring to the dynamic normative phenomena reached by the community, and guidelines are referring to explicit rules and guidelines which are publicly displayed or pinned in the online space inside the community which all community members should follow. Behaviours that deviate from the norms and guidelines may lead to potential moderation action.

### 1.2.3 Norms, Online Delinquency and Dissent

One of the main challenges for online community moderators is how to deal with unwanted behaviours, in a way to find the balance between reinforcing existing norms and also nurture the evolution of norms carefully. Some unwanted behaviours are hard to see as anything other than destructive acts by malicious individuals but others could reflect important emerging concerns in the discourse of the community. Sternberg refers to “misbehaviour” as conduct that does not conform to norms (Sternberg, 2000). However, conflicts and dissent are not per se undesirable instances of engagement, rather it depends on how they are handled and how different perspectives are valued or dismissed. Prior work in CSCW, even when predominantly concerned with behaviours labelled as flaming or trolling, recognised that disruption can play important roles, such as bringing communities together (Bruckman et al., 1994; Cheng et al., 2017). Some online communities are explicitly designed around dissent, for example, the subreddit ChangeMyView<sup>3</sup> (Tan et al., 2016) or the discussion platform Kialo<sup>4</sup>. These communities encourage constructive dissent with the goal to guide people in the process of understanding complex issues from a range of varied perspectives. In this thesis, norm-challenging behaviour includes in principle forms of conduct that could be destructive or constructive: both are relevant for moderator attention and, indeed, the tension between them sets a significant challenge for effective community moderation.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The research in this thesis is guided by a few high level questions. These questions focus the research but also serve as a vehicle for creating a discussion space that makes connections with broader concerns in research in online communities. We use these research questions (RQs) as a road map to explore online community and moderation, such that this thesis is able to illuminate online moderation with a new light.

To explore what kind of moderation may happen in online communities, we would like

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.kialo.com>

to also look into what kind of behaviour online will result in moderation. Therefore our first question is: **RQ1: What kind of behaviour in online communities motivates moderation intervention?** This question is addressed by all the studies reported in this thesis. The analyses furnished by these studies bring a new understanding of behaviours that are deemed problematic for online communities, and what strategies were used in moderation intervention.

The second question asked in this thesis is: **RQ2: How do moderators conceptualize their work in online communities?** This question is also weaved into all of the studies in this thesis. Understanding how moderators look at their work can inspire future design of online community management tools and policies. This is helpful for relating human moderators work to the wider online world.

Looking amongst the individuals in online communities, we are interested in how engagement in moderation activities reflect and influence community norms. Therefore, we raised a sub research question under RQ2: **RQ2a: Can moderator activity influence the development of online community norms?** The motivation of this question is trying to study if and how moderator activity, both as repeating actions and a long-time, high-profile presence, will influence and reflect in the concomitant norms within the online communities. This question is particularly discussed in Chapter 3 focusing on the care-as-nurture attitude moderators bringing with them in their moderation work.

The member side of moderation and normative behaviour is also considered in this thesis. So in this thesis, we also try to discover **RQ3: How do community members perceive moderation in online communities?** Again, all studies in this thesis reflect member perspectives. In Chapter 3, member checking (Birt et al., 2016) was done to both increase the trustworthiness of results related to RQ2 and explore space of RQ3. In Chapter 6, participants were recruited no matter if they are moderators or members of a group to get a broader insight about how moderation could be perceived in online communities.

With regards to RQ3, and to engage our discussion more with community norms, we consider a sub question of RQ3: **RQ3a: How might community member attitudes toward moderator activity influence the development of community norms?** This question is design to fill the gap of RQ2a left in studying the relationships between community norms and moderation.

The thesis considers technical opportunities for supporting the work of moderators **RQ4: How might technologies assist human moderators in their work?** With



this question, we are aiming to open a tentative design space to support online communities, and careful online community moderation. In Chapter 6 - Facebook Group Badges, we studied how algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups may affect moderation activity, even given that it was not initially designed for moderation use.

The research questions as laid out above have evolved over the course of the doctoral research. Each study served to tailor the research questions being posed at the point of its inception, based on the study context and previous understandings.

## 1.4 Research Methods and Approach

The research uses a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis techniques. It takes an inductive approach to the research problem, inspired by grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). That is to say, a concerted attempt has been made to reveal important mechanisms at work in the world of moderation, drawing directly on the author’s primary data sources, without bringing a preconceived theoretical framework to the analysis.

The exact method chosen depends on the concerns of study and the contexts of the communities. Our first study in Chapter 3 - MetaFilter Moderation stems from the qualitative analysis of three complementary data source. We started by thematic analysing (Braun and Clarke, 2006) the 2016 and 2017 corpus of comments on MetaFilter<sup>5</sup>, with then followed by interviews with four of their staffed moderators looking into how MetaFilter is moderated. These two parts of analysis also partly entailed active member checking (Birt et al., 2016) to contest our analysis and co-create knowledge about moderating strategies of MetaFilter.

Taking the results from the MetaFilter study, we then tried to seek opportunities to look at communities of similar sizes but with more tools available and more diverse backgrounds. We then in Chapter 5 and 6 using a mixed-method approach to generalise our findings from the MetaFilter study to communities on Facebook, and investigate the relationships between algorithmic tools and human moderators in online communities. We first did an exploratory interview with moderators of various Facebook groups asking about their relationships with Facebook, their moderation experiences, their strategies, and opinions about algorithmically generated badges. We then designed and distributed a survey with a combination of Likert-scale questions for quantitative data

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.metafilter.com>, see Chapter 3 for more details.

and free text answers for qualitative data looking at how members and moderators of Facebook groups interpret and make use of this algorithmic tool. After that, we applied a post-survey interview with participants asking for further explanation. This gives us a more complete view from different perspectives of Facebook groups including members, moderators in various groups. This gives advantages to generalise our analysis to more platforms and online communities, in the sense of both scale and forms.

### 1.4.1 Research Ethics

All studies were designed and conducted in accordance with a 13-point ethics checklist, then in use by the Department of Computer Science, University of Bath, to support ethical review of research. The checklist was reviewed and informed specific plans for each research study to check and resolve potential ethical concerns. In appendix A.1, we provide an overview of the checklist. MetaFilter has partnered with us in the research by providing us with the corpus data in early 2018 as a data dump and being available for questions regarding the understanding of their particular culture. The Department of Computer Science ethical approval process changed in early 2019. Studies in Chapter 5 and 6 were submitted to the Psychology Research Ethics Committee (PREC) for approval in July 2019 prior to the study, and was granted approval in October 2019 (PREC code 19-277)<sup>6</sup>. We believe we managed to respect and safeguard our study participants through this combination of review processes.

## 1.5 Thesis Outline

This section presents a detailed outline of the content of the thesis in the form of chapter summaries.

### Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter has introduced the problem domain of this thesis. It discusses the background of research about online communities in HCI, and presents a set of research questions we explore in this thesis. It also briefly summarises the research methods and our approaches employed in the work.

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<sup>6</sup>If you have any concerns related to the ethics approval in this study please direct them to the Chair of the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, email: [psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk](mailto:psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk).

## **Chapter 2 - Online Community & Moderation**

This chapter discusses background research in HCI and CSCW on online communities, as it relates to moderation. It considers online community norms, social roles and dissent in online communities, and online community moderation, aiming to set the scope of the thesis and open up the contribution space. The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the foundation research area of this thesis, thus establishing a link between the primary contribution of the thesis and the prior work in HCI and CSCW.

## **Chapter 3 - MetaFilter Moderation**

This chapter presents empirical work with MetaFilter (MetaFilter study), a community weblog, using thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of three complementary datasets: (1) an archive of moderator postings; (2) interviews with experienced moderators; and (3) an open discussion about moderation with the larger MetaFilter member base. Our analysis shows that the quality and community acceptance of moderation on MetaFilter hinges not only on the practical strategies employed, but also on the careful stance moderators take in respect of community membership and participation. From our findings, we derive a range of recommendations concerning norm-setting, professionalism, community engagement and management of responsibility for moderation. We argue that cognisance of these matters is critical for the development of policies and supporting technologies for sustainable and constructive discussions in online communities, if they are to be robust against the risks posed by intra-community tensions around difficult or controversial topics. We end this chapter by attempting to link these conceptual findings to other types of online communities, and lay the groundwork for later chapters.

## **Chapter 4 - Moderation as Care Work in Online Communities**

This chapter brings reflects on the insights furnished by the MetaFilter study by relating them to a concept of care that is derived from healthcare research. It discusses literature in HCI and CSCW that touches on care ethics, and proposes the potential of using care-as-nurture as a lens to look at moderation in online communities.

## **Chapter 5 - Facebook Group Moderation**

In this chapter, we take care-as-nurture as a lens on online community moderation and use it to drive the second major phase of empirical work to be presented in this thesis. We conducted three consecutive studies with Facebook group users. In contrast with MetaFilter moderation, Facebook group moderators are mostly volunteers, following

the specific guidelines that have been devised for their individual groups. Groups on Facebook focus on more narrow topics, and most member profiles reflect their offline identities. There are more industrial moderation tools available for the moderators on Facebook. In this chapter, we discuss if and how the findings and analysis derived from care-as-nurture can be applied to small and medium online communities on Facebook. We first explored our ideas by piloting 6 interviews with moderators of Facebook groups, using a revised interview protocol from the MetaFilter study. Questions about their connection to Facebook, their moderation experiences and strategies were asked during the interview. We then designed a survey and distributed it to more general users of Facebook groups to look from more perspectives. Participants were invited to a post-survey interview upon finishing the survey, of whom 16 then agreed to take part. Care-as-nurture appeared to have a different kind of resonance with Facebook groups than as was revealed through the MetaFilter analyses. Facebook group moderators seem to apply a relaxed moderation strategy, which may link to groups on Facebook having a more specific purpose and the more hybrid, real-name nature of Facebook.

### **Chapter 6 - Facebook Group Badges**

This chapter extends the Facebook phase of empirical work by bringing our insights about moderation with human moderators to bear on a technology aiming to support their work. We draw our attention to algorithmically mediated moderation on platforms that categorise and label members based on posting or activity metrics. In our Facebook group data collection activities, we included a set of questions looking at specifically how human moderator and community members adapt to the algorithmically generated badges designed and provided by Facebook. In the MetaFilter community, moderators are most often acting pro-actively and members work collectively to help report and address problematic behaviour. In contrast, moderation is supported by tools on Facebook and the process is correspondingly different. While quite a lot of tools are available for Facebook group moderators, users of Facebook groups do not have many opportunities in designing and deciding the tools they want to use. Rather, they can only adapt themselves to the tools available for them provided by the platform.

In our pilot interviews, a set of questions were asked to the participants about generally how they feel coping with the newly introduced algorithmically generated badges in their groups. From our analysis, the moderators use the badges sceptically as the badges are designed to be a ‘reward’ to Facebook group members, but at the same time, they do not have control over deciding whom badges would go to in the group. Later in the

survey study, we specifically asked about their views on the tools available for them provided by Facebook, including the badges. We then use Likert-style ratings (Likert, 1932) in the survey to specifically ask general Facebook members' views on each badge. In the post-survey interviews, participants were asked to discuss their reasons for having responded to the survey in the way they had. These follow-up interviews serve both to strengthen the trustworthiness of the survey and to deepen our understanding of how members and moderators have been able to incorporate badges into their regular practice.

From our findings, algorithmically generated badges can be helpful in the sense of providing more descriptive information to users, but should be interpreted with the context of groups more consistently and cohesively. To maximise the use of algorithmically generated badges or labels, the moderators or community caretakers need to work together with the platform during the design phase, and should be given access to supervise on how these tools are used and included in the decision making process.

## **Chapter 7 - Conclusion**

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the work done and how the key findings from the studies have built an understanding of challenges and approaches to moderation. We identify key limitations in the work done and offer directions for future work to further the understanding of using care-as-nurture as a lens in exploring care-in-moderation in online communities.

## Chapter 2

# Online Community & Moderation

### 2.1 Chapter Overview

In Chapter 1 we outlined our motivation and the overall goal of this thesis about online communities moderation. In this chapter, we discuss the background research about online communities and moderation in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW) field, aiming to further set the scope of this thesis and open up the contribution space. Firstly we reviewed literature in HCI and CSCW about the discussion on how to decide what count as an online community as the foundation research area of this thesis. We then turn into literature in HCI and CSCW about moderation and governance in online communities to further open up the contribution space. Furthermore, we explored literature about dissents in online discourses research to provide some insights related to online communities and establishing a link between the primary contribution of the thesis and the prior work in HCI and CSCW.

### 2.2 Online Communities

Just like it is difficult to define what is ‘community’, there is no strict definition of ‘online communities’. Bruckman (2006) proposed that community should be a prototype-based category and (1) has fuzzy boundaries, (2) culturally constructed, and (3) is radical and genre. Similarly, an online community is not simply putting a group of people online, especially when contemporary communities can be hybrid - with both

online and offline attributes. It is difficult to draw a line in contemporary life between what is online and offline. We join university societies and their Facebook groups online, spreading words, sharing opinions about offline activities. We organize meet-ups with people we know from various online groups, pulling over the network lines, bringing ‘Internet friends’ back to their offline circle. Rheingold (1993) stated that ‘*a virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks*’. With the rapid development of computer-mediate communication technologies and the popularize of smart devices, contemporary community space is much less bounded by geographical region, and can often be stretched into online spaces. Speaking of that, in this thesis, we still need a working definition to help scope the online communities we are looking at. In Whittaker, Isaacs and O’Day (1997)’s report of the *Theory and Practice of Physical and Network Communities* workshop, they proposed the ‘community’ concept can be discovered by using ‘prototypical attributes’, which should be treated as examples of attributes in communities, but not drawing boundaries for them. The core attributes (CAs) include

- **CA1** - members have some shared goals, interests, needs or activities that provide the primary reason for belonging to the community;
- **CA2** - members engage in repeated active participation and there are often intense interaction, strong emotional ties and shared activities occurring between participants;
- **CA3** - members have access to shared resources and there are policies for determining access to those resources;
- **CA4** - reciprocity of information, support and services between members;
- **CA5** - shared context (social conventions, language, protocols);

From CA1 and CA2 we can tell that it is an important aspect for members to be emotionally bounded or to have the feeling of belongingness to the groups to make it a community. And in all core attributes described above, it is an essential part that the group has a ‘shared space’ of something. This space does not have to be geographically close by, but it is more a place members could and willing to wander around, contribute to, and engage with. However in CA2, it is to be discussed that what is “active participation” and whether “intense interaction” is essential in communities. Especially different online communities have their own set of rules describing “who are our members”. Some communities may not even have a clear boundary for memberships.

Preece (2000) introduces online community as,

*a group of people who interact in a virtual environment. They have a purpose, are supported by technology, and are guided by norms and policies.*

This definition is aligned with Bruckman (2006), with the norms and policies aspect added to Rheingold (1993)'s definition, but weakened the conflict raised in Whittaker, Isaacs and O'Day (1997)'s workshop report. This working definition also supports the research area of this thesis while discussing community norms evolution.

To further elaborate on what can happen in online communities, in this section, we firstly discuss what role users can play in online communities. We then turn into literature about the usability and sociability that affects online community developments from the HCI and CSCW perspectives.

### 2.2.1 Social Roles in Online Communities

Just like in local offline communities, there are different roles to play in online communities. Preece and Schneiderman (2009) presented the *Reader-to-Leader* framework (Figure 2-1) showing how people's behaviour changes online over time among reader, contributor, collaborator, and leader. While this framework is designed to help identify what motivates technology-mediated social participation (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009), it is also helpful for consulting online community developments. In online communities, members can be in any stages in the Reader-to-Leader framework. Whether users hold the membership of the communities depends on the community norms and is normally collectively decided by the community. Community membership requirements are not always bounded by the participation status of the community. For example, members of a university society may join the equivalent online group without actively contributing online. Though it is not usual, some online communities may require members to actively participate in their online activities. While membership of an online community depends on their own definition or norms developed by the community, the participation level in the Reader-to-Leader framework could be a hint in parallel with the membership status. Thus consulting what motivates users to move to the next participation level could help scope who should be counted as a member of the community.

Within the Reader-to-Leader Framework Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2003), it is not clear that if a user can engage in multiple stages at the same time. For example in online communities, moderators are not always wearing their moderation hat. They may sometimes participate as members, or even take a break from their role by just



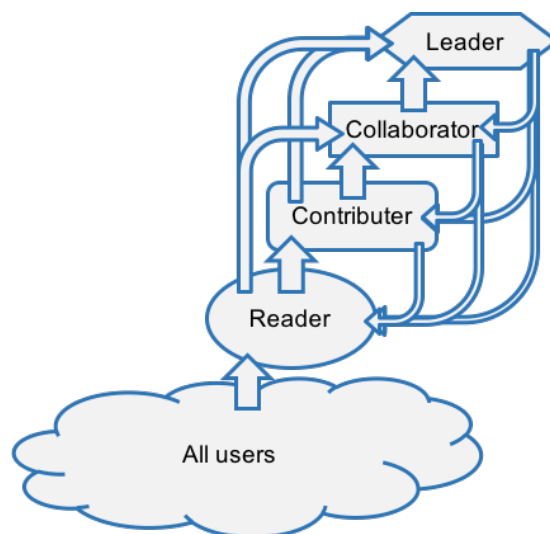


Figure 2-1: The Reader-to-Leader Framework (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009)

browsing information in the community. It remains an open question that if and how the Reader-to-Leader could be applied to contemporary online communities.

As in this thesis, we are focusing on moderation in the context of norms in small and medium online communities, it is worth discussing some specific roles mostly related to these. In the following sections, we discuss the research background of newcomers and moderators (or community carers) Newcomers of online communities.

### **Newcomers**

Newcomers to a specific online community may not be familiar with the community norms and act non-normatively (Kraut and Resnick, 2012). They learn about existing norms by observing other people and the consequences of their behaviour, reviewing explicit instructions or codes of conduct, or acting and directly receiving feedback (Kraut and Resnick, 2012; Preece and Schneiderman, 2009), or using the contemporary Internet slang - *lurking* (Yeow, Johnson and Faraj, 2006). If at this time users are still in the “reader” phase, and they found themselves happy to comply with the observed norms, they may be motivated to move to the other phases, start participating and contributing to the community.

Kraut and Resnick (2012) presented four main critical design challenges for creating successful online communities including starting a new community, attracting and socializing new members, encourage commitment, encouraging contribution, and regulating behaviour. They took an evidence-based social design approach and listed some



Figure 2-2: Wikipedia: Please do not bite the newcomers ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Please\\_do\\_not\\_bite\\_the\\_newcomers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Please_do_not_bite_the_newcomers))

comparative and noncomparative design claims at various abstraction level under each challenge. These are aligned with the Reader-to-Leader framework raised by Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2003). As violation of norms may lead to moderation activity or other impactful results to the community, how to negotiate with newcomers of their behaviour with the existing community norms becomes issues that we may be especially concern about. Research in fanfiction communities found that distributed mentoring helps members with informal learning in the community (Campbell et al., 2016; Evans et al., 2017). Mentorship from old-timers will help the newcomers become more committed to the community and encourage them to contribute more via for example modelling the best practices (Kraut and Resnick, 2012). Research in HCI and CSCW about job training and knowledge transfer in workplaces also touches on the topic that junior workers can benefit from connecting with the person with meta-knowledge of the knowledge network (Yang, Yuan and Wang, 2019). In organizational socialization theory (Figure 2-3), in order to help with newcomers adjustment, both newcomer information seeking and the use of organizational socialization tactics are needed (Bauer et al., 2007).

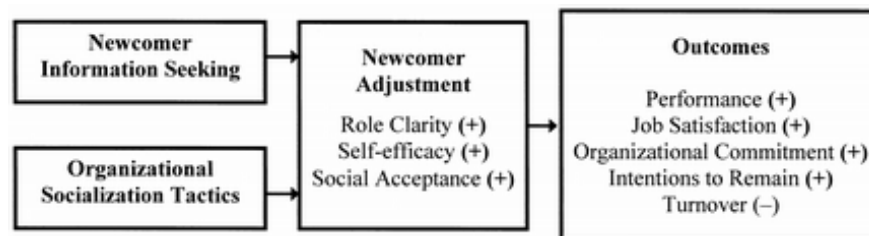


Figure 2-3: Antecedents and outcomes of newcomer adjustment during organizational socialization (Bauer et al., 2007)

This is similar in online communities: Newcomers of online communities may learn about existing norms by observing other members' behaviours and impersonate others in their community. Wikipedia suggests in its community behavioural guideline that members should communicate with newcomers patiently and thoroughly and ultimately contribute in a constructive manner (Figure 2-2). Thus online communities need to find a balance between setting up clear and understandable norms without displaying guidelines with a surplus of details. Having understandable and clear norms cannot only help newcomers engage more productively with a community, but also help in governing conflicts better overall, even when longer-term members are involved (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009; Kraut and Resnick, 2012). However, it is yet to discuss if it is always harmful to online communities when newcomers challenge the existing norms (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). In this case, the newcomers, as the new blood of communities, will help test the existing norms and hopefully be able to challenge the out-fashioned ones if they are motivated enough to contribute.

### **Moderators**

Online communities usually have moderators or mediators to help govern communities. The role moderators play and the tasks they have are not always the same. As commercial and legal interest in online community exchanges has grown, so has understandings of the vital role moderators can play. Moderators of communities may also be recruited via various channels, and the size of the moderation team also varies based on the community needs. For example, moderators of MetaFilter were recruited by the site owner and they are the paid workers of the community weblog site. Moderators of the CHI Meta group on Facebook<sup>1</sup> are recruited by an open call from the group founders in the community. A university society group on Facebook has moderators who are also committee members of the society.

Preece (2000) summarized a set of different works moderators can take on based on prior literature (see in Table 2.1). Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor (2020) present a set of metaphors moderators used to describe their work indicating different social roles they can play in their communities including: nurturing and supporting communities; overseeing and facilitating communities; governing and regulating communities; managing communities; fighting for communities (Figure 2-4). These metaphors provide insights into what social roles moderators believe they hold in their online community. While these metaphors are not functional roles, they are the conceptually shaping mod-

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<sup>1</sup>A unofficial discussion group about the ACM CHI Conference of Human Factors in Computing Systems.

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- ★ Facilitating, to keep the group focused and “on-topic.”
  - ★ Managing the list - archiving, deleting and adding subscribers.
  - ★ Filtering messages and deciding which ones to post. Typically, this involves removing flames, libelous posts, spam and inappropriate or distracting jokes, and generally keeping the ratio of relevant messages high, often described as the signal/noise ratio.
  - ★ Being the expert, answering frequently asked questions (FAQs) or directing people to online FAQs, and understanding the topics of discussion.
  - ★ Editing text or digests, or formatting messages.
  - ★ Opening questions, to generate discussion.
  - ★ Marketing the list to others, which generally involves providing information about it.
  - ★ Helping people with general needs.
  - ★ Ensuring that flaming and *ad hominem* attacks are done offline.
- 

Table 2.1: Summary of tasks performed by moderators for electronic discussion groups (Preece, 2000; Berge, 1992; Collins and Berge, 1997; Salmon, 2009)

erators actions for example as mentioned by Preece (2000) above. The level of each activity is shaped by what role moderators believe they are playing in the community. And the metaphor as their “role description”, is also driven by what activities they do in the community.

Similarly, the roles and core understanding of moderation differ between communities and a differently designed moderator role can have different effects upon deliberation (Wright and Street, 2007). In some, moderators are seen and act as *sensor*. In such cases, their main activity is to delete offending comments. Alternatives to such an approach can aim at amplifying minority viewpoints (Janssen and Kies, 2005). In online public policy engagement settings, managing content stream and engaging with content and participants are the core strategies of moderation (Epstein and Leshed, 2016). However, these strategies are much more suited to the interaction of limited time spans, where, as the authors admit as a limitation, allowing members to acquire long-term skills for productive online engagement is less important than the ad-hoc management of current content.

In this thesis, we discuss how do moderators conceptualize their work in online communities (RQ2). We are not asking the moderators specifically for a metaphor describing their role, but more from our observation and engagement with the communities. We then discuss what value a specific “role description” would add to moderation activities and how many communities respond to that.



Figure 2-4: Five categories and twenty-two variants of metaphors for roles in volunteer community moderation. The orientation of categories and metaphors is not indicative of any hierarchy or relationship between groups (Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor, 2020)

### 2.2.2 Designing Usability and Planning Sociability

For developing successful online communities, there are Preece (2000) suggested that for developing successful online communities, community developers should study community needs so that they can design usability and plan sociability to support the evolving community. Here usability refers to the software or platforms users are interacting with; Sociability focuses on social interactions including for example rules and guidelines of the community (Preece, 2000; Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2003). Therefore this is not just the responsibility of community moderators, but is a mission that can be collaboratively achieved by platform developers and community members. For example, to develop a neighbourhood area, efforts are needed from the local council or other authorities to plan the roads, parks and shops, and also the local residents to maintain their living areas or decorating for festivals. For an online community, especially communities living on platforms like Reddit and Facebook, communities have the tools from the platform helping for usability, and high-level guidelines including laws and platform rules to shape sociability. However, community moderators will be able to design specific rules for joining or community guidelines for specific interaction. Sometimes they may even decide to consult community members for this, which is essential in the step of identifying community needs. Usability and sociability of online communities are closely related Preece (2000), just like it is difficult to separate the convenience and atmosphere of the neighbourhood area.

In the book *Online Communities: Designing Usability, Supporting Sociability*, Preece (2000) suggest that before started building a community, it is important to get “acquainted” with online communities from several perspectives including sociability and usability of online communities. The components of sociability include purpose, people and policies, which could be reflected by policies for membership, codes of conduct, security, privacy, copyright, free speech, and moderators etc. The components to design in usability can be interaction dialogue, navigation, registration forms, feedback, representations of users, message format, archives, support tools etc. Usability and sociability are closely related together. However with most of the online community platforms today, moderators or community owners have limited power over the usability of their community. For example, to start a new group on Facebook, users have to adapt tools provided by Facebook and make use of them. Similarly, it is not that users have less freedom for planning the sociability of their online community if they are planning to create a new community with platforms like Facebook, Reddit or Discord. Communities must still abide by the universal policies of the platform they are rooting on (Fiesler et al., 2018). Therefore it is worth studying if and how moderators or owners of online communities may make use of the tools available for them, how they respond to or push back to these limitations within the room of usability and sociability.

## 2.3 Online Community Moderation & Governance

Commenting is one of the key ways for users to interact with each other and exchange opinions in online communities. However, text-based media present many challenges for community members who wish to maintain the quality of comments that contribute to particular discussions and for the general spirit of exchange that characterises their community (Reagle, 2015). There is some evidence to suggest that members are more likely to stick with moderated online communities (Wise, Hamman and Thorson, 2006) but the drivers behind effective moderation have been unclear. To manage the quality of comments and the discussions online, platforms usually apply moderation via various means. Moderation is *the governance mechanisms that structure participation in a community to facilitate cooperation and prevent abuse* (Grimmelmann, 2015, p. 47). Seering (2020) reviewed literature about online community self-governance from several perspectives including community-based moderation and platforms, policies-focused moderation research. For example, Facebook planned to hire more content moderators and aim to have 20,000 by 2018 (Knight, 2018). Research in HCI and CSCW about content moderation spans over online communities to all platforms and

communication means online. Early research in CSCW examined the effect of different media on groups working remotely on collaborative tasks in controlled laboratory environments (Olson and Olson, 1997), using face-to-face communication for comparison. More recently, research about managing and moderating online comments concerns several platforms and online communities such as the comment section of the online presence of the New York Times (Park et al., 2016), Twitter (Maruyama et al., 2014), Facebook groups (Seering et al., 2019b), Reddit (Leavitt and Robinson, 2017; Dosono and Semaan, 2019; Matias, 2019; Jhaver et al., 2019; Jhaver, Bruckman and Gilbert, 2019; Seering et al., 2019b), 4chan (Trammell, 2014), Slashdot (Lampe and Resnick, 2004; Lampe et al., 2014), Wikipedia (Billings and Watts, 2010), Twitch (Seering, Kraut and Dabbish, 2017; Seering et al., 2019b), Discord (Jiang et al., 2019) and health-related forums (Huh et al., 2013).

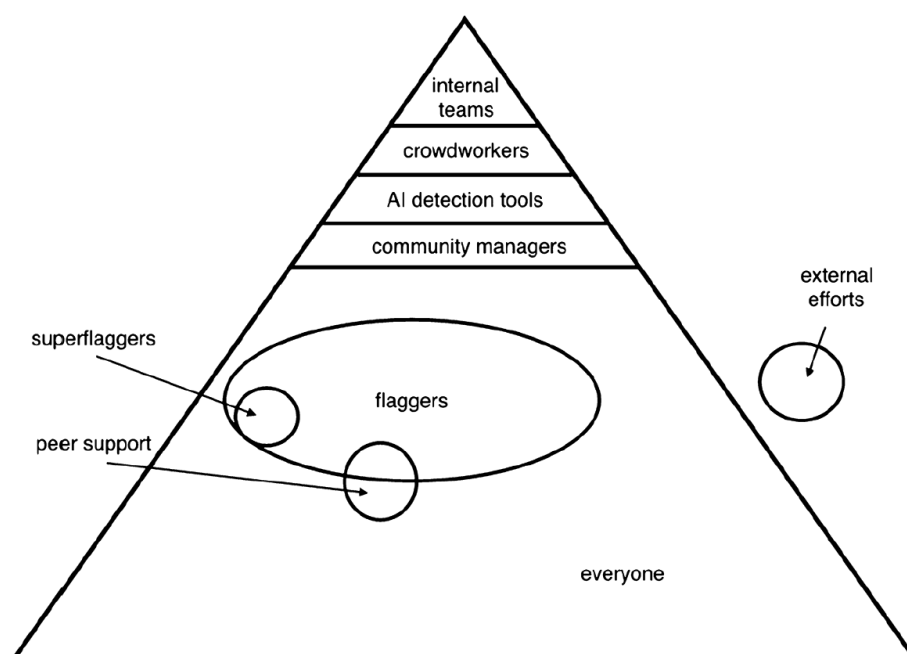


Figure 2-5: The many forms of labor involved in platform moderation (Gillespie, 2018, p. 116)

Moderation in online communities is specifically challenging due to an ever-increasing amount of content, which needs to be monitored, and, in most cases, a lack of well-trained moderators. In the book *Custodians of the Internet*, Gillespie (2018) summarizes the many forms of labor involved in platform moderation (Figure 2-5). Dosono and Semaan (2019) argue that particularly for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) moderators on Reddit, the emotional labour involved in free moderation on

other forums can be taxing. However, people are more likely to engage with online communities that exhibit signs of moderation (Wise, Hamman and Thorson, 2006). The dynamics of moderation practice could enable platform designers and owners to better frame the grounding problem for those who want to engage with it. In this way, they may be able to reinforce engagement, whilst appreciating the human context of exchange, leading to reduced cross-posting and increased constructive, more meaningful messages (Whittaker et al., 1998).

In this section, we discuss previous research about moderation from two perspectives. We first discuss the taxonomies of online community moderation in a functional perspective, to support the later studies in scoping the kind of moderation involved with the research platform. Then we review prior research about norms and guideline in online communities, to discuss moderation from the policies perspective.

### 2.3.1 Taxonomies of Online Community Moderation

Grimmelmann (2015, p. 63-70) provided a taxonomy for online moderation across different platforms. Four dichotomies are used to describe the spectrum of potential approaches including automatic vs. manual; transparent vs. secret; ex ante vs. ex post; and central vs. distributed (see Table 2.2),

Dichotomies	Descriptions
<i>automatic vs. manual</i>	Content is either filtered automatically or reviewed by a human expert, who is either employed or volunteering for this.
<i>transparent vs. secret</i>	The majority of members is either aware of moderation actions or those are hidden from them.
<i>ex ante vs. ex post</i>	Moderation occurs either before content is visible to a larger audience or after the fact.
<i>central vs. distributed</i>	Either a core team of dedicated moderators is responsible for moderation or community at large (or a qualified subset).

Table 2.2: Taxonomy for online moderation across different platforms (Grimmelmann, 2015, p. 63-70)

As an example, the online version of the New York Times uses *ex ante* moderation practices to provide *central* moderators complete *manual* control of what readers would engage with (Park et al., 2016). Such an approach is highly labour intensive and remains, necessarily, *secret*. Some research has also looked into automated forms of manual moderation support in health-related communities (Huh, Yetisgen-Yildiz and Pratt,



2013). In many cases using rating systems *ex-post*, the distinction between central and distributed becomes slightly muddled. For *distributed* and *ex-post* moderation, community members identify inappropriate comments and flag or report them to a core team of dedicated moderators. Downsides of this approach include reliance on a dedicated audience caring about quality on the platform and moderators acting swiftly (Park et al., 2016; Lampe and Resnick, 2004).

Grimmelmann (2015, p. 58-63) also identified several high-level techniques for moderation including: (1) excluding (of offending members or content); (2) pricing (access to content without moderation); (3) organising (mostly of content, includes editing); (4) and norm-setting (e.g., by referencing best practices). However, which strategies exemplify these techniques and how they might shape up to be effective in the context of online discussion platforms, remains an open question (Gilbert et al., 2017). Similarly, we lack insights into how these techniques relay back to the varied norms and guidelines online communities may have for themselves. There is little we know from previous work about the relationships between members and moderators in online communities.

### 2.3.2 Norms and Guidelines in Online Communities

Online communities have essentially two forms in which they may communicate expected behaviours: they may have high-level norms providing general guidance or explicit rules (Kiesler et al., 2012). Previous research has used a set of various terms on it including: norms, rules, policies, laws, governance, requirements and code of conduct (Preece, 2000; Kraut and Resnick, 2012; Gillespie, 2018; Fiesler et al., 2018; Seering, 2020). Different from laws, norms are socially negotiated and contextually dependent modes of conduct (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). Thus online communities need to enforce their norms contextually. This can span topics including membership requirements, code of practice, flagging and reporting process, privacy, copyright rules. For example, the image-based bulletin board 4Chan applies a “work safe” mode (4Chan, 2018); Wikipedia asks editors that their articles convey a Neutral Point of View (NPOV)<sup>2</sup>. Fiesler et al. (2018) summarize that subreddits on Reddit may have restrictive and prescriptive rules on various topics including but not limited to: advertising & commercialization, doxxing/personal info, format, harassment, hate speech, links & outside content, politics, spam, trolling.

Norms govern behaviour in communities by setting expectations for allowable conduct, and may be enforced if and when members of a community perceive that a serious violation of its norms has taken place. Expectations in online communities can be

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<sup>2</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral\\_point\\_of\\_view](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view)

descriptive or injunctive, with implications for their clarity and enforceability (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). Policies direct behaviour in online communities, and may be subject to national and international laws (Preece, 2000). Norms are an emergent property of social interactions, and moderators have limited power over norms in online communities (Grimmelmann, 2015). Moderators can influence norms directly by articulating them in community guidelines (Grimmelmann, 2015), or enforce norms indirectly through moderation actions such as highlighting good behaviour and hiding bad behaviour (Kraut and Resnick, 2012). If a certain behaviour is associated with a recent trend, the norms can be challenged and become dynamic (Sparkman and Walton, 2017). In this thesis, we refer to community norms as the dynamic normative phenomena reached by the community. We scope guidelines to explicit rules and guidelines publicly displayed or pinned in the online space inside the community, which all community members should follow. And we are interested in whether and what kind of moderation action or norm change will take place, when counter-normative behaviours happened in online communities.

## 2.4 Dissents in Online Communities

Not different from face-to-face communication, there are times when people have different opinions online. As the lifeblood of online communities, people online, with mixed cultural, temporal, geographical and technical modes, still represent a different order of attunement (Yu, Spiel and Watts, 2018, 2019; Yu, 2017). One of the main challenges for online community moderators is how to deal with unwanted behaviours, in a way to balance between reinforcing existing norms and also nurture the evolution of norms carefully. Some unwanted behaviours are hard to see as anything other than destructive acts by malicious individuals. If all unwanted behaviour was like this, moderators would only need ban and delete abilities to solve the problem. However, a more nuanced understanding is available by characterising potentially unwanted behaviours as anti-normative. Whether or not a behaviour is seen as unwanted or intolerable must depend on the nature of exchanges taking place and potentially also the social capital of the member who enacts it.

Early papers on online communities in CSCW, even when predominantly concerned with behaviours labelled as flaming or trolling, acknowledged the vital role that disruption plays in forming and establishing communities that create a positive point of identification by association for its members (Bruckman et al., 1994). Trolling itself extends on a continuum and does not necessarily identify inherently disruptive individuals, where valued members can become drawn in (Cheng et al., 2017). It is in

the nature of impassioned debate for feelings to run high. Equally, individual postings may be more tolerated if they are positively received by high status ‘up votes’ than those with neutral status (Sarkar et al., 2012). Nevertheless, disruption and dissent have mainly been approached as a problem to be solved. Bruckman et. al. define behaviour as “deviant” if it is not in accordance with community standards (Bruckman et al., 1994, 2006, 2018), while Kirman et. al. describe those who break the social contract in online communities as being invested in “mischief and mayhem” (Kirman, Lineham and Lawson, 2012). Sternberg uses expressions such as “misbehaviour”, similar to “misconduct” to refer to content that does not conform to norms (Sternberg, 2000). However, conflicts and dissent are not per se undesirable instances of engagement, rather it depends on how they are handled and how different perspectives are valued or dismissed (Björgvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren, 2012; Frauenberger et al., 2019). Wikipedia shows a little more nuance: the idea of an ad hominem attack can be used to differentiate undesirable behaviour from legitimate disputes. Some mediators have worked to help conflicting parties to express, recognise, and respond positively to their personal and substantive differences (Billings and Watts, 2010). Some (parts of) online communities are explicitly designed around dissent, for example, the subreddit ChangeMyView<sup>3</sup> (Tan et al., 2016) or the discussion platform Kialo<sup>4</sup>. These communities encourage constructive dissent with the goal to guide people in the process of understanding complex issues from a range of varied perspectives. They explicitly foster a “mindset of conversation” to online exchanges, instead of zero-sum debate and without tolerance of hate speech. Research approaches are needed that can investigate forms of guidance that help to create more inclusive outcomes. So in this thesis, dissent is scoped as a matter of identifying occurrences of anti-normative behaviour in an online community as they encode norm-relevant differences of viewpoint, and that have received moderator attention. The approach adopted to the investigation is to collate and analyse relevant experiences in moderation as they relate to cases of anti-normative contributions (postings). The broad scoping of dissent for the purposes of this thesis is to better characterise the work of moderators as they may seek to engage with challenges to community norms. Such engagement has the potential to allow for freedom of expression and sustainable evolution, as new generations of visitors become participants and then members.

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.reddit.com/r/changemyview/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.kialo.com>

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we reviewed the literature in HCI and CSCW about online communities. We retrospect the literature in sociology about communities in order to scope the terms of online communities. Just like it is difficult to define community, there is not an easy sentence about what is an online community. We concluded that online community should be a prototypical term with fuzzy boundary. To further scope online community in this thesis, our work is based on the definition raised by Preece (2000, p.10), consist of four components including *people, a shared purpose, policies, and computer systems*. Within online communities, we discussed the social roles in online communities, elaborating on the Reader-to-Leader framework (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009), drawing our attention to the newcomers and moderators, as these two roles are vital in online community moderation research in HCI and CSCW. We then discuss the limitation with the online community research about designing usability and planning sociability. We raised the concerns that contemporary online communities created by users are abided by online community platforms such as Facebook and Reddit. Being born on online community platforms introduce the challenges limiting the usability and sociability choices available for community owners.

We then study the literature about online community moderation. Starting with the taxonomies of online community moderation Grimmelmann (2015), we recognise the challenges in the combination of ways online communities can be moderated. We further discuss literature about norms and guidelines in online communities. As we are interested in what kind of moderation or norm change will take place, when counter-normative behaviours happen in online communities.

Finally, we further elaborate on research about conflicts, misbehaviours, dispute and debate literature in online discourse. We raised the term dissent, looking into a term identifying occurrences of anti-normative behaviour in online communities. As Kim (2000) emphasized, *successful communities evolve to keep pace with the changing needs of members and owners*. We suggest that dissenting does not always do harm to communities, rather with dissents handled smartly in moderation, it could lead to healthier, stronger, and more sustainable evolution in community norms.

In the next chapter, we present our first study with MetaFilter, a community weblog. This study draws on a long-term analysis of moderation practices in the MetaFilter community, using thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of three complementary datasets, to explore human-centred moderation by closely working with an online community.

## Chapter 3

# A Case Study with MetaFilter about Moderation Strategies in Caring for Online Communities

### 3.1 Chapter Overview

In Chapter 2 we reviewed literature about online community and community moderation. We raised our concerns about the relationships between dissents and moderators in online communities, and how can moderation activities shape online communities including the norms and sustainability. This chapter presents empirical work with MetaFilter (MetaFilter study, or thesis study 1 hereafter), a community weblog, using thematic analyses (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of three complementary datasets: (1a) an archive of moderator postings; (1b) interviews with experienced moderators; and (1c) an open discussion about moderation with the larger MetaFilter member base.

The purpose of this study is to obtain some data to explore human-centred moderation by closely working with an online community. We chose MetaFilter as our research platform because it is a well-established online community, with clear boundaries for membership, has been praised for creating the foundation for positive engagement (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009), as well as the high quality of contents it produces (Chandrasekharan et al., 2017). We chose to thematic analyse (Braun and Clarke, 2006) the moderator postings, as well as member checking (Birt et al., 2016) via consulting our analysed results with MetaFilter moderators and members because we would like to closely look at the whole community perspective. Our analysis shows that the

quality and community acceptance of moderation on MetaFilter hinges not only on the practical strategies employed, but also on the careful stance moderators take in respect of community membership and participation. We argue that cognisance of these matters is critical for the development of policies and supporting technologies for sustainable and constructive discussions in online communities, if they are to be robust against the risks posed by intra-community tensions around difficult or controversial topics. We end this chapter by attempting to link these conceptual findings to other types of online communities, and lay the groundwork for later chapters.

### 3.2 Study Background & Motivation

Through the propagation of online media, new opportunities arise for people to share their comments with friends and strangers alike. Online platforms offer a variety of opportunities for their readers to engage with their media and each other, typically in the form of text, leading to significant growth in the importance of user-generated content (Gilbert et al., 2017). There are different roles users can play as engagement develops, including social functions to support interactions between users, to the point that they operate as online communities (Welser et al., 2007). A good early experience with interactions encountered on a platform can encourage newcomer ‘readers’ to join and then stick with the community as members (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009).

As a form of communication, however, textual interaction requires both more work and high awareness towards its ambiguity to craft communication so that it conveys appropriate social information (Walther, 1992). It can easily be subject to misunderstandings and lead to conflicts between readers that then in turn require careful management to resolve that itself respects the nature of the medium (Billings and Watts, 2010). The overwhelming amount of information online is challenging to comprehend and constructively discuss in the appropriate venues (Semaan et al., 2015). Additionally, the anonymous or pseudonymous nature of many of these platforms can lead to contributors behaving in a much more problematic manner than they would in other social contexts (Suler, 2004). *“Don’t read the comments.”* is one of the most well-meant suggestions given out when it comes to online discussion of news, which is notoriously deemed to be low-quality (Reagle, 2015).

Most platforms use moderation to improve the quality of comments and the discussions they constitute; for example, Facebook is planning to hire more content moderators and aim to have 20,000 by the end of 2018 (Knight, 2018). A moderated environment may appear to be attractive to some community members if it provides them with the

opportunity to stay closer on topic within a given discussion without an unacceptable loss of freedom of expression (Wise, Hamman and Thorson, 2006). Moderator interventions must manage a difficult balance between creating perceptions of “thought police” censure on the one hand and properly safeguarding community values on the other. Additionally, moderation can at times enable platform designers and owners to establish a common ground for those who want to engage with it. In this way, they may be able to reinforce engagement, whilst appreciating the human context of exchange, leading to reduced cross-posting and increased constructive, more meaningful messages (Whittaker et al., 1998). Discussions appear to be more diverse and evidence-based on social network sites such as Facebook, if there is moderation (Camaj and Santana, 2015). A wide variety of approaches can be taken to guide online moderation (Grimmelmann, 2015) but it is difficult to discern which strategies have a positive effect on the overall discussion culture and which are at the very least ineffective. One approach to answer this is to look at a community where moderation works well. Due to the external praise as “counterexamples of abusive content” (Chandrasekharan et al., 2017), we chose MetaFilter as a case study of moderation in a positive context.

MetaFilter is a ‘community weblog’ founded in 1999, to which members can contribute a link or a comment<sup>1</sup>. It has a very well established moderation culture, which has been praised for creating the foundation for the positive engagement the site offers (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009) as well as the high-quality content it produces, especially within the comment sections (Chandrasekharan et al., 2017). The community around the site is, for example, known for a highly influential thread on emotional labour<sup>2</sup>, which attracted 2113 comments within 30 days (after which threads on MetaFilter are closed). A small team of moderators ensures constant moderation availability through a 24/7 staffing rotation. Hence, MetaFilter is a site that offers a community of members a platform to engage with each other in productive discussions about topics of their interest. As the community is comparatively small (less than 8000 active contributors each year), it provides a feasible case study for HCI: allowing for a good in-depth understanding of practices from several angles (comment corpus, moderators’ and members’ perspectives) while still covering overall context.

Whereas critique on online moderation models and suggestions for improvement are fairly common (Grimmelmann, 2015), little is known about the practices of moderation that lead to constructive online discussions: careful moderator interventions guiding discussion and overall community engagement. We argue that insights into these ap-

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.metafilter.com/about.mefi>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.metafilter.com/151267/Wheres-My-Cut-On-Unpaid-Emotional-Labor>

proaches could provide an understanding of how discursive norms are established, re-affirmed and negotiated to lead to high-quality content in online communities, especially what we could help to create well-moderated spaces for motivated subcommunities.

We investigated MetaFilter’s moderation strategies through the following research questions (MeFi-RQs), which were derived from the high level research questions of this thesis in Section 1.3.

- **MeFi-RQ1** Which moderation practices are employed at MetaFilter?
- **MeFi-RQ2** How do the moderators conceptualise their work?
- **MeFi-RQ3** How does the member base perceive moderation on MetaFilter?

Through our analysis, these questions then lead to insights into potential core concepts of careful online moderation, which is discussed in Chapter 4 later and lays the groundwork for future studies.

Our thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) triangulates between three sets of data: moderators’ comments on the site, interviews with the moderating team, and a discussion with members of the community. Subsequently, we identified how moderators establish their authority, prevent conflicts, and engage with the community outside of core moderation activities, all within a frame of pro-active care for their community. These engagements are driven by an underlying level of mutual trust and respect between moderators and members on the site. We derive three forms of best practice from our findings and based on the concept of care, which stand to be useful to establish and maintain online communities more generally.

### 3.2.1 MetaFilter

MetaFilter is a website on which members can collect and reference other web pages. Coined as a ‘community weblog’, it was founded in 1999 as a space for friends of the owner and grew into a platform for cultured conversation. As of February 2018, 270 699 user identifiers have been assigned. Throughout 2017, 7147 unique users interacted with the original site generating on average 1140 comments on 19.5 link posts per day<sup>3</sup>. Next to the core site, there exist sub-sites for a Question & Answer forum (AskMeFi), a platform to discuss pop cultural media (FanFare), self-promoting areas (Projects, Music, Jobs), an event planner for open meetings between members (IRL), a backchannel to discuss details about the site and post feature requests (MetaTalk)

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<sup>3</sup>Taken from <http://stuff.metafilter.com/infodump/>



as well as a simple chat environment, a podcast and a section for collected stats about the site (Labs) (see also, Figure 3-1).

In 2014, the site ran into financial problems (Dewey, 2014) due to their placing in google ranking systems. After a call for member contributions (Haughey, 2014), it regained financial stability and is financed by 4161 individuals as of March 2018.

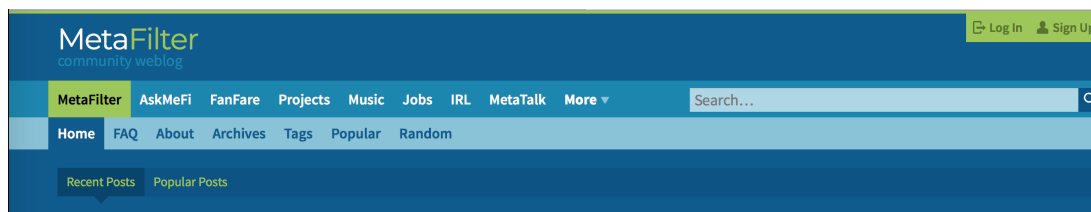


Figure 3-1: MetaFilter’s menu structure in 2018

While only registered members can post and comment, everybody can visit and passively read everything on the site. Sign-up is currently possible at a one-time fee of \$5. Prospective members are introduced to the concept of trust and the understanding of content quality on the site. They are also presented with links for further summarised information on posting guidelines. Further community guidelines can be found in the FAQ section<sup>4</sup>. Hence, several social and technical access barriers keep the site mostly spam-free. The site itself does not aim at growth, but rather tries to foster a community feel. A dedicated staff team is paid for the human-only moderation system. The site has been praised for its high level of civilised discourse (Dewey, 2014). All members can use flags to alert moderators about certain comments. Next to the founder, the first additional moderator was hired in 2005 and met with scepticism by a significant portion of the then-current member base (Ali-Hasan, 2005). Currently, the site employs eight people (including the current owner) of which seven act as moderators and one as coder<sup>5</sup>. All of them have been long-time members of the site before they were hired. The deletion rate for comments on the main site was at about 2%, and the reported rate for comments was 5.4% for 2017<sup>6</sup>, which appears to be similar to other online communities discussing news articles (Cheng, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil and Leskovec, 2015). Previous research has shown how moderators’ actions are fundamental for the identity of the community (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009).

In Grimmelmann (2015)’s terms (discussed in Section 2.3.1), MetaFilter employs *manual* moderation, with a mix of an *ex ante* approach for posts and *ex post* approach

<sup>4</sup><https://faq.metafilter.com>

<sup>5</sup><https://faq.metafilter.com/#33>

<sup>6</sup>Own analysis on all MetaFilter comment data for 2017.

for comments. Moderation is informed by a *distributed* flagging system, but actualised by a *central* team of dedicated moderators. Moderation is made explicitly *transparent* where appropriate. As high-level moderating techniques, the site additionally relies on organising (mostly through editing) and norm-setting by example (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009) with little pricing (for membership) and some exclusion (through temporary or permanent bans).

What is missing so far is a detailed look into what strategies are actualised when and how they relate to moderators' and members' understanding of moderation in context. Taking a deeper look at these practices and the resulting discursive norms within a small, but well-established community can lead to further insights about core aspects of careful online moderation. Specifically, we add to previous work by (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009), an analysis of the same community, but with a corpus of comments 18 years after the site has been founded and add the explicit perception and self-reflection of moderators as well as site members.

### 3.3 Method

We draw from three sources of data: comments, interviews, and online member discussion. We have adopted a methodological position that retains a separation between them to respect the distinctive nature of each source. Furthermore, our enquiry grew with the outcome of one analysis sensitising the analysis of the next. This is inspired by grounded theoretical sampling as a principle for progressing inductive enquiry (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). This approach allowed the framing of our final inquiry - member discussion of our broad provisional perspective - that would otherwise not have been possible.

Our work stems from the qualitative analysis of three complementary data sources: the 2016 and 2017 corpus of comments on the main page of MetaFilter (the user-generated news aspect), interviews with four of their seven staffed moderators, and responses to a post within the community where members could contribute their perspective around moderating on MetaFilter. The latter two also partly entailed active member checking (Birt et al., 2016) about our previous results inviting interviewees or commenters to contest our analysis and co-create knowledge about moderating strategies. The multiple viewpoints allow us to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the practices employed in moderation on MetaFilter and which aspects are valued by which stakeholder. The studies were designed and conducted in accordance with the 13-point ethics checklist of the Department of Computer Science, University of Bath (Appendix A.1). MetaFilter

has partnered with us in this research by providing us with the corpus data in early 2018 as a data dump and being available for questions regarding the understanding of their particular culture. Moderators were also kept in the loop regarding this publication. They could review it, though no change happened. Other than the described procedures here, though, they were not involved in the analysis including the write-up of our findings.

### 3.4 Thesis Study 1a: Thematic Analysis of MetaFilter Moderator’s Comments 2016 & 2017

In this section, we present the first sub-study of the MetaFilter study (Thesis study 1a) which we thematic analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2006) the 2016 and 2017 corpus of comments on the main page of MetaFilter. From our analysis, we identified four main themes and 11 sub-codes under the four main themes. We later wrote up the findings from MetaFilter study 1a for member-checking (Birt et al., 2016) in study 1b and 1c.

#### 3.4.1 Data Acquisition: Comments

	2016		2017	
comments	absolute	percent	absolute	percent
overall	523 571		416 416	
moderators	4 183	0.80%	3 349	0.80%
moderating	1 365	32.63%	1 184	35.35%
deleted	9 481	1.81%	8 516	2.05 %
comment length	mean	median	mean	median
overall	413	241	439	260
moderators	494	206	538	240
moderating	201	173	203	169
comments per member	mean	median	mean	median
overall	66.15	8	58.26	7
moderators	380.27	109	304.46	131
moderating	170.63	130	169.14	160

Table 3.1: Distribution of comments in the corpus. Percentage of moderating comments given as percentage of comments by moderators.

We were granted access to all comments (including deleted comments) upon request by MetaFilter for the years 2016 and 2017. Table 3.1 illustrates descriptive statistics for both corpuses. Notable in the last section is that moderators can be seen as high-

frequency members as they post on average more than six times as many comments (more than twice as many moderating comments) than the member base overall.

We used the data set from the year 2016 to explore the overall comment base and to identify initial codes and themes for a range of comment types (e.g., general, moderating, deleted). Two authors then coded a random subset of 335 (10%) moderator comments (including the general and moderating purpose comments) of the 2017 subset individually and then established the themes stemming from the combined 2016 and 2017 set in discussing them among each other. As our previously established codes appeared to apply to the 2017 set as well, we deemed the data base to be saturated. While the coding and analysis were done on the level of individual comments, we considered the context of these comments by revisiting the associated thread to better understand the intent of a moderating intervention. The data set itself was not anonymised; members were identifiable through their unique numeric identifier on the site. One author coded the set by hand on print-outs before transferring them to Dedoose, the other solely used Dedoose. In cases of disagreement, we briefly explained our rationale and, if possible, attempted to find a way to combine different codes. These comments served to answer MeFi-RQ1 and, implicitly, MeFi-RQ2.

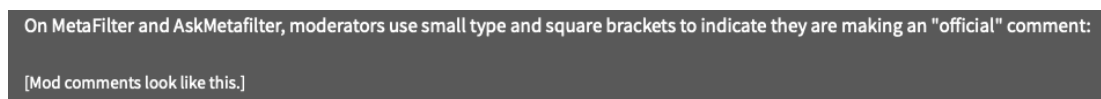


Figure 3-2: MetaFilter's comment format taken from <https://faq.metafilter.com/>

As moderators use the same handle when moderating comments or interacting with the site as a member, they use different textual styles to indicate the position from which they post: The text is a smaller format and within square brackets for moderating comments. Below is a comparison between a regular post and moderation. We retain the original style when quoting a comment (see also Figure 3-2):

Example regular quote. – *commenter*

[Typo fixed!] – *commenter*

When quoting from comments available online, we paraphrase them lightly. While we ensure that the meaning remains unchanged, this serves to make the comments harder to search online and, hence, preserves some anonymity (Moreno et al., 2013).

### 3.4.2 Data Analysis

We used thematic analysis (TA), a widely used qualitative method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As an interpretative method, the yielded results and insights differ depending on who performs the analysis. The robustness of the results relies on researchers' rigour and their expertise. To increase both, two separate coders conducted the analysis first individually and then consolidated disagreements. We use dedoose<sup>7</sup> as the tool for analysis, benefited from its collaborative feature.

Each of the data sets has been coded individually and resulted in a different set of themes. We integrate the findings of each individual analysis as part of our discussion in this study.

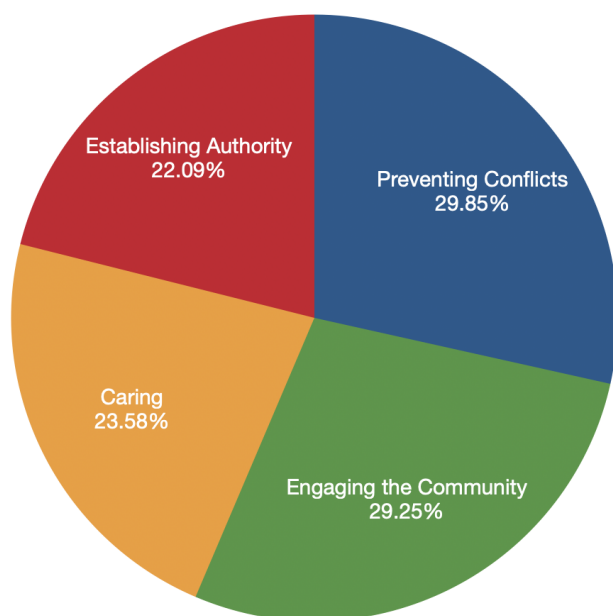


Figure 3-3: Distribution of strategies in analysed comments

Section	Codes
3.4.4	Establishing Authority
3.4.4.1	Calling out Individuals
3.4.4.2	Pulling a Hard Stop
3.4.5	Preventing Conflicts
3.4.5.1	Referencing Best Practices
3.4.5.2	Suggesting Alternative Venues
3.4.5.3	Subtle Guidance
3.4.6	Engaging with the Community
3.4.6.1	Personal Perspectives
3.4.6.2	Modelling Best Practices
3.4.7	Caring
3.4.7.1	Praise
3.4.7.2	Transparency
3.4.7.3	Being Empathic
3.4.7.4	Explicit Care

Table 3.2: Final codes

### 3.4.3 Results

From our shared reading and coding of the 2016 and 2017 corpus of comments on the core MetaFilter site, we established four main themes for moderating practices (MeFi-RQ1) and the rationale behind these (MeFi-RQ2): *Establishing Authority*, *Mediating Conflicts*, *Engaging the Community* and *Caring*. The comments are intended to assist our readers' understanding of the grounding for the inferences we have drawn. Moder-

<sup>7</sup><https://www.dedoose.com>

ators are distinguished through individual identifiers (M1, M2 etc.). When a quote is specific in this thesis, we add the context of the comment thread to it for the readers to better understand the comments. Below is an example format for a quote:

<Context of the comment thread, month/year of posting; context of the comment>

Example comment quoted. – *commenter*

The four main strategies we identified, and their distribution within the corpus, are listed in Table 3.3 and Figure 3-3. However, while it is relevant to see for some practices how frequently they occur relative to one another, we do not assume that the pertinence and relevance of a practice can be asserted only by it being prominently represented within the corpus. Overall, the four main strategies are represented in roughly equal parts within the corpus, which indicates that they are similarly embedded as routine aspects of MetaFilter moderator practice.

### 3.4.4 Establishing Authority

Moderators on Metafilter establish their authority on the site using two dominant strategies: calling out people who have a negative influence on a given thread and pulling a hard stop. The latter strategy involves establishing logical consequences for continued behaviour of individuals or groups behaving counter to explicit or implicit guidelines and continuous demarcation of those guidelines through reiteration.

#### 3.4.4.1 Calling out Individuals

Calling individuals out on undesirable commenting happens in different forms. We understand a post as calling someone out, if a moderator names a specific member and the action they are expected to not do any further. In these cases, the offending comments are usually still part of the discussion. However, moderators tend to be specific in what exactly is the offending content or behaviour. Occasionally, they give a warning, where they detail where they see a conversation heading, point to someone who is fuelling that direction and explicitly state how they expect them to act.

<Weekly report on US politics, August 2017>

[We're stopping this becoming a conspiracy theory derail; <member>, you need to judge off-the-wall theories better.] – *M1*

While the expectation towards future behaviour is only vaguely phrased, it signals to other members what exactly a problem with a previous comment might be from the

moderators' perspective. It invites the members to re-evaluate a moderator's judgement, which then allows for a broader discussion on moderating practices<sup>8</sup>.

#### 3.4.4.2 Pulling a Hard Stop

When declaring certain aspects of the conversation on a thread more generally undesirable and asking multiple members to stop through calling out or deletion, the moderators use similarly explicit strategies as above. Usually, these situations are accompanied with the deletions of selected comments.

<Discussion on Conspiracy Theorists within the US government, March 2017; some members commented negatively on the president's weight>  
[This fat-shaming derail is grotesque and needs to stop immediately. Thank you.]  
– M2

This particular comment also illustrates how moderators are not acting as semi-objective beings, but also, for example, express their opinion on what is happening in a discussion.

Hence, they are not simply establishing their authority to exert dominance, but to actively shape the discussion. In their comments, they reiterate boundaries and invite members to renegotiate them. However, in situ, they decide about the course of action and use the additional instruments at their disposal, such as being able to delete a post, to make far-reaching decisions about the conversation style and content within a given thread. They also do so from a transparently subjective perspective, including their own values and judgement of how certain topics are discussed.

#### 3.4.5 Preventing Conflicts

Conflicts on MetaFilter can take on different forms. The discussion of different or even opposing viewpoints is explicitly encouraged, even though conflicts stemming from meta-discussion, derailment or ad-hominem attacks are removed (i.e., deleted) from the conversation. Moderators do not visibly engage in ongoing conflicts. Instead, they occasionally steer the conversation in a more preventative fashion, e.g., by referencing the community guidelines or pointing out alternative venues for certain content that might lead to unhealthy conflict within a thread. Outside of their comments made explicitly as moderators they also appear to comment on threads with the intent to subtly guide discussions.

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<sup>8</sup>Albeit, those are transferred over to the MetaTalk section of the site which we did not analyse here.

### 3.4.5.1 Referencing Best Practices

References to best practices and community guidelines are demarcations of the boundaries for what is deemed admissible conversation within a certain thread. Brought in early in a thread, it also allows participating members to know beforehand, how moderators assess it.

<Catch-All thread on US politics, November 2017>

[One deleted. As per recent discussion<sup>9</sup>, rather than pulling fast jokes linking to a tweet about Trump's "Muslim migrant" retweet, some explanation and a link to an article with context and more information would be preferred. Thank you.] – *M4*

Particularly notable about this comment is, that it references a MetaTalk discussion about the topic and builds the foundation of the moderating action on a shared understanding of the boundaries which are reinforced through this action. Included in such a reminder is the notion of members being expected to be mindful of other members and their particular circumstances.

### 3.4.5.2 Suggesting Alternative Venues

Occasionally, members engage in discussions, that might be better suited to alternative venues or threads within the site. In some cases, this means managing the quality of content on the main site. Instead of stopping a repetitive conversation (as shown above) moderators might suggest arguing a case in a previous thread where it might fit better.

<Discussion of US right-wing strategies to sway the French elections, January 2017; members were arguing about counter-strategies>  
[If people want to discuss the benefits of literal Nazi-punching, we have a whole thread on that elsewhere<sup>10</sup>.] – *M5*

Such a comment is placed to prevent a derail within the current thread. Hence, having an in-depth knowledge about the topics and subsequent modes of discussion members engage in and acting on early signs allows moderators to keep the conversation within a thread on topic.

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<sup>9</sup><https://metatalk.metafilter.com/24620/Resetting-expectations-about-political-discussion-on-MetaFilter#inline-1290536>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.metafilter.com/164695/Thats-just-how-you-negotiate-with-a-Nazi-Ask-your-grandfather>



### 3.4.5.3 Subtle Guidance

Another strategy preventing conflicts can be seen when moderators subtly guide threads through commenting as members, not using the established moderating format of small text in square brackets.

<Discussion on loneliness, particularly as a phenomenon affecting predominantly men, August 2017; on-going debate on how MetaFilter poses within this context>

MetaFilter, like most other stuff, is what you make of it. For many people it may not mean that much besides a space to read things on the internet. For many people it means more. It's okay wherever you stand on that, but don't try to assume everyone else is wherever you are. – *M3*

*M3* appeals to a sense of community with different interests. By not formatting their comment as a moderation comment, they explicitly include themselves in said community. Moderators also might use this formatting to convey context to someone who feels like an outsider to the knowledge required to understand in-jokes of the community.

<Candidates for 'The Great American Novel', January 2017; a member has been asking about an inside joke they did not understand>

<member>, it is a play on a quotable episode in a poem by Kipling called "The English Flag" (...). – *M4*

By explaining the background, *M4* not only defuses the hostility of such a situation, but also invites others who might have similar feelings, but are less vocal about it, to participate in the conversations and the camaraderie.

In summary, moderators on MetaFilter have several strategies at their disposal to prevent conflicts from happening in the first place or dominating a thread. They do so by making their decisions transparent, referencing a shared understanding of community, reminding members about best practices or alternative places and subtly guiding conversations by either pointing towards a shared community or providing an entry point into the conversation to outsiders. Hence, active engagement with the community to understand where a discussion is heading, is essential to their moderation.

### 3.4.6 Engaging with the Community

Moderators on MetaFilter engage with the community either by providing their perspective or additional information to discussions. In doing so, they provide a best practice example on how to engage with the community. By actively participating in

the community, they show a personal stance in how they want it to develop. Moderators assume a position of power even in engaging with the community as members as they have the privilege of being able to shape it as well.

#### 3.4.6.1 Personal Perspectives

Such an interaction can be as little as providing a personal impression towards others' comments or articles. By doing this – outside of moderator formatting – moderators contribute to discussions with personal experiences situating their comments.

<Paulina Porizkova on how she became a feminist, June 2017; discussion on sexual determination>

We do that in my hometown! We also have integrated clinics at the high schools where children can receive routine care, including treatment for STDs, prenatal care, and the pill. Go to your school board and fight for these things! If only the conservative parents show up, they are the only opinion that's heard. The sensible parents with open-minded attitudes towards sexuality need to be present as well, and often, and loudly. – *M1*

The information provided by M1 is connected to personal experience in a specific place, illustrates the local status quo and provides suggestions on how to reach a similar space. By doing so, this is a further example of how moderators make themselves personally vulnerable as well and are present as members as well as as moderators.

#### 3.4.6.2 Modelling Best Practices

While moderators mostly model positive attitudes in their interaction with the community, they also do not shy away from challenging others' opinions and arguments.

<Enabling different styles of play in popular games, October 2017; conversation up to this point dominated by a discussion on technical difficulties>

That position seems quite throwing-hands-in-the-air to me, to be frank. Conversational choices in such games do the same ultimately that everything else concerned with state-management in a game does: changing a flag or other variable behind the curtains that then remains as such for the rest of the play-through. Coming up with a simple way to alter that state-change outside of the normal game loop is not a difficult challenge. It's a little bit of additional work, and if it results in a more flexible, interesting, accessible game it's absolutely work worth doing. Either way, it's far from structurally inconceivable. – *M3*

After an initial qualification of the argument made in a different comment, M3 illustrates the status quo and potential benefits of changing it.

Moderators actively take part in the community aspect of the site. In becoming personal, providing situated advice and positioning oneself, this engagement makes the moderators vulnerable towards the sites' members as individual entities. By disclosing their private stance, they can be attacked or judged by their opinions, which can be used in arguments about interactions with members as well.

### 3.4.7 Caring

We discerned another theme, which is tightly interconnected with the overall moderating stance and engagement with the community: Care. While we present it as an isolated theme here, it permeates all the other strategies in moderation as we discuss in more detail below. Moderators make their actions explicit and provide reasons for them to be accountable for them and make them negotiable within the site, they give compliments and praise and provide empathetic comfort.

#### 3.4.7.1 Praise

Outside of their moderation formatting, moderators freely compliment others on their posts and comments. Praise can, beyond constituting enthusiastic support for particular comments, show how the site continues to be relevant to moderators as individuals. It indicates that they care about the content posted there.

<US rapper including a marginalised voice in their music, May 2017>  
Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah is a fantastic writer and Missy Elliott is my person of the year for now for hard-to-identify reasons... so this is very timely for me. Thank you for posting it. – M5

M5 explicitly converses with individuals instead of the community as such. Additionally, M5 points out what makes the contribution of another member personally valuable. Through that, they mark high-quality content implicitly as well, however, they do so through personal responses and not necessarily in the format of explicitly moderating comments.

#### 3.4.7.2 Transparency

In many instances, we observed moderators making their processes transparent to members. This concerns edits of previous posts, a glimpse about actions behind the scenes

or when acting upon a member request. Being transparent is an act of care as moderators, by doing so, deliberately pay attention to the needs of the larger member base in terms of understanding moderation, being able to challenge it and learning community norms.

<Obama's article in the Harvard Law Review, January 2017>

[Corrected the spelling of Barack Obama's name.] – M1

<Mastodon, April 2017; request on including Mastodon handles in member profiles>

[Not yet, but I have asked <coder> to check this.] – M3

<The Guardian losing their US-American readership, June 2017>

[Removed a spoiler from the thread, as per request.] – M4

These examples illustrate the range of things that are, strictly speaking, not necessary to communicate to members, but are made transparent regardless. This way, moderators invite members to take part in the processes behind the scenes. In rare cases, moderators also use their comments to indicate that they are aware of something happening but choose *not* to act upon it.

<Seemingly obscure technological development, May 2017; article had been linked to previously>

[I'm having the type of Friday where I'm simply going to declare amnesty for a <topic> double.] – M3

The context for this comment is that, on MetaFilter, a link which has been previously discussed cannot be the basis for another thread. However, M3 made a different judgement call and allowed two posts about the same topic as by that point people enjoyed discussing the topic again. As the post attracted a high number of 'favorites' (42, second most favoured comment in the thread), the community welcomed the decision.

### 3.4.7.3 Being Empathic

We have seen moderators go even further and suggest an empathetic understanding of how a certain comment came to be.

<Catch-All thread on US politics, April 2017; excessive in-jokes on cheese puffs>

[...Individually, it's totally fine, and we absolutely understand the urge, but in practice, more than two dozen jokes about cheese puffs is annoying for others to wade through after the fact.] – M4

The empathy expressed here is two-fold. On one hand, M4 communicates an understanding of how it came that several people started making the same joke. On the other hand, they think of people who might come into the discussion at a later point and find it cumbersome to encounter a derail about an unconnected topic.

Empathy and comfort towards members as well as other readers appears to be a guiding strategy for moderators in several forms. In a similar, but more explicitly phrased case as above, a moderator pleads with the community to find a more appropriate way to discuss a complex context.

<Incident of a mass shooting in the USA, October 2017; increased implied relationship between mental illness and being a shooter>

[A few more removed. Folks, this is a terrible fucking situation and as much as I understand the need to find a way to frame it as inherently an outlier, not-normal occurrence, doing so in terms of mental illness does a huge disservice to the millions and millions of people just living every day with mental illness as part of their normal, day to day lives. If you want to discuss this as being a fucked up, wrong, unconscionable deed to commit, that's ok and understandable, but be careful not to throw a whole great big pile of good people – some of them your fellow MeFites – under the bus due to poorly-considered framing.] – M3

Empathy here takes a very different turn. Swear words are very much considered within the discursive limits of the site culture and are used here to drive the point home that M3, even though they removed comments, considers themselves on their side. Again, empathy is not only brought towards people exhibiting behaviour that is deemed problematic. M3 appeals to the community to share this empathy with their peers, also in an attempt to prevent future conflicts. Incidentally, this comment received a high number (122) of favourites indicating agreement from members of the community.

#### 3.4.7.4 Explicit Care

Care for the community happens sometimes quite explicitly. In connection with US political threads, one moderator provided information in case members required professional help.

<US Election, November 2016>

[If you're having a hard time, please consult the ThereIsHelp<sup>11</sup> page if you need to, and take care of yourself.] – M2

In such a statement, moderators delineate the limits of their abilities to care for the

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<sup>11</sup><http://mefiwiki.com/wiki/ThereIsHelp>

community, while still being aware of issues that might arise and pointing towards alternative options. While a list of helplines is not within the scope of the site itself, an associated wiki lists them along with different topics and for a range of countries around the world.

Hence, caring as an active stance in moderation appears to be a core value underpinning moderators' engagement with the site – be it personal or as members of the staff. While we identified it as its own theme, it encompasses multiple strategies discussed in other themes as well, be it to establish authority, prevent conflicts or engage with the community.

### **3.5 Perspectives of the Community**

Next to our reading of moderators' comments, we aimed to understand how the community – made up of the interplay between moderators and members – conceptualises moderation. We conducted interviews with four volunteering moderators (Section 3.6) and engaged members in a discussion on the associated MetaTalk subsite (Section 3.7). As part of the interviews and the post, we engaged in active member checking (Birt et al., 2016) as a means to re-evaluate our outside perspective with the people who experience moderation on MetaFilter on a regular basis. This means, that in both the interviews with moderators as well as our post on MetaTalk, we presented the results of our analyses in study 1a and invited our participants to challenge and refine them.

### **3.6 Thesis Study 1b: Interview with MetaFilter Moderators**

In this section, we present the second sub-study of our MetaFilter study (MetaFilter study 1b) which we interviewed four out of seven MetaFilter moderators about their moderation work. We also incorporated active member checking (Birt et al., 2016) in this stage by providing part of our results in MetaFilter study 1a during the interview. From our analysis, we identified three main themes about MetaFilter moderation. We combine the discussion of this study with the other MetaFilter substudies (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and present it later in Section 3.8.2.

#### **3.6.1 Method**

After our analysis of the comments, we conducted three two-hour-long semi-structured interviews via an online text-based chat tool and one structured interview with follow-

up questions via email. The guiding questions are available in the Appendix A.3. The site currently hired eight staff members (including the site owner), seven of them act as moderators and one as a coder. Our four participants volunteered after a general inquiry toward all staff members. The textual form was due to our participants' preference.

During the interview, we touched on their connection to the site, how they structure their collaborative environment as well as personal strategies for moderation and how they tie in with their experiences on the site. As per their request, we are using their MetaFilter handles to identify them as interviewees (Bruckman, Luther and Fiesler, 2015). Additionally, we presented our findings up to that point in an abstract way, which allowed participants to reflect on an external perspective on their work. All chats and emails were logged for later analysis. The interviews served to answer MeFi-RQ2.

### 3.6.2 Results & Discussion

The four interviewees were cortex, LobsterMitten, restless\_nomad, and Eyebrows McGee (ages, if given, between 35 and 42). All had achieved at least high school education, with some attending university. One user self-identified as cis-male, two female and one as "more or less female". The four interviewees were all long-time members (6 - 7 years) of the site before they were hired as moderators. cortex is the current owner of MetaFilter. LobsterMitten had a break of nine months due to budget cuts in 2013 and was re-hired later. restless\_nomad has been reading the site passively since 2000 and has extensive moderating experiences outside of their current position (on game forums). LobsterMitten referred to their experience of previously teaching university classes as relevant for their moderating style. While all seven currently active moderators were asked to be interviewed, two of them declined due to time constraints and one only helps out sporadically.

Our analysis follows three themes we established across all interviews.

- Actualising collective guidelines through personal strategies
- Nurturing the community through attentive care
- Moderators as *primi inter parem*

We present our interviewees' personal and collective (as well as collectively personal) strategies when interacting with the site as moderators or members. These strategies tie into their own conceptualisation of what moderation on the site does, what it should do and what it cannot.

### 3.6.2.1 Actualising Collective Guidelines through Personal Strategies

MetaFilter's moderators have developed a range of personal strategies, which through shared enactment become collective guidelines in how to identify and deal with inappropriate content on the site. Seen the other way around, though, the collective guidelines are also flexible enough for moderators to develop their individual personal strategies within them – which in turn makes them individually accountable as well.

As an example of a personal strategy of engaging with the content on the site, one of the moderators tries to seek out personal contact with the members who posted content deemed as problematic. As a personal strategy, this approach exceeds expectations on how moderators are supposed to interact with offending members, which also makes it negotiable with available resources during busier times.

I'll often Mefimail a person to explain my action. (...) If a shift is busy or stressful I do it less. – *LobsterMitten*

Reading across all interviews we noticed a shared set of personal strategies, which appears to be the result of expert long-term engagement with the site. For example, most of them might engage with a thread outside of moderator formatting to subtly guide the discussion.

I'm somewhat more likely to try to redirect conversation with a substantive comment. – *Eyebrows McGee*

I try to do gentle nudging whenever I can. – *cortex*

Finally, explicit guidelines exist for how to deal with the more consequential set of actions available to moderators. These rules concern deletion, when to pull a hard stop in a conversation, grounds for a ban and structure the interaction with members. For example, moderators do not edit members' content without their explicit consent.

Combining personal and shared strategies with explicit guidelines allows moderators to bring an individual note to their moderation on MetaFilter, while also maintaining the quality of moderation in general.

### 3.6.2.2 Moderators as *Primi inter Parem*

As all moderators were previously contributing members to the site, they know both sides of the moderating/moderated coin. However, their continued interaction with the site as a member is not only different from their interaction with the site as a moderator, but also differs from how they previously engaged with the site.



I'm a little more careful about bringing the tough love now that I'm a mod (...) I can't really give in to snarkiness or sarcasm, because even if you're "just" being a user, you're still a mod. – *Eyebrows McGee*

Moderators are careful with how they engage with the site at the time of this study, but also noticed how the site changed for them.

I'm in less good a mood when on the site on average than I was say five years ago because I have to have my nose in conversations about unhappy stuff a lot. – *cortex*

Hence, being a moderator changes how the individuals in that role interact with the site, but also how the site itself acts on them. Moderators have to actively negotiate their dual roles of acting as members on the site while simultaneously being responsible for the quality of content, also as a role model to the members in their community.

As the current owner, cortex has a special role towards members and moderators alike.

the buck stops with cortex. I'm not sure if users respect him more but they know it's a final decision, and he's really conscientious about taking the hard knocks from users when we have to do something unpopular, and protecting the rest of us. – *Eyebrows McGee*

Not only is he in the position to set explicit boundaries, if that is required, but he also represents these decisions. He takes responsibility for the site and its employees. For example, he was the only moderator bringing up the financial aspects of running MetaFilter. He also communicates certain decisions about moderation to the member base<sup>12</sup>.

In their conceptualisation of themselves as moderators, our interviewees appeared to be aware of their privileged position and take their responsibility for the community seriously. At the same time, they interact with the site as members as well. Hence, moderators on MetaFilter can be understood as *primi inter parem* (or first among equals), with the owner taking the special role of, ultimately, having the core responsibility for the site's development and employees.

### 3.6.2.3 Nurturing the Community through Attentive Care

Moderators on MetaFilter take careful measures to shape the discourse and content on the site and use multi-directional trust as their conceptual basis for moderation. For

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<sup>12</sup>see, for example, <https://metatalk.metafilter.com/24620/>

example, all moderators mentioned that the recent political situation in the United States of America (where the site is based) changed the tone of MetaFilter discussions, created larger threads overall and increased their workload substantially. In response, they identified a need for more positive banter, which is why they scheduled a weekly social thread on the associated MetaTalk site. These threads engage the community around light topics such as local foods<sup>13</sup>, uncommon habits<sup>14</sup> or inverted bragging<sup>15</sup> to negotiate shared identity precisely outside of more politically charged discussions.

Rhetoric gets sharper and hotter faster. People get visibly more angry, quicker, in conversations and arguments. – *cortex*

I felt like people needed a positive outlet because there was so much politics ugliness, and I love threads that are like “show us your desk!” or “show us your purse!” so I started doing those. – *Eyebrows McGee*

Such initiatives actively shape site culture and establish as well as re-affirm the community feel, but they also exhibit a notion of active care for the community.

All activities as moderators are shaped by a fundamental trust in the member base, even when they encounter less ideal behaviour.

Generally we try to assume the best of people, and extend the benefit of the doubt that people can change, that having a bad day once is something that happens, etc. – *LobsterMitten*

They also actively frame their work as mostly dealing with a minority of members which might not necessarily represent the community at large.

You have a few people getting into heated arguments all the time, which makes for a lot of mod work but isn’t actually all that much in pure volume. – *restless\_nomad*

One interviewee, specifically, tried to find a suitable metaphor for the relationship between moderators and the site that indicates caring as a core stance, which is necessary as the foundation of being able to be a respected member of the community while at the same time having to transparently make decisions about small scale cases.

[T]he metaphor would be taking care of a fruit tree. You want it to grow and bloom and bear fruit, so one of the things you have to do is prune it to keep it healthy, but you also have to water it and protect it feed it and

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<sup>13</sup><https://metatalk.metafilter.com/25019/Metatalktail-Hour-Local-Food>

<sup>14</sup><https://metatalk.metafilter.com/24865/Metatalktail-Hour-SO-WRONG>

<sup>15</sup><https://metatalk.metafilter.com/24957/Metatalktail-Hour-Bragging-Wrongs>

so on. (...) It also means you aren't JUST reactive, you're also proactive, and you think about how the forum you're creating will help or hinder the community. – *Eyebrows McGee*

Hence, moderators carry through their care by attending to the community and actively shaping it not only through the deletion of undesirable content (or removing harm), but also through the addition of desirable comments (or providing an opportunity for growth). Through these actions, their practices follow the normative goals of care ethics (Pettersen, 2011). Additionally, moderators take up a conscious stance by being involved in the site personally as well as professionally.

### 3.7 Thesis Study 1c: Member-Checking via a MetaTalk Thread

In this section, we present the last sub-study of MetaFilter study (MetaFilter study 1c). We post the abstract level description of our findings in MetaFilter study 1a to MetaFilter and consulted the members to better increase the trustworthiness of our results (Birt et al., 2016). We identified three themes in the thread including ambient humanity, learning community norms, and moderation as community foundation.

#### 3.7.1 Method

We used MetaTalk, a subsite<sup>16</sup> of MetaFilter, to discuss moderation on the site. In the post, we gave an abstract level description of our findings and asked members a few high-level, open questions to start the conversation. We reminded them that their comments could be potentially quoted in publications. Until its closing date on 26 April 2018, the thread consisted of 132 comments from 94 unique participants. Additionally, we received several private emails. Current moderators refrained from commenting other than to clarify open questions or to respond when explicitly asked. However, retired moderators engaged with the conversation of their own volition. This data source was aimed at further detailing MeFi-RQ2 from a member perspective and gaining a deeper understanding regarding MeFi-RQ3.

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<sup>16</sup><https://metatalk.metafilter.com/24732>

### 3.7.2 Results & Discussion

To engage the larger community on this topic, we posted a thread on MetaTalk<sup>17</sup>. By April 6th, 2018, the thread gathered 128 comments. Individual members also contacted us privately to provide additional background information. We excluded comments in our analysis that were not discussing moderation (e.g. "Sometimes, this site feels too US-centred").

#### 3.7.2.1 Ambient Humanity

Members reported that they identify ambient humanity in moderation; that is, they explicitly perceive moderators as individual humans and encounter them as such, which in turn creates the background for moderating actions. All moderators have an active account with the site. One member stated that they are more cooperative with the moderators they feel they know.

Mods are human too: they are users of the site as well as moderators, with human faces and human names and personalities and everything. There are few enough of them that they are familiar to everyone. And they will sometimes be honestly exasperated instead of customer service bland. Generally, I think this makes everybody more cooperative than if they were dealing with Anonymous Staff.

Even if there is disagreement with a moderator's judgement, members indicated that they learn from observing and experiencing moderation. Members, generally, respect the decisions and assessed them, overall, as appropriate.

While I do not always agree with their decisions, I have found them to be very humane and civil about their work. This has inspired me to try to act likewise.

Where humans are at work, mistakes happen. MetaFilter's members, however, see how moderators take their misjudgements and continuously try and improve their processes.

(...) the most impressive aspect for me on this site is that relentless, long term drive towards the aim that we can still do better.

Hence, being individually identifiable and responsible is relevant to the members to respect moderating activities even if they do not agree with them. Combined with

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<sup>17</sup><https://metatalk.metafilter.com/24732/Taking-Care-of-a-Fruit-Tree-Moderation-on-Metafilter>

moderators acting transparently, this creates the background which allows members to attribute ambient humanity to moderation.

### 3.7.2.2 Learning Community Norms

For newcomers, MetaFilter provides them with a quick overview over posting guidelines<sup>18</sup> and asks them, upon signup to “act in a civilized manner”<sup>19</sup>. Besides that, the site avoids spelling out detailed rules to the members. This allows them to 1) be flexible and responsive to context and 2) continuously discuss existing norms with members. Other than the high level norms, the \$5 entrance fee means that many members previously engaged with the site as passive readers. Hence, by the time they joined, they already are familiar with the more implicit conventions of the site.

Because of the membership fee, I spent some time as a regular reader before contributing. That helped me to familiarise myself with the community standards in a casual, gradual way - through seeing the moderators’ notes of the terms like “derail” or “threadsitting” - so by the time I joined, I more or less knew what to do and what not to do.

Some members would find their comments being deleted. However, their experiences of getting moderated also allowed them to learn about the norms and limits of discourse on MetaFilter.

I have got comments deleted several times by different reasons. Most of them get deleted without mention, or as the part of the general reason of participating in derails. I thought they were fair and they have helped me sort out what the community standards are.

Though some feel left out of the community with their position, at least with regards to some topics. The exclusion is similarly tied to moderation on the site and is overall assumed as a negative aspect of moderation. Hence, the shaping of a community through moderation also means making active choices about the shape of that community to the point where members contest this through their view on its purpose.

The moderation is too heavy-handed and full of leftist bias and touchiness to have relevant discussions on some socio-political topics. (...) I think, this has pushed the site into a corner, where many are alienated, who might contribute nuanced opinions on critical issues. (...)

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<sup>18</sup><https://www.metafilter.com/guidelines.mefi>

<sup>19</sup><https://www.metafilter.com/newuser.mefi>

Additionally, they appreciated that moderators appear to try and work with individuals who post problematic comments before using their ultimate tool, a permanent member ban.

Other than some rare cases of specific offences banned straightly, people are given many chances to turn it around before getting banned. Which is good - because sometimes they do need those chances.

This quote echoes the sentiment from above, where moderators assume not only that people want to positively engage with the site, but even in cases where they do not, can change their posting behaviour.

Even members with little personal experience of moderation modulate their interaction with the site according to what they read in moderated threads. One of them explicitly stated to re-consider contributing a certain comment before posting it.

I've only had one comment deleted since I joined here in 2006 (...) to me the expectations set by the moderators are very clear, and absolutely keep me checking my behaviours here. I started to write comments in the past and felt like I have the perfect zinger or come back and then realised "this is just going to get deleted" and let discretion be the better part of valour. This type of "think before I comment" behaviour which, frankly, does not occur in many other online spaces, is to the credit of the moderation here and it keeps the level of civility here at a rather high level.

Ultimately, learning and understanding the community norms is seen not only as of the reason for the quality of content on the site, but also as a continuous activity.

### 3.7.2.3 Moderation as Community Foundation

Besides several opportunities to communicate with moderators as a group or individually, members fundamentally trust the staff. They see moderators as part of the community, which allows them to freely voice their opinions on the site.

You could make the case that the existence of moderation encourages the users to engage in expressing and contributing, because they know the mods have their back.

This trust is the basis for the respect towards moderators' effort in maintaining an environment for constructive discussions. It additionally makes members feel similarly responsible for the site culture. Flagging comments then becomes a way to actively

support the moderation staff in their work. For some members, this even extends to their own comments.

I've had comments deleted before, and every time, I cheer the deletion. I am terrible at the "flag-and-move-it-on" without mouthing off first, but I often flag my own comments for deletion when moderators miss them.

Others, however, rely on the moderating staff to create a comfortable reading environment and trust them to take over community maintenance.

I am here at all because of the moderation here. This is possibly the only space in my life where I feel able to relax, participate as an observer, and just be myself without worrying and watching for the community waters, because I can trust the mods to already be doing that for us and keeping their eyes on that.

### 3.8 General Discussion of MetaFilter Case Study

Through the analysis in MetaFilter studies, creating a culture of care appeared as the core aim that underpins the moderation practices associated with MeFi-RQ1 and MeFi-RQ3; both for moderators and site members. Moderators treat their work as a matter of taking care of fruit trees and, in return, the community grows healthily and bears the fruits of engaging conversations. In this section, we unpack the layers of care on MetaFilter (MeFi-RQ1 and MeFi-RQ3) and discuss some best practices for careful moderation in online communities (MeFi-RQ1 and MeFi-RQ2), together with the rationale and approach behind them as identified within the MetaFilter case study. Table 3.3 summarizes the findings in each MetaFilter sub-studies.

#### 3.8.1 Layers of Care in MetaFilter Moderation

On MetaFilter, care plays out on multiple levels and in different ways. The community as a whole cares for the quality of the discourse and creating a space where people can discuss online content that is relevant to them. The moderators take care of members' concerns by using transparent moderation strategies. Members care for the staff as a whole, assisting them by flagging problematic comments and engaging with them about the norms of the community. The owner of the site cares for the staff by taking responsibility for difficult decisions and defending their actions and choices. Hence, caring for and by all parts of the community is an inherently mutual process and embedded in MetaFilter culture. Understanding the layers of care extends previous work

Section	Results & Discussions
3.4	<b>Thesis Study 1a: MetaFilter Moderator’s Comments</b>
3.4.4	<b>Establishing Authority</b>
3.4.4.1	Calling out Individuals
3.4.4.2	Pulling a Hard Stop
3.4.5	<b>Preventing Conflicts</b>
3.4.5.1	Referencing Best Practices
3.4.5.2	Suggesting Alternative Venues
3.4.5.3	Subtle Guidance
3.4.6	<b>Engaging with the Community</b>
3.4.6.1	Personal Perspectives
3.4.6.2	Modelling Best Practices
3.4.7	<b>Caring</b>
3.4.7.1	Praise
3.4.7.2	Transparency
3.4.7.3	Being Empathic
3.4.7.4	Explicit Care
3.6	<b>Thesis Study 1b: Interview with MetaFilter Moderators</b>
3.6.2.1	Actualising Collective Guidelines through Personal Strategies
3.6.2.2	Moderators as Primi inter Parem
3.6.2.3	Nurturing the Community through Attentive Care
3.7	<b>Thesis Study 1c: Member-Checking via a MetaTalk Thread</b>
3.7.2.1	Ambient Humanity
3.7.2.2	Learning Community Norms
3.7.2.3	Moderation as Community Foundation

Table 3.3: Summary of results &amp; discussions for MetaFilter studies

on empathy in online communities (Preece, 1998) by providing specific insights into how communities can act on empathy between members, and also between members and moderators. The mutual care moderators and members enact towards each other makes them reciprocally vulnerable (Butler, 2012), but also creates the foundations for growth and improvement on both sides as per the normative goals of care (Pettersen, 2011).

Care goes even deeper, though. Moderators do not limit their work to dealing with the day-to-day content. They tend to the community by demonstrably setting the tone of discussion. They strategically prune potentially destructive content where necessary by deleting comments or banning users. They also create conditions for personal and collaborative growth by providing personal perspectives on discussions. The ecology of opinion is vital for discussion on MetaFilter. Moderators encourage members to take



care of each other and consider different backgrounds and alternative views on how to read certain content, by modelling care themselves. This care extends to readers who are not necessarily members of the site as well and acknowledge when their care might not be sufficient for the well-being of community members (similar to Huh (2015) finding in the context of health forums). In consequence, it might be useful to consider adding a fifth dichotomy to Grimmelmann’s taxonomy (Grimmelmann, 2015): *managing vs. caring*. Moderation can either be a tool to maintain high-quality content or an integrated process with the goal of community building.

We found that the three research questions we started with (see Section 3.2 for all research questions) could all be understood within this notion of ‘mutual care’. The practices that shape moderation on MetaFilter are pervaded by it, the moderators’ rationale and approach behind these practices stems from it, and the larger community perceives moderation as a caring activity, they want to give back to. Care is a central value for all, but for moderators, it is key to the motivation for members to continuously engage with the site. Moderation, hence, can go beyond “commenting promotion, deletion, and control” (Gilbert et al., 2017), but instead become integral to the identity of an online community.

Explicit, extensive and continuous mutual care activities build the foundation for trust between members and moderators on the site. This trust is then again the pre-requisite for moderators to act from a vulnerable position, which can be challenged constructively. Members trust the staff to make decisions that have a positive effect on the site’s culture and moderators trust in members to share a similar vision for what MetaFilter can be to the community. In return, this leads to a high level of content quality and resolves some of the issues associated with anonymity in online communities (Suler, 2004). The mutual trust allows moderators to be open to inquiries about their judgements and decisions; to be accountable, transparent, but also to engage with members on an individual basis. People may not remember what comments they get moderated and deleted. But the feeling of being taken care of by members and the community would be there. Hence, pervasive care and mutual trust are the foundation for MetaFilter’s moderation practices.

### 3.8.2 Observed Care-in-Moderation in MetaFilter

While different approaches in moderation exist, we see that moderators of MetaFilter bring *care* as an attitude into their practices when engaging with the community. Stemming from the foundations of care and trust between moderators and members, we identify several care-in-action practices, which can guide people in moderating online

communities, including:

- Norm setting
- Professionalism
- Moderators as community members
- Sharing responsibilities

According to Korth (2003), caring acts varies in the explicitness and the match (congruence) between what was being expressed and what was felt. While we present these care-in-action practices in isolation, we see that for their actualisation to be effective, a similar overall stance of the community towards moderation will be necessary.

Our expectation is additionally, that our recommendations are most likely applicable in smaller online communities (e.g., Facebook groups) than more global settings (e.g., Facebook itself). However, for these suggestions to scale to a larger setting, moderators need to be individually accountable, responsible and identifiable as a basis.

#### **3.8.2.1 Norm Setting**

Setting explicit norms on a high level and co-creating as well as inferring implicit norms in-situ makes them negotiable and invites members of an online community to reinforce their norms themselves. This echoes previously made suggestions (Kiesler et al., 2012). The norms should be high-level enough to work as a foundation, while detailed enough to be understandable. For example, “Be nice to each other.” might be too high-level, whereas “Respect other’s point of view even when it differs from your own” allows for nuance and provides a clear guideline for discussions.

To allow for flexibility in negotiating these norms and their derivations, a shared space attached to but separate from the core place of discussion can give those interested in shaping its norms a forum. Assigning a dedicated platform to discussions of that kind also acknowledges the fluidity of norm-setting as a non-static and ever negotiated process. It invites the community to challenge implicit and explicit norms alike and provides them with the tools and avenues to express their agency.

#### **3.8.2.2 Professionalism**

While leaving moderation in the hands of the community or using automated solutions can be beneficial to moderation, from our work, we established that having a core team

of paid moderators enables them to have a shared vision about a community's development and to create an intrinsic sense of commitment, obligation and responsibility. Preferably, this vision is also shared by the community as well.

Moderators can then focus their working time on the site and can give it the high priority it requires to enact such a shared vision. Further, through their potentially increased engagement, they can acquire the necessary moderation expertise and a deep understanding of the community. This understanding in turn can make the task easier by being able to expertly estimate upcoming work quickly upon the start of a given thread.

### 3.8.2.3 Moderators as Community Members

Moderators of MetaFilter are not only members of the community but also actively stick with the community for more than 8 years. The strategy of hiring preferentially long-term members has worked in MetaFilter's unique situation where professional moderation was initially secondary. However, conceptualising moderators as *primi inter pares*, members of the community with additional responsibilities, can help the individuals in that position to enact it with humility. Considering members not within a hierarchical binary, but rather as peers can guide moderators in gaining an understanding of the community even if they were not necessarily part of it beforehand. Additionally, moderators are then more prepared to put in the emotional labour of caring for the community and can be a basis of trust, when members see that they are interacting with another person instead of representatives of power.

Moderation decided by people who are members of the community is perceived as more legitimate and effective (Kiesler et al., 2012). As members of the community, moderators can then foster a positive tone within the conversations. They provide best practice examples on how to interact not as a deliberate example, but rather through regular engagement as members, which has also been identified previously as a successful strategy (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009). In that regard, they also act as model citizens of the community, next to other members.

### 3.8.2.4 Sharing Responsibilities

Being transparent in moderation practices engages members in understanding the limits of discourses within a given community. The legitimacy and effectiveness of moderation decisions can be increased by applying consistent moderation criteria and appeal procedures (Kiesler et al., 2012). It also sets community expectations of moderation

correctly and comprehensibly with a side effect of making moderators accountable for their decisions. Additionally, by providing the reasons behind a specific judgement call, members can gain a deeper understanding of how these calls are made. They can then reinforce the community norms among each other or point out problematic comments to moderators, which in return can decrease moderators' workload. Including members in moderation should be a reciprocal process where moderators also show appreciation for content that is flagged to them. Through that, moderators and members can jointly enact a shared vision of how they want a community to function while assigning clear responsibilities between them.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary and Conclusion**

Moderation is a familiar part of online community experience and can serve both to facilitate constructive exchanges between members and to maintain the quality of member-generated content. However, moderation can only be effective if it is enacted in such a way that it earns the trust of community members. In this chapter, we have reported a three-part analysis of moderation to expose how successful moderation can be orchestrated effectively in practice in an online community of choice. We examined archived comments to see how moderation has been exercised in practice, supported by our analysis of how moderators reflect on their practice when interviewed. Finally, we drew in further perspectives from community members who reported their experiences of moderation on MetaFilter in relation to our key findings. We chose to look at moderation on MetaFilter for its longevity and the high quality of its member-generated content (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009; Chandrasekharan et al., 2017).

The key patterns we have exposed in Metafilter moderation practices are intended to assist designers, analysts and practitioners as they reflect on their own moderation challenges in other cultural, social and technical environments. Our thematic analysis of moderated comments, interview data, and an online discussion with the community members suggest that careful moderation includes establishing the legitimacy of authority, consensual mediation of conflict, and engaging the community, all within a frame of care. We argue that a frame of care in moderation entails proactive engagement, not just responding to abuse or other unwanted behaviour when it is flagged. The professional paid moderators of MetaFilter have a shared vision for the community that is grounded in their membership in the community itself. By analogy, they take care of their community as a gardener might take care of a fruit tree. In their work, they observe the community in bloom to later harvest the fruits of high-quality content by proactively tending, nurturing and pruning. Moderators on MetaFilter care

about each other, members and the community as a whole: this value underpins the operations they perform and is the foundation of their success as a whole. Norms themselves should be curated with care, and moderators could be the members modelling care. However, this comes at the cost of increased emotional labour comparing to the work by Dosono and Semaan (2019), particularly in the double role moderators have as moderators and members of the same community. This circumstance might make it infeasible for individuals to hold up in the long term without the added benefit of financial compensation.

Although our study drew upon three complementary data sources, they do not represent complete coverage of experiences or interests in commenting on MetaFilter. We did not actively seek out the perspective of banned members or those who left the community for other reasons, which could conceivably have included more pronounced unhappiness with the style of moderation<sup>20</sup>. While some members were critical towards certain stances, a general selection bias could be said to colour our perspective by having only included current members (though historical deletion data was in our posting dataset). We must be cautious about the validity of implications for online communities that are not founded on consensus and choice, perhaps driven by external social factors, such as company networks. Further research is needed to examine online engagement in communities that are not fully elective in nature or settings employing (partly) automated moderation (Huh, Yetisgen-Yildiz and Pratt, 2013).

Furthermore, the effect of diversity should be factored into considerations. Differences of viewpoint are to be expected in any online discussion. They are part of a creative tension that can construct new understandings amongst those who participate. Moderators make judgements about both that depend on their own evolving interpretations of legitimacy and variation, both for what is sayable and for how it might be said. Although MetaFilter moderation has come about over a period of nearly 20 years, it cannot be said to have stayed static for all of that time. Next to the more obvious role of moderators, members also play a role in deciding if the kind of moderation actions and decisions they encounter are valid and fair. The evolution of moderation practice could be analysed within an existing theoretical perspective on community growth, such as the Reader-to-Leader framework (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009), and thus provide stronger supports to the existing models.

In this chapter, we consider moderation practices for online communities from a perspective that is jointly motivated by norm construction and the concept of care when

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<sup>20</sup><https://www.reddit.com/r/metafilter/comments/87j3s9>

exercised in online communities (Toombs, Bardzell and Bardzell, 2015). After discussing our lens on online moderation, we provide background on norms in online communities, our understanding of care as a practice and MetaFilter as a member-lead news community. From our findings, we derive a range of recommendations concerning norm-setting, professionalism, community engagement and management of responsibility for moderation.

In the next chapter, we took the care lens in moderation from MetaFilter study, turning into the literature of care ethics, to further elaborate on developing a more meaningful caring framework to guide our further research on care-in-moderation.

## Chapter 4

# Moderation as Care Work in Online Communities

### 4.1 Chapter Overview

As quoted from the MetaFilter study (Chapter 3), MetaFilter moderators see their work as “*taking care of a fruit tree*”. Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor (2020) summarize different metaphors like gardener or janitor are used by moderators to describe their work, it remains a question that if it would affect moderation in online communities by synthesizing moderator’s work as “taking care” of the community.

As a moral concept constantly developing, *care* has been explained by previous researchers in different fields. Within healthcare research (Tronto, 1993), care reflects values within healthcare that are essential for understanding the interlinked networks of formal and informal responsibilities constituting professional practice. Care can also be of value in the investigation of other fields with strong human networks (Korth, 2003).

In the feminist theory of caring, Fisher and Tronto (1990) suggest that caring can be viewed as

*a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our “world” so that we can live in it as well as possible.*

They also settle caring into four phases (Fisher and Tronto, 1990):

- **Caring about:** involves paying attention to our world in such a way that we

focus on continuity, maintenance and repair.

- **Taking care of:** involves responding to the caring about aspects - taking responsibility for activities that keep our world going.
- **Care-giving:** involves the concrete tasks, the hands-on work of maintenance and repair.
- **Care-receiving:** involves the responses to the caring process of those toward whom caring is directed.

The metaphor MetaFilter moderator was using - “taking care of the fruit tree”, refers to taking care of the community. MetaFilter moderators see their work as taking responsibility for activities that keep the “MetaFilter world” going. In online communities, caring is also relating to people - members inside and outside of the community, and the community as a piece of their ‘world’. It is yet to discuss that in contemporary time, if online community moderators can play the correspondent role as a community worker, but just online.

Jaggar (1995) added that for the justificatory of care act, being able to justify the appropriate identification of needs one addresses is an important aspect of it. Hamington (2004) raised a particular moral construct “embodied care”, elaborating a construct of care that included its embodied dimension, particularly defining care as “*an approach to individual and social morality that shifts ethical emphasis and consideration to context, relationships, and affective knowledge in a manner that can be fully understood only if its embodied dimension is recognized*”. Hamington (2004) presented the three embodied dimensions of care as “caring knowledge”, “caring habits”, and “care imagination.” Simola (2012) later discussed the three embodied dimensions of care in relation to social sustainability in business practice. However, to the best of our knowledge, care has not previously been used as a frame for examining moderation practice in HCI and CSCW. In this chapter, we review literature about care ethics in HCI and CSCW and seek opportunities of applying it in online community moderation. At the same time, this chapter introduces and provides a descriptive account of care ethics in the online community context. We discuss how moderation in online communities can be treated as care work, and propose using care as a lens to explore normative processes in online community moderation in future research.



## 4.2 Care as a Practice

For maker/contributor communities, Toombs, Bardzell and Bardzell (2015) argue that care is a key driver of sustainability. It requires work from the entire community to maintain the value of their exchanges, including initiating and maintaining the care activities (Fisher and Tronto, 1990). Moderating online communities comes with a greater or lesser level of care exhibited by the moderation practices, including taking care of the community as a whole, stimulating healthy discussions and maintaining a positive environment for constructive exchanges. Aligning with Fisher and Tronto (1990), caring activities in online communities involves ability factors such as time, knowledge and skill. Moderation in online communities requires time-efforts, knowledge of the community, and a various set of skills including such as management, mediation. Caring in online communities can be actualised explicitly (e.g., by sympathising with members or consciously attending to a subject) or implicitly (e.g., through implementing procedures enabling explicit care or simply by being present) (Korth, 2003).

Inherent to the act of care is a normative stance. *Caring for* something implicitly entails normative notions of supporting its growth and development while at the same time removing obstacles for that growth (Pettersen, 2011). In the context of online communities, caring for them then includes not only the removal of undesirable content, but also active support for creating the circumstances in which desirable content may emerge. It implies the responsibility of initiating and maintaining caring activities in the community, which is an important factor in the sustainability of online communities.

When consciously adopted as a practice, care acknowledges multiple perspectives and assigns equal validity to those while putting them in context to each other (Parton, 2003)<sup>1</sup>. Care manifests then as an embodied stance towards being in relation(ship)s with others, directed towards things and other living beings (Fisher and Tronto, 1990). The stance can be operationalised as a dedication towards others in a community and can be multilayered within different circles of distance within this community. For example, people might care about their close family as well as their extended ones. However, this care might also lead to excluding some family members from gatherings to ensure the positive experiences of others. In online communities, people relate to each other via interaction with their online presence. Therefore caring for one member can be extended to others related to them online and sometimes even the whole community.

Understanding moderation as a practice of care conceptualises the activity as one that is mutually enacted by moderators and members. This results in similarly mutual

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<sup>1</sup>In this regard, research activities in this thesis are informed by such an epistemology of care.

vulnerability towards others' actions (Butler, 2012). For example, members can flood moderators intentionally by creating an increased workload or they can reflect on the effects of the content they post beforehand. Moderators can remove members' privileges for interacting with the site or guide them towards producing more desired content. While the range of possible actions differs as well as the severity of consequence, both moderators and members are similarly vulnerable in their interaction with each other. For this vulnerability to be constructive, members and moderators require a space in which they can acknowledge their respective mistakes and negotiate strategies to prevent them in the future.

Within HCI and CSCW the intricacies of care have been analysed, e.g., in the context of maker spaces Toombs, Bardzell and Bardzell (2015) and as inherent in citizens' responses to an earthquake (Wong-Villacres, Velasquez and Kumar, 2017). Additionally, care ethics, a moral theory on how care can be enacted to fulfil its normative goals of nurture (Hamington, 2004), have been relevant as guiding principles for managing long-term relationships with research participants (Toombs et al., 2016). Hence, care provides a useful lens into computer-mediated human interactions. However, to the best of our knowledge, it has not previously been used as a frame for examining moderation practice to expose elements of moderator work that could inform policy and design work for online communities. Our lens of care on MetaFilter moderation practices (Chapter 3) was chosen as to exemplify such potential insights in a particular context.

### 4.3 Nurturing as a Layer of Concern in Online Community Moderation

While there is little research in online community moderation use care as a form to explore normative processes in online community moderation, the nurturing term is not new online community research. Preece (2000, p.228-229) discussed in the book *Online Communities: Designing Usability, Supporting Sociability* that, upon an online community is launched, developers should also plan on welcoming and nurturing the community. Products resulting from this stage is aiming to identify and support the needs of the community including (Preece, 2000, p.229):

- A plan to seed the community with people who will encourage its development and attract others.
- A plan to carefully observe the community during the first six months of existence

and solve problems that occur.

- A long-term support plan.

In our MetaFilter study, a moderator used the metaphor “*taking care of a fruit tree*” to describe the moderation work in MetaFilter:

[T]he metaphor would be taking care of a fruit tree. You want it to grow and bloom and bear fruit, so one of the things you have to do is prune it to keep it healthy, but you also have to water it and protect it feed it and so on. (...)It also means you aren’t JUST reactive, you’re also proactive, and you think about how the forum you’re creating will help or hinder the community.

– *Eyebrows McGee*

The metaphor shows one moderator’s mental model for how they make sense of their role on MetaFilter – taking care of a fruit tree – and helps explain their strategies for action in moderation (Weick, 1995; Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor, 2020; Yu, Spiel and Watts, 2018). Focusing on different phases in online communities’ journey, some of the products suggested by (Preece, 2000, p.229) above also aligns with this metaphor such as “seeding the community with people” and “support plan”. Through our MetaFilter study in Chapter 3, we further identified two specific strategies used by MetaFilter moderators –“pruning” and “fertilising” – which help reinforce existing as well as evolving norms on MetaFilter, which further deepened our understanding of what exactly is care-as-nurture in online community moderation. In this section, we articulate the metaphor with its effects on community norms, to deliver the understanding of normative processes in moderation that is not narrowly concerned with removing undesired content or members who violate community standards, but involves thoughtful decisions and active support to assist the norm to evolve.

### 4.3.1 “Taking Care of a Fruit Tree”

From our analysis of moderation on MetaFilter (see Chapter 3), we found moderators bringing *care* as a layer of concern into their daily moderation work (see all themes in Table 3.3). For maker/contributor communities, Toombs, Bardzell and Bardzell (2015) argue that care is a key driver for sustainability. Taking care implies feeling responsible for initiating and maintaining caring activities (Fisher and Tronto, 1990). It also requires efforts from the entire community to maintain the value of their exchanges, which means it is not advisable to leave this responsibility to a small group of powerful key players (Yu, Spiel and Watts, 2018). While Seering et al. (2019b) summarizes that

moderation tasks primarily include monitoring and responding to misbehaviour, using care as a lens to explore normative processes in online community moderation, we see that there should be “tasks” or actions moderators can take on expanding to community development. Moderators perform care by attending to the community and actively shaping it, not only through the deletion of undesirable content (or removing harm), but also through the addition of desirable comments (or providing an opportunity for growth). In our MetaFilter study analysis, we argue that the broader set of MetaFilter moderators share this strategy of care as a layer of concern in moderation and that it helps them actively maintain and shape norms on MetaFilter. Through these actions, their practices follow the normative goals of care ethics (Pettersen, 2011). We identified two specific strategies used by MetaFilter moderators—“pruning” and “fertilising” – which help reinforce existing as well as evolving norms on MetaFilter. This notion of care in moderation can be then understood as a matter of nurturing for sustainable community growth.

### **Pruning for Reinforcing Existing Norms**

With quotes from interviews with MetaFilter moderators, we see that moderators take careful measures to shape the discourse and content on the site and use multi-directional trust as their conceptual basis for moderation. Such initiatives actively shape site culture and establish as well as re-affirm the community feel. These also exhibit a notion of active care for the community. In our analysis, we found that moderators of MetaFilter bring care into their practices while pruning for reinforcing community norms, as an attitude towards the tone and intent of their interventions, be they formally or informally framed. For example, praising and showing empathy to members reinforces the validity of their contributions or the concerns they raise.

In many instances, moderators put in proactive work to avoid having to take drastic measures by, for example, using formal moderation tools, and may in addition contact the member to explain the thought process behind the decision and point to potential alternative strategies. MetaFilter moderators write comments to provide subtle guidance for appropriate behaviour, without using the moderator format but more as a normal member in the community; this emphasises the moderator’s role as an established community member first and an official moderator only when necessary. MetaFilter moderators try to balance between getting dissents moderated straight away and leaving members to work it out. It also shows that activities as moderators are shaped by a fundamental trust in the member base, even when they encounter less ideal behaviour. On the other hand, moderators actively frame their work as mostly dealing with a

minority of members which might not necessarily represent the community at large. Being careful about how and what to “prune” from the community is paramount, and balancing their positions as respected community members with making transparent decisions about small scale cases is important but challenging (Jhaver, Bruckman and Gilbert, 2019).

Using *care* in reinforcing existing community norms does not refer just to pruning. It inhabits a superordinate layer of concern permeating every decision moderators make even in, for example, giving compliments, praising content and providing comfort to members (see examples in Sidebar 1). Caring attitudes in online communities encourage committed engagement and can positively contribute to the reinforcement of norms by regulating what is appropriate and inappropriate for a given online community (Ren et al., 2012; Smith, McLaughlin and Osborne, 1997). Moderators on MetaFilter visibly demonstrate norm-appropriate behaviours through modelling care themselves, to encourage their members to take care of each other. Moderators explicitly demonstrate the broader sense of care in posts and commentaries for other members to see. The main focus and indeed their self-image of moderator activity is devoted to preventing malicious confrontations from happening in the first place.

### **Fertilising towards Norms Evolve**

Beyond actively shaping the content and discussion culture on the site, moderators’ careful attitude also helps in growing the community. Moderators on MetaFilter regularly discuss their moderation with members. Through discussion with the community, moderators identified the need for more positive banter for their members. The increasing frequency of contentious, extensive and rapid discussions on daily political developments had increased moderators’ workload substantially and began to dominate their work. They decided to schedule weekly social threads around light topics such as local foods and uncommon habits on MetaFilter’s associated MetaTalk site. In this case, MetaFilter moderators performed care by attending to the health of their community by taking action aimed at integration<sup>2</sup>. Hence, active care can be seen not only in practices surrounding the removal of undesirable content not capable of existing community norms, but also in actively providing the ground for desirable alternative engagements in order to assist the health and growth of community norms. It also speaks to the relevance of their direct personal involvement, which helps them be more aware of existing tensions, as a complement to their status as moderators.

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<sup>2</sup>In 2019-2020, MetaFilter had many explicit discussions on oppressive systemic tendencies within the community. These are not part of this thesis, but maybe something to investigate in the future

## 4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we reviewed the literature on care ethics in HCI and CSCW. We then discuss whether and how using care-as-nurture as a frame to identify multi-faceted and nuanced concepts characterising dissent and to develop tools for the sustainable support of online communities and their moderators.

Care provides a meaningful framing concept as a *proactive* approach to moderation, a type of approach that has been addressed in less depth than *reactive* ones (Seering et al., 2019a). Exhibiting care in moderation practices means acknowledging how maintenance, health and protection are inadequately safeguarded by purely reactive work. This suggests that there is much space for designers to increase the social nuance of approaches to moderation, which often rely only on detecting and flagging, hiding or removing undesirable actions after they have occurred. Delegated as the responsibility of a small group of powerful key players, care by itself cannot be a productive stance (Toombs, Bardzell and Bardzell, 2015). Taking care implies taking active responsibility for initiating and also maintaining caring activities (Fisher and Tronto, 1990), which overlaps with the mission of moderators in online communities: taking care of the community as a whole, stimulating healthy discussions and maintaining a positive environment for constructive exchanges. Critiques of online moderation models and suggestions for improvement have been made previously (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009), but little is known about the *care*-ful practices of moderation nurturing positive and constructive engagements. We see care-as-nurture as a way of highlighting desirable emergence and expansion of member exchanges, particularly in complex situations that require nuance, finesse, tact and, of course, care. Caring for something entails a normative notion of supporting growth and development, including removal of obstacles for growth and provision of nourishment in whatever form is required (Pettersen, 2011). Blanket suppression of dissent can itself be seen as an obstacle to growth, and can take away attention from efforts focused on engaging, contributing and maintaining a community (Butler, 2012; Ren et al., 2012).

Identifying moderation practices with care-as-nurture as a frame provides the opportunity to deliver an understanding of moderation that is not narrowly concerned with removing undesired content or members who violate community standards, but involves thoughtful decisions and active support for the entire community. Individual and communal action by moderators around problematic contributions can reveal fundamental stances within a community towards its evolution, and future viability, if they are situated in caring practices. In the future studies in Chapter 5 and 6, we seek for traces of

using care-as-nurture as a frame in volunteered moderation within Facebook groups.

## Chapter 5

# Moderation in Facebook Groups: Applying Care as a Lens to Facebook Group Moderation

### 5.1 Chapter Overview

In previous chapters, we examined the range of challenges faced by online community moderators and explored possible responses, strategies and general approaches that could guide their work. In the last chapter, we argued that online communities could benefit by drawing on a *care-as-nurture* metaphor to inform their general approach to moderation. Such an approach might foster a healthier, more free-speaking, more constructive online discussion environment. Health is part of the care equation, directly related to the long-term sustainability of a community and depending on its ability to evolve. In this chapter, we take our insights about human moderation in online communities, to look at moderation in Facebook groups. In contrast to the MetaFilter analysis, the analysis to be reported in this chapter encompasses many communities (or groups). Whereas MetaFilter is both a platform and a community, Facebook is a platform that hosts many social groups. Most moderators of Facebook groups are volunteers. They may not have professional training in moderation and they are not paid for moderating their groups. As a platform, Facebook encourages all its users to create “real” profiles so compromising the idea of an entirely online community: there are quite a lot of “hybrid communities” on Facebook groups for example local residential communities (Baborska-Narozny, Stirling and Stevenson, 2016). Facebook



moderators may also be recruited via various methods (Seering et al., 2019b): they may have started the group by themselves, they may be invited to the role through their friends, they may be recruited by the current moderation team. With the moderation tools provided by the Facebook platform, they also have their own strategies to adapt to these tools. However ultimately, Facebook groups are still moderated by human moderators. In this chapter, we seek to triangulate the results and analysis we presented in the MetaFilter studies and the *care* model presented in Chapter 4. We conducted 3 consecutive studies with Facebook group users, each intended to reveal the role moderators play in Facebook groups, and the experience of being a Facebook group member in relation to norms and moderation. In this chapter, we present the analysis focusing on assessing if and how our previous discussion in Chapter 4 could be generalised to Facebook groups. The qualitative research paradigm adopted by this thesis mitigates against the notion of replication. The rich variety of contexts created by different communities using different platforms means that ‘sameness’ is a weak idea so the results and discussion in Chapter 3 are not held up as replicable. Rather, we seek to track the traces of *care* in moderation within this study, as discussed in Chapter 4, to see how a care-as-nurture lens might serve as a general framework to explain experiences with online moderation.

Following the general logic of our previous analysis, we re-iterated the interview questions from the MetaFilter study (see Appendix B.1), adjusting them to reflect platform differences and the fact that participants would be recruited from multiple Facebook groups. We first piloted the interview with 6 moderators of Facebook groups. We then recruited 16 more participants through a survey (discussed in Chapter 6) including both moderators and members of Facebook groups. In this chapter, we analyse the results of these interviews and relate them to the *care* framework in Chapter 4. We identified 6 main themes and 22 sub-themes from the interview results and present them in this chapter. We argue that groups on Facebook have more specific purposes and may include more hybrid components. Moderators of Facebook groups apply a more relaxed strategy, because of the real name nature on Facebook and the hybridity attribute of the groups. Taking care of communities in Facebook groups should extend to establishing and maintaining the identity and purpose of the group, consulting closely to the community needs.

## 5.2 Study 2a: Facebook group Moderation

People gather in public spaces to share interests, exchange opinions and build a community (Oldenburg, 1999). With the penetration of social technologies into all aspects

of contemporary life, quite a large number of people spend a lot of time on social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Covering a big population in the world, social media platforms make it convenient for people to set up new connections or find someone “in common” with them. For example during freshers’ week in universities, new students seek for various groups on Facebook (Figure 5-1), trying to learn about their new journey and the people travelling along with them potentially. Societies also set up their pages and groups to attract more students to join. There is not an easy word to explain why people are attracted by social media platforms like Facebook. Nontasil and Payne (2019) suggest that emotional utility may partly explain the attractiveness of reading Facebook news feed. Research about Facebook in HCI and CSCW has also shed light on emotional aspects of connectedness, including “contagion” through social networks(Kramer, 2012), relationship closeness(Quercia, Bodaghi and Crowcroft, 2012; Burke and Kraut, 2014), social media use and well-being(Cheng, Burke and Davis, 2019; Nontasil and Payne, 2019), feedback expectations (Grinberg et al., 2017), and politics on Facebook (Nielsen, Vaccari and Holloway, 2013; Gerodimos and Justinussen, 2015; Camaj and Santana, 2015).

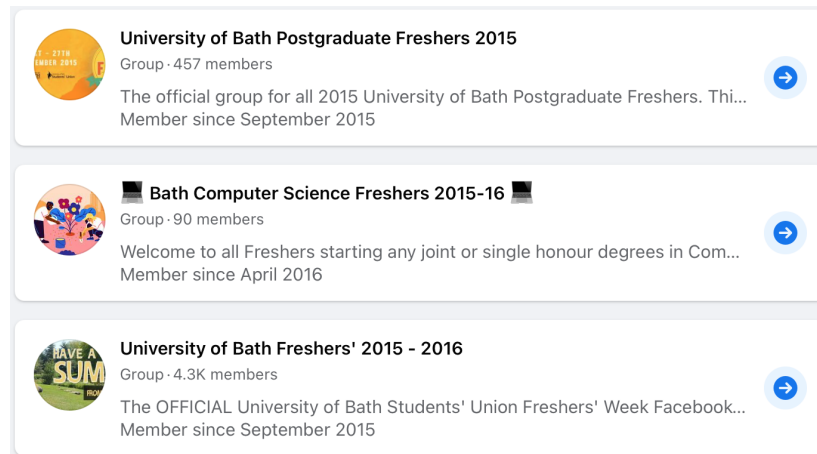


Figure 5-1: A few Facebook groups for 2015/2016 freshers

Research on Facebook groups has tended to focus on specific problems in a specific community or a set of communities, and how to resolve them, regarding social processes that might be at work more generally. Rao and Hemphill (2016) suggested that members of the Asian American Chicago Network Facebook group may use it to build professional networks and reinforce their identities. Similarly, Ammari and Schoenebeck (2016) interviewed 18 stay-at-home dads (SAHDs) and found that they create multidimensional social networks through for example creating Facebook groups to gain social support and overcome isolation they experience offline. By qualitative studies with the

Facebook page of the Foodsharing.de platform, Ganglbauer et al. (2014) suggest that their Facebook page provides a basis for guiding and framing the communities for the platform. Baborska-Narozny, Stirling and Stevenson (2016) argued that weak-tie residential communities (or residents of apartment blocks) can develop collective efficacy through communicating on a Facebook group. Younas, Naseem and Mustafa (2020) analysed the posting and support seeking behaviours within a closed women-only Facebook group of 15,000 members, to explore the importance of digital safe spaces such as Facebook groups that allow vulnerable populations to remain judgement-free and safe in online communities. Whilst these studies raise interesting issues that could be echoed by other communities, they do not address an aspect of online community life that all must face: sustainable management of problem behaviour.

The role moderation can play in Facebook groups is still unclear. Through a mixed-method study with Bangladesh Facebook group users, including moderators, Sultana et al. (2020) reports users having some privacy concerns about sharing their personal information including for example address and phone number when asking to join Facebook groups. However, discussions about other perspectives for example tools and management of Facebook groups are still in very early stages within the paper. Although Seering et al. (2019b) includes 15 participants who are moderating Facebook groups in the study, it sheds light mainly on volunteer moderation across three platforms including Facebook groups, Twitch, and Reddit. There is still room to add in the research conversation about Facebook groups' moderation specifically in HCI and CSCW.

### 5.2.1 Research Questions

We designed 3 main research questions for the Facebook group study (FBG-RQs), derived from the goal of this thesis (see Section 1.3 for the general research questions for this thesis), also from the research questions of MetaFilter study (see Section 3.2).

To explore the context of communities in Facebook groups, our first question in this study is: **FBG-RQ1: What kind of communities do people join on Facebook groups?** This question was posed to better understand the context of our data gathered from the Facebook group users, given the single-community benchmark we had set with the Metafilter studies, and to prepare for further scoping the following research questions on the Facebook group platform.

The second question asked in this study is: **FBG-RQ2: What strategies do Facebook group moderators employ at their groups?** With this question, we are

looking for not only what is special to moderate a Facebook group, but also what is overlapped in their moderation strategy with other platforms. We would like to compare this with our previous analysis especially the *care* framing in moderation raised in Chapter 4. However, we purposefully did not ask the participants about how they “take care of” or ‘have been cared for” in Facebook groups. The qualitative data analysis strategy we have adopted privileges authentically reported experiences over pre-existing categorisations. So we set out to explore the data collected and see if *care* ideas could converge with the themes produced by an inductive analysis of our data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Looking at Facebook as the online community platform, for FBG-RQ2, we raised a sub-question: **FBG-RQ2a: What tools are available for Facebook group moderators to help manage their group?** This is to explore how tools provided by platforms may affect volunteer moderation in online communities rooted there. We will further explore this question in the case study reported in Chapter 6.

Finally, we have our third question asked in this study: **FBG-RQ3: How does the member base perceive moderation on Facebook groups?** We did not specifically ask for moderators as participants in this study but extended the study to all Facebook users. As with our Metafilter studies, we wished to strengthen our analysis by including perspectives on how Facebook group moderators think they moderate, as well as how members perceive the work of those who moderate their groups. Rather than member checking, this time group members were planned to be included in the primary data-gathering phase.

### 5.3 Methods

We performed 22 semi-structured interviews (6 in pilot interview, 16 in post-survey interview) from Spring 2019 to Spring 2020. Questions about participants’ connection to Facebook, online community experiences, their Facebook group development, the moderation environment, their personal strategies in moderation, and their experiences as a moderator were asked during the interview (see Section 5.3.1.1 for the interview protocol). The pilot interview was designed and conducted in accordance with the 13-point ethics checklist used by the Department of Computer Science, University of Bath, to support ethical review of research (See Appendix A.1 for the checklist). The Department of Computer Science ethical approval process changed in early 2019 after we conducted the pilot interview. The study including the survey and post-survey interview was submitted to the Psychology Research Ethics Committee (PREC) for

approval in July 2019, and was granted approval in October 2019 (PREC code 19-277)<sup>1</sup>.

Once all interviews were completed and transcribed, we organised the texts into two topic-based chunks. The first chunk focuses on moderation in Facebook groups, and is comprised of topics 1-4 and 6-7 in the interview protocol (see Section 5.3.1.1 for the interview protocol). The second chunk asks for further explanation of participants' survey answers, which will be discussed later in Chapter 6. NVivo 12 was used to manage the transcriptions for our analysis. We open coded inductively each chunk of the texts and organise them into themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019).

### 5.3.1 Pilot Interview with Moderators of Facebook groups

To test the interview protocol, we conducted seven half-an-hour long semi-structured interviews with Facebook group moderators. Participants were recruited by Facebook posts and word-of-mouth approach. Participants need to be the admin or moderator of at least one Facebook group which has more than 50 group members. Participants were put into a draw for a £50 Amazon voucher for their efforts. Seven participants volunteered after seeing our advertisement, but only six were eligible for the interview. One participant volunteered found that she was a moderator of a Facebook page instead of a Facebook group during the interview. Therefore we have discarded and excluded this interview in our data set in analysis. The interviews were conducted via text-based chat, face-to-face chat or online video chat, depending on our participant's preference. In the end, four of these interviews were conducted face-to-face on campus at the University of Bath; two of these interviews were conducted online via text chat on Skype and Facebook Messenger. The interviews lasted between 11 minutes and 45 minutes with variance due to the interview protocol is in the piloting phase, the Facebook group participants are managing, and if the interview is done online or offline, with video chat or text-based chats.

All voice-recorded interviews were transcribed and anonymised, and text-based chats were archived and anonymised before analysis. When specific group names or members were mentioned in the interview, it is been masked or summarised with the bracket like [contexts] in the transcript. The participants were asked to choose their own pseudonyms for the interview for further identification in the research. The original records of the interview were destroyed after anonymization. We adjusted the interview protocol as the pilot interviews proceeded, based on the utility for eliciting participant

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<sup>1</sup>If you have any concerns related to the ethics approval in this study please direct them to the Chair of the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, email: psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk.

responses and time taken during the pilot interview, to maximize the efficiency in the later phase of this study. Although we are in the piloting phase of the study, we valued the data gathered from our participants and analysed it in the same way as the later interviews, with only adding the identification code “PLT” before their pseudonym for identification. After piloting the interview, we skimmed through the transcripts seeking opportunities to improve the design of this study, without actually coding the transcripts. We identified the additional needs of involving non-moderator Facebook group users in this study, therefore we designed the questionnaire and post-questionnaire interview mentioned later in Section 5.3.2.

### 5.3.1.1 Interview Protocol

In this section, we list the revised interview protocol for this study. We revised the structure of the interview and re-arranged the order of questions in the protocol in order to better flow the interview (see the original protocol for piloting in Appendix B.1 and B.3.2. We also tailored a few questions for non-moderator participants (listed below with +).

#### 1. Connection to Facebook

- How long have you been on Facebook?
- What kind of Facebook groups are you in on Facebook? And how long have you been with them?
- As you know, this is a study about what it’s like to admin or moderate a Facebook group. So how many groups do you currently admin for?
- Which group are you most closely working with? (Focus on the group later?)
- How’s the group like? How many members/posts per day? Roughly how often do you check the group?

#### 2. General Moderation Experiences

- Can you tell me about a memorable moderation experience you have had with your community?
- Do you still engage with the group outside of your moderating role? How do you distinguish between the two?
  - + Do you think the moderators of your group still engage with the group outside of their moderating role? How do you distinguish between the

two?

### 3. Facebook group Development

- What do you think makes people engage with this group instead of alternatives?
- How has the group developed since you have become active on it?
- How do you see it developing in the future?
  - + How would you like it to develop in the future

### 4. Moderation Environments

- How would you describe your general approach to moderating the group? (N/A for non-moderators)
- Do you have any formal guidelines or rules for moderating your group? (Any additional ones do you have within the moderators? )
- Do you moderate the group collaboratively with other staff members? How do you relate to the other 'staff' members?
  - + Do you think moderators of your group work collaboratively with other staff members? How?
- Do you use any tools to help you moderate? What tools does Facebook give you that you find helpful for running the group? (N/A for non-moderators)

### 5. Facebook group Badges

- Have you noticed that Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups? Has your group enabled the badge functionality?
- What badges you have seen so far? What do you think they represent or how do you think Facebook decides who to give the badges to?
- Going through the rating of badges in the survey and ask for extra explanation.**
- Do the badges gain your extra attention? What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with the badge?
- How can these badges be informative for you?

## 6. Moderation Strategies

- What kinds of strategy do you use in Facebook group moderation? (N/A for non-moderators)
- What is your process? How do you become aware of a problematic interaction and what are the follow-up steps? Which behaviours are deemed as problematic?
  - + Which behaviours are deemed as problematic in the group? How do you become aware of a problematic interaction and what are the follow-up steps?
- How do your strategies differ from other moderators? (N/A for non-moderators)

## 7. Experiences as a Moderator

- Do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook group moderation? Would you like to talk a bit about it?

### 5.3.2 Survey and Post-Survey Interview about Facebook groups

From our pilot interview in Section 5.3.1, we recognize the needs of this study to involve broader Facebook group users including members' voice. We then designed a questionnaire (see Appendix B.2 for the full survey), asking questions about people's general interests in Facebook groups and specifically the badge function in Facebook groups (later discussed in Chapter 6) with it. We also see the questionnaire as a way to attract participants' interests in this research. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were invited to leave their email address if they felt sufficiently interested in the research to be interviewed further about Facebook groups Moderation at a later date.

Participants who have left their email in the survey were invited to join the post-survey interview online or on campus at University of Bath. Participants were invited to do interviews using text-based chat, face-to-face chat or online video chat, depend on their preferences. 26 out of 119 survey respondents have showed interest in being interviewed by leaving their emails in the questionnaire. 16 out of the 26 of participants confirmed and finished the interview upon invitation. Six participants were interviewed online between December 2019 to 11th March 2020. 10 of them were interviewed face-to-face on campus at the University of Bath, UK, between February to 4th March



2020<sup>2</sup>. Interview participants were audio recorded and all audio was transcribed into text after the interview. The original recording was destroyed after being transcribed. Any personal information in the interview was anonymised so that no person could be recognised from it (e.g. names, online community handles, locations, institutions). The masked transcripts were sent to participants after to correct any factual errors. Optionally, the participants were given the chance to give themselves a pseudonym at the end of the interview. This was for them to better identify themselves in any publications that should arise from this research. If a participant choose not to do so, a participant number was assigned to them for further reference.

During the interview, questions about their connection to Facebook, moderation experiences, group development, moderation environment and personal strategies were asked (see Appendix B.3.2 for the interview protocol). Participants were asked to recall and explain more on their ratings of the Facebook badges to provide deeper insights to how they see the badges. Each participant received a £10 Amazon voucher for their participation. Participants from outside the UK received an equivalent value e-Giftcard as thanks for their effort.

### 5.3.3 Participants

We performed 22 semi-structured interviews including six in pilot interview, 16 in post-survey interview from Spring 2019 to Spring 2020. Table 5.1 lists the participant ID (PID), the participants' demographics information, and how long they have been on Facebook (as the platform, not the group). Pilot interview participants were recruited through our Facebook posts and word-of-mouth approach. Participants need to administrate or moderate at least one Facebook group with more than 50 group members to be eligible to take part in the pilot interview. Seven participants volunteered after seeing our advertisement and six of them are eligible for the interview. Post-survey interview participants were recruited through the survey about Facebook groups by leaving their email address upon finishing the survey. 16 participants finished the interview after being invited. Participants who took part in the pilot interview were still allowed to participate in the survey and the post-survey interview, as the second interview has additional information asked in alternative ways and a more general focus which extended beyond the pilot interviews. We anticipated that there would be some biases in the post-survey interview if participants have been interviewed on a similar topic in one year. We have two participants in the post-survey interview who has had

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<sup>2</sup>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person activities on campus at University of Bath ceased from 17th March 2020. All planned interviews online and offline were conducted before that.

PID	Age	Education	Gender	Facebook age
PLT-Frodo+	33	Doctorate degree	Man	>10 years
PLT-007+	29	Master's degree	Man	
PLT-JS+	32	Bachelor's degree	Man	14 years
PLT-Fred+	25	Bachelor's degree	Man	10 years
PLT-Biscuit+	23	Bachelor's degree	Man	8 years
PLT-KC+	24	Master's degree	Woman	11 years
P01	25	Bachelor's degree	Woman	9 years
P02	33	Master's degree	Woman	12 years
P03+	36	Doctorate degree	Man	10 years
P04+	24	Master's degree	Man	11 years
P05	50	Bachelor's degree	Woman	8 years
P06+	27	Master's degree	Man	12 years
P07	23	Some college credit	Woman	10 years
P08	18	High school graduate	Woman	1.5 years
Chris+	34	Doctorate degree	Man	11 years
P10 <sup>PLT-Biscuit</sup>	24	Bachelor's degree	Man	8 years
P11	24	Master's degree	Woman	11 years
P12+	26	Master's degree	Man	8 years
P13 <sup>PLT-Fred</sup>	25	Bachelor's degree	Man	10 years
P14	18	Some college credit	Woman	11 years
Charlotte	32	Master's degree	Woman	10 years
Frigg+	27	Master's degree	Woman	10-12 years

Table 5.1: Participant details, + indicates participant is either a moderator or admin of the group

participated in our pilot interview: PLT-Biscuit and P10; PLT-Fred and P13. During the second interview, P10 is focusing on the same group we were discussing in the pilot interview, but he had stepped down from the moderator position and quit the group a few weeks before the second interview. Consequently, his experiences had evolved in a useful way in terms of our research objectives. P13 focused on a different group that he was managing rather than the one discussed in the pilot interview. Both PLT-Biscuit (or P10) and PLT-Fred (or P13) brought some new perspectives in different rounds of interviews. Therefore when we analysed these two interviews, we treated them as separate interviews as if they are not from the same person. However, when we present the descriptive information about the participants later in this section, we only count them as one identical participant. When we use the quotes from these two participants in the analysis, we use their original participant ID in the interview.

20 participants in total participated in the interview (10 male and 10 female, average age 28.15, with median at 26 years old, listed in Table 5.1). 12 participants were administrating or moderating at least one Facebook group upon the time of the interview. The pilot interview time varied between 11 minutes to 17 minutes for the in-person interview, with both text-based chat interviews lasts around 50 minutes. For the post-survey interviews, all participants chose to do either a video call via Skype or a face-to-face interview in person on campus at University of Bath. The post-survey interview time varied between 16 minutes and 43 minutes, with the average at 26 minutes.

Table 5.2 lists the group information mentioned by participants during the interview. As reported during the interview, the group type mentioned in this study varies from student groups, entertainments, cultural, health to politics (see Table 5.2 for information of groups covered in the interviews). We summarised the group type and rounded the member size to the nearest value in order to maintain the anonymity of our participants. The group sizes mentioned in the interviews are between 50 to 660,000 members. Participants stated that they had spent from 3 weeks to 8 years with the groups mentioned during the interview. We did not specifically ask all participants how long they had been group members in the piloting phase: some participants mentioned that information spontaneously. We use a question mark in Table 5.2 if this information is not clearly clarified by the participants.

PID	Group type	Member size	Time with the group
PLT-Frodo+	card games	>2,000	1+ years
PLT-007+	student society*	250	3 years
PLT-JS+	card games	2,500	4 years
PLT-Fred+	academics*	75	11 months
PLT-Biscuit+	politics*	150	1 month
PLT-KC+	games	200	?
P01	research & conference*	3,000	1 year
P02	buying & selling	3,500	4 years
P03+	culture	26,000	>5 years
P04+	sports group*	2,000	8-9 years
P05	pet	5,000	3 weeks
P06+	sports*	2,000	2-4 years
P07	food & recipes	13,000	2-3 years
P08	courses	200*	1.5 years
Chris+	political discussions*	350	3-4 years
P10 <sup>PLT-Biscuit</sup>	politics*	300	8 months
P11	guide dogs & health	5,000 & 14,000	2-3 years
P12+	university sports club*	133	3 years
P13+ <sup>PLT-Fred</sup>	cultural and musical*	50	8 years
P14	memes	660K	1.5 years
Charlotte	running*	hundreds	1 year
Frigg+	student movie club*	500	5+ years

Table 5.2: Group information mentioned by participants during the interview, + indicates the participant is either a moderator or admin of the group; \* indicates that the group associated with some off-line organizations or groups

## 5.4 Results & Analysis

We identified 6 main themes and 23 sub-themes in Facebook group moderation (listed in Table 5.3). In this section, we discuss the meaning of each theme and present quotations from study transcripts to evidence them. While some themes overlapped with what we found in the MetaFilter study, we did not deductively code them in this study. Our intention was still to follow an inductive approach to this analysis. These recurrent themes, including caring and subtle guidance, are evidenced by our interview data from Facebook group users. Other themes emerged inductively that were not present in the set we reported in our MetaFilter study, whilst still consistent with the “Caring” concept that sensitised our analysis. We will discuss this later in Section 5.5.

### 5.4.1 Facebook as a Networking Platform

As a huge social media platform itself, participants see it as one of the first places when they want to find something. Figure 5-2 presents the treemap of three sub-themes under Facebook as a networking platform. The size of each square represents the coding references of each code.

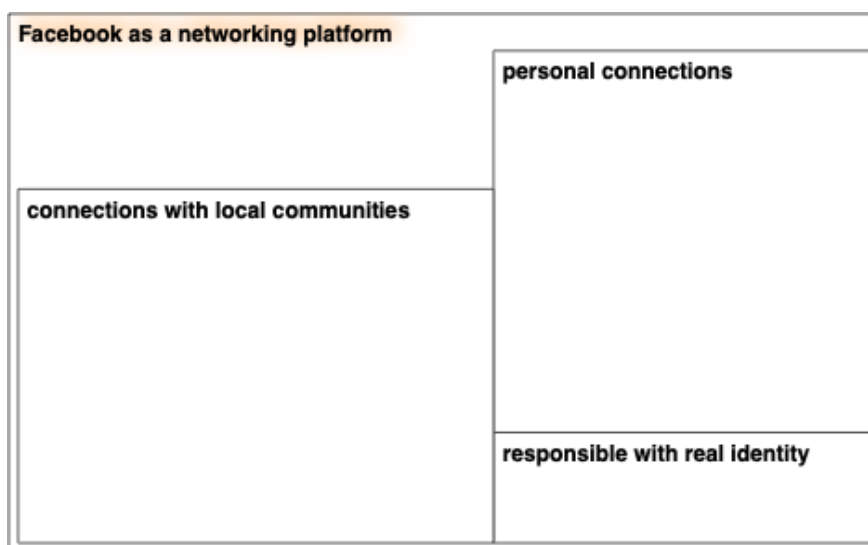


Figure 5-2: Treemap: Facebook as a Networking Platform

P04 and P12 are both managing their groups on Facebook for university sports clubs. While they both stated that “*everyone has Facebook*”, P04 argued that freshers at universities see Facebook groups as the first place to go if they would like to subscribe to the updates from the society. People would think they are “*insane*” if the university society is on other platforms like forums. P12 added that the “*handy range*” of tools

Section	Codes
5.4.1	<b>Facebook as a Networking Platform</b>
5.4.1.1	Personal Connections
5.4.1.2	Connection with Local Communities
5.4.1.3	Responsible with Real Identities
5.4.2	<b>Community Development</b>
5.4.2.1	Outdated Roles
5.4.2.2	Maintain Some Entry Requirements
5.4.2.3	Creating Subgroups on Community Needs
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5.4.3	<b>Norms and Guidelines</b>
5.4.3.1	Shared Vision and Common Ground
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5.4.4	<b>Relaxed Moderation</b>
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5.4.5	<b>Moderator Vision</b>
5.4.5.1	Active Monitoring
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5.4.3.4	Tailored by Group Contexts
5.4.6	<b>Caring</b>
5.4.6.1	Identifying the Needs
5.4.6.2	Subtle Guidance and Negotiation
5.4.6.3	Modelling Practices
5.4.6.4	Transparency
5.4.6.5	Moderator as a Member
5.4.6.6	Acknowledging Care

Table 5.3: Final codes for Facebook group moderation

Facebook provides in groups are useful for the moderators of university societies groups on Facebook.

Well, Facebook, like I say, everyone has Facebook and, it's, you know so obvious how to share a video, how to create an event, things like that. In forums. I'm sure you can do that, but I think forums are also a much more negative connotation with it I think if freshers were advertised by saying join our for them online. You know people would think we were insane.

– P04

I think it's useful in the fact that pretty much everyone has Facebook. That's quite useful. There are quite a handy range of tools on Facebook, as you got kind of the Messenger bit of it and you can do everything from inside of Facebook groups.

– P12

Similarly, PLT-KC, who is a moderator of a gaming group at the university said that posting on Facebook groups feels less formal as it is like messaging people, comparing to forums that have more asynchronous activities.

I think on Facebook people wants to post more often than on those forums. Because on Facebook it feels like they're messaging people.

– PLT-KC

P02 also sees Facebook groups as a way to know what her friends are up to. Having friends who she knows in the Facebook groups may affect her joining decision to the group.

So one group is mostly my friends, but it's not like I'm very emotionally attached to the group. It's mostly like the way of knowing what my friends are up to and maybe join them.

– P02

#### 5.4.1.1 Personal Connections

As a social network platform, members may have personal connections with moderators in Facebook groups. P01 expressed that she knows the moderator in her group from outside. Therefore they may communicate through back-channel if there is any issue.

But the moderator happens to be actually someone I know. I take a class with her.

– P01

However, during the interview, P02 found that she knows the moderator outside the group but was not aware of their moderator role. This may indicate that Facebook group moderators may not talk to others about their moderation role outside. This is also link to Section 5.4.4 Relaxed Moderation, as it may mean that the moderation load in some of the groups is very light that it is not easy to notice the moderators presence.

Oh, actually I know that person. I didn't even know she's a moderator of that group.

– P02

When discussing what to do if in the future the group grows bigger, P06 expressed the willingness of getting extra moderators on board. P06 addressed that it is important to know the person before bringing them on board as a moderator. The social network nature on Facebook makes it possible and the trustworthiness among moderators can be strengthened by knowing each other outside of the group.

I guess (the criteria of choosing the third moderator is) by knowing the person. So like the other moderator, he's my friend, so I know him pretty well.

– P06

#### 5.4.1.2 Connection with Local Communities

Amongst 22 groups mentioned in the interviews, 12 groups are having some sort of links to local communities (listed with \* in Table 5.2). PLT-007 joined the group as soon as he arrived in the city, and became one of the admins by taking being on the committee of the society.

So I've been in this society since I am here in [city] so... and I've been in the committee from the second year and when you are in the committee they also make you the new admins in the group.

– PLT-007

Charlotte mentioned that a group was created after everyone in her project expressed the willingness of keeping in touch after the residential finished.

It was kind of. I did a project where we went away for a residential and then everyone kind of wanted to keep in touch after the residential finished



so I just did a group.

– *Charlotte*

Similarly, members in the politics group Chris is managing can only be added once they attended the physical meet-ups. And members will be promoted to moderators if they are involved in event organizing.

This is kind of a secret group, so we just. You know, physical meetups and things like that. So once you attended those physical meet-ups you were added to the group. Then we know who's in the group and then when you host or engaged in organizing activities, you are a moderator.

– *Chris*

Different tools were also used on Facebook to manage different activities and audiences. In Frigg's movie club, a public Facebook page is used for advertising the club. And only members of the club get access to the Facebook group for additional interaction.

It's a closed group because we have a public page which is for people like we're interested in the club, or like it's sort of to advertise, but the group is there for people who are actually signed up in our members.

– *Frigg*

### 5.4.1.3 Responsible with Real Identities

Moderators of Facebook groups may have a more relaxed moderation strategy (Section 5.4.4). This may be affected by people being encouraged to create their profiles associated with their real identity on Facebook. P03 compared his experiences with anonymous forums and recognised people are more cautious about posting with their real names.

When we were younger on forums and things like that. Nobody knew like even your first name. Because you would use a nickname basically so you say that again my name is Bob and everybody would call you by your nickname. So because of anonymity, the issue is, people would tend to be harsh. I've seen a lot of awful things, people posting and threatening each others' life. Something like please kill yourself and things like that. OK, and when Facebook arrives, people started using their real names, so I suspect people are a bit more cautious on Facebook and it's very uncommon to see, basically, people threatening each other. OK, it's less common, it still happens, but yeah.

– P03

Similarly, PLT-KC and PLT Fred both recognised that knowing each other outside the group may decrease the posts that need moderation in the group.

I checked the posts and everyone is fine and they don't post things that we don't want. I think it is because it is a closed group so people only invite people they do know.

– PLT-KC

We never need to do it (remove moderate comments). When someone posts something inappropriate we will remove it but, because it's not a group, it's... everybody knows or will know each other outside the group so it's not that these opportunities for strangers to join the group and post things there.

– PLT-Fred

### 5.4.2 Community Development

The community development of Facebook groups varies depends on the context of the communities. Participants have different opinions of how their groups on Facebook developed since they were there. For P02, the group she is in “*evolved*” because new members join the group every year.

So every year there are people you people coming. I don't remember how big it was when I started, but it was my first year. So I can't help you in with that. But I can tell that there is... the group evolved.

– P02

Similarly, for most of our participants in groups associated with local organizations, one of the development goals of their community is to increase the number of group members. Chris started the politics group with 10 people with similar interests as him. With a few members adding to the group by months, it is now reached 350 members.

I've been a member since it was started at the beginning it was like 10 people like us back then. So we started slowly every month there are like 45 new members later. In certain months we add 20 like that. That's how it is now it's just like 350 or 60 members.

– Chris

After having a few intense discussion threads in the group by posting on topics that

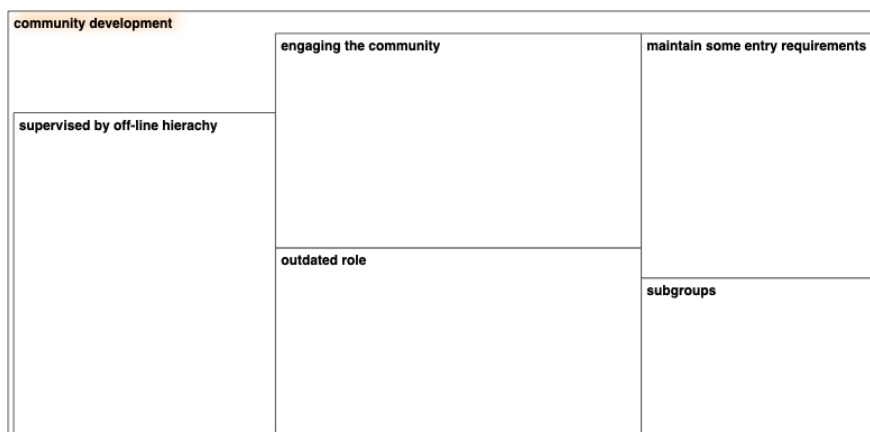


Figure 5-3: Treemap: Community Development

are controversial to the audiences of the group, P11 found that the moderation in the group is stricter because the admins decided that the group “*only allow saying positive things*”.

(The moderation) has been stricter. When I first joined the group, people could write anything. But now these groups only allow saying positive things for the guide dogs, you can’t say anything bad about the staff of the guide dogs. So we have to be sensitive.

– P11

We then further identified five subthemes related to community development (Figure 5-3). During our interview, participants who are associated with groups linking to local communities mentioned some mismatching and overlapping community development strategies between the online and offline community development. Participants who are in the groups with weak links to local communities also hinted at similar topics including outdated roles, entry requirements, subgroup splitting, supervision by offline hierarchies, and engaging the communities.

#### 5.4.2.1 Outdated Roles

The membership and roles in Facebook groups may vary by the purpose of groups. Some of them require some active maintenance to cooperate with changes. However, it may also be flexible and information including the roles could be outdated. P02 is a member of a Facebook group for buying and selling second-hand goods within the university. She is also a member of a few other university-related groups. She found that while people join the group because they were studying at the university, they

may not remember to leave the group once they left the university. The reason for that may also vary. In the end, the member number of the group may go up, but the number of active members could stay similar.

Well, it depends. Because when people join this group, it means that there are students at the University. When they leave University, they probably leave the group, so I guess it should be like the more or less constant size. But sometimes people just stay in old groups. Maybe people like, I'm in so many groups and I didn't even notice that. I mean, so it's probably like that, so it made us grow in time slightly. Because of this, people stayed in the group, but they're not active members.

– P02

P04 is an admin of a group for a university sports club. This group usually have the committee members as admins. However P04 recalled that when he was away from the university for his placement year, the others “*never bother doing that*”, because they assume P04 would be back to the sports club once he was back.

One thing that stuck out to me was you are supposed to be removed as admin, when your time or committee is off. They never bother doing that with me. They just assume that I'd be back when I was back from placements.

– P04

Similarly, PLT-Fred is a student representative and was managing a student group on Facebook. He mentioned that it may worth creating a new group for alumni instead of keeping them in the main group and never to be removed by anyone.

I imagine the next time more people join the course, they'll be added if they want to use it. I've also thought that we eventually might need to remove people if the purpose of the group is only for current students. That's something that needs to be discussed moving on. And there might have to be an alumni group for example to set up. And I might become a moderator for that group.

– PLT-Fred

Therefore for Facebook groups especially the ones which is associated with some offline organizations or communities, the online group may be outdated at both the membership and administration team.

### 5.4.2.2 Maintain Some Entry Requirements

The purpose of setting up Facebook groups varies. A few participants mentioned that the groups they are in have some entry requirements. P06 recalled that they used the tool provided by Facebook to ask people five questions when people want to join the group. He mentioned that this is to prevent people who are not interested in the group to join. And the joining application will be declined if the questions are not answered.

It's not a public group so you can't just join it. You have to get approval and there's like 5 questions and we kind of deduce whether or not to let them in. 'Cause many people just apply and don't fill any questions so we just send it back and say you're not coming in until you answer the questions and that's kind of an easy way to keep people out who aren't serious about it. Well, not serious, but like who are just joining a group for joining a group and not really...

– P06

PLT-JS is an admin of a card game group with 2500 members. Working with a group of five moderators, he mentioned that the moderators will do some checking before admitting new member's joining requests. While specific criteria were not mentioned in the interview, he stated that by doing that, it could filter out the people who are “*not interest*” in the game and “*end up posting spam*”.

I'm the “primary admin” and do most of the work.

I've asked the others to check out new members before admitting them.

Anything with [card game] on it attracts some extra people that don't really have any interest in this game and they end up posting spam that's annoying for most people so we try to avoid letting them into the group.

– PLT-JS

PLT-Biscuit is an admin for a politics group discussing proposals. For his group, whoever is outside their political party is not allowed to join. If anyone is not supporting the proposal, they will also remove the member from the group. He also mentioned some checking process to make sure the people they allow in the group is legit.

So the group was only for people who, so we had some proposals and it's only for people who support those proposals. And ways to make them turning to be achieved. So if people were clearly, either from the opposite group outside, you know, or if they didn't support those things, then we'll kick them out of the group. And even maybe not accepting them at all, or

without actually replying to their post or something. Even if they weren't for the specific things.

– *PLT-Biscuit*

#### 5.4.2.3 Creating Subgroups on Community Needs

As a big social media platform, the effort and costs to set up new groups are not much on Facebook. In our interview, a few participants mentioned that when they identified that the group needs to be split into smaller ones, they can set the sub-groups up conveniently. P04 mentioned that the original group of the sports club becomes the “*main base*” of their club, and they have “*splintered off*” into a few subgroups such as an athlete and a women-only. He also has foreseen that in the future, they may need to create more sub-groups to “*light up*” members' interests.

I think we've splintered off a little bit. This is still the main base, but we've got, you know, the athletes one, we've got a women-only one, and things like that.

...

I think so long as the club hopefully carries on developing. We'll need new groups to keep up with those interests, so we've got a lot more people at a moment they want to do [sports type], so they're going to have their own group, things like that. As long as we keep this page as the central one for general information, and you know, to 'wow' people with how many people we have in the community. Yeah, things just keep lighting up with people's interest.

– *P04*

P08 is in a group of around 200 members with her coursemates. She mentioned that being in a group with 200 members is probably not very useful as a course group. While a lot of members start muting the main group, they have also created some new ones with more focused topics on for example a specific module.

Lots of people muting it because... I feel like it's going to become less useful. Quite a lot of the people already talked to me say they've already muted it because they found it really irritating for the messages coming in. OK. I mean, they've already made smaller groups for different modules, so I probably see it just splitting up and not being just one big clump of people.

– *P08*

#### 5.4.2.4 Supervised by Offline Hierarchies

As the groups our participants are in may link to some local communities or organizations (see Section 5.4.1.2 Connection with Local Communities), some of the participants mentioned that the group could be supervised by organization hierarchies offline. PLT-007 mentioned that while moderators of the group are all committee members of the group, his position in the committee is the “*media officer*”. Therefore he is a more “*static*” moderator of the Facebook group.

People who are in the committee of the society will become moderators automatically.

...

I am the most static one because my role in the committee is media officer. But other people in the committee and the admins they sometimes post as well and they are able to moderate.

– PLT-007

P04 thought though they do not claim that the Facebook group is an “*official*” group of the sports club, someone from the university may intervene if there is a problem. He recalled that once there was a problem with the wording of a post in the group. They were contacted by the university about that. And it is “*helpful to have an extra pair of eyes*” in the group.

I don’t know whether not count as official. Definitely. I think that if we started posting offensive things in there, the university would be on it quite quickly... We’ve had that just before.

...

We’ve got the list of members, and yes, it was fairly transparent about who works for the university. The only time that we’ve really interacted with them is, they suggested, we might want to clear up some of our wording so... Well, it’s fairly obvious what we mean. We don’t mean anything negative, but they’ve got in touch saying, well, someone might read this in a more negative way rather than you mean, so I wouldn’t call an issue, is just helpful to have an extra pair of eyes.

– P04

Frigg created a group for a student movie club at her university with about 500 members in it. She explains the reason why people choose to engage with her group instead of the alternatives is that they try to “brand it within the university”. Comparing their experiences with another movie get-together club which takes an invite-only approach in

the same department, people may feel that they are exclusive for the “popular people”. Frigg tried really hard to brand her group as a university one, by talking to the tutors and presenting themselves at university events. And she thought that is why people are more interested in their group instead of the alternative ones.

Well. In this case, I know there is another sort of movie get-together club, but I think it’s actually we really tried to brand it within the University, because the other one is, well... Ours is specifically for people studying in this department and the other one is as well. But the other one is more like sort of by word-of-mouth that, the people who know this guy would get invited. If you know someone you can invite, though it is not exclusive, anyone is welcome, but if you don’t know them you can get the feeling that it’s exclusive, and it’s for the popular people or whatever. We made an effort to brand it and to talk to the tutors who meet the new students and ask if we can come and present ourselves and we have an exclusive event just for new students. So we try and actually reach out and tell people that they’re welcome.

– Frigg

#### 5.4.2.5 Engaging the Community

There are various of ways to engage the community within the community development. A strategy being mentioned in the interview by our participants is to keep the group actively posted. P06 see the reason for people engaging with the group instead of alternatives as daily active interaction on it, which is what he is “trying to look for” because without daily interaction, others may not have incentives to engage with the group.

Yeah, I think the daily interaction or members is the reason people keep coming back, so it’s not a quiet group. It keeps its active. That’s what I was trying to look for. So you have a lot of groups where nothing happens and then that kind of doesn’t incent people to actually... They don’t feel valued.

– P06

In some interviews, our participants told us that besides checking when there is a notification in the group, they also check it whenever they appear in their news feed on Facebook. P07 further stated that having updates frequently posted may increase the chance it comes up in people’s news feed. This would remind people of the existence



of the group so that they are more likely to engage with it.

People post a lot on it so that posts come up a lot and then it reminds you, oh yeah, that group exists and you're more likely to engage with it yourself. I think.

– P07

### 5.4.3 Norms and Guidelines

There are a few places for the admins and moderators to put the community guidelines in their groups on Facebook: they may have it in the about section of the group, as a pinned announcement on the top, or has it written as a question upon member's joining requests. This makes it quite challenging for the admins and moderators to enforce the rules. When being asked about what typical norms and guidelines are applied with their group, some participants such as P01 mentioned that they would have assumed it to be something general such as behave "*appropriately*" if they have not seen any.

I haven't seen any so I assume you just have to be, uhm? A very clear and graceful and the content should be appropriate to the community. Those were just uhm, I guess norms that you have to follow, but I haven't.

– P01

Similarly, P02 only recalled that she has seen something before when she joined the group but could not recall the exact rules. During the interview, she has to search for the guidelines on her Facebook group

Because there should be something like moderator approved (when I joined the group). Something. OK, it's just like. No selling of animals, people, drugs and this is the only guideline.

– P02

In this section, we further identified four sub-themes speaking of norms and guidelines in Facebook groups (Figure 5-4) in order to deepen our understanding of how norms and guidelines of Facebook groups are developed and maintained by the communities.

#### 5.4.3.1 Shared Vision and Common Ground

Groups on Facebook usually have a very specific purpose or for a specific group of people. Therefore members of Facebook groups often share a vision and a common ground with others in the group. This usually helps sharing the understandings of the

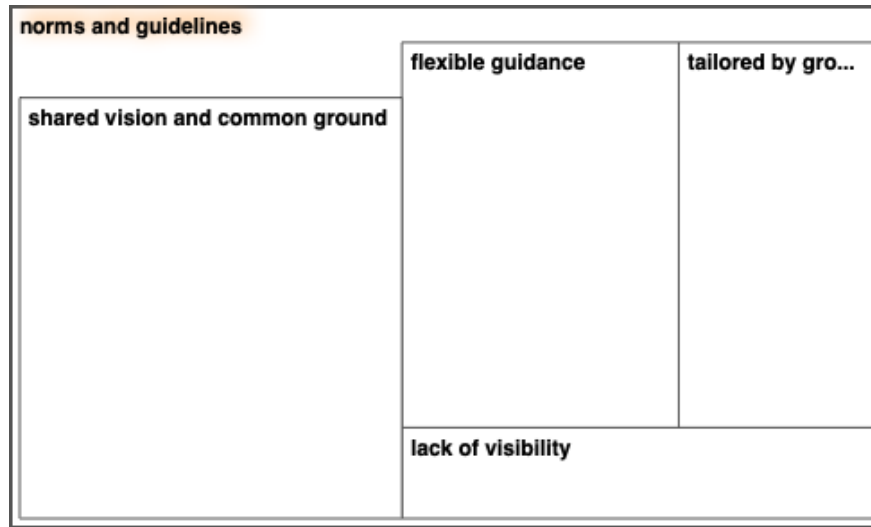


Figure 5-4: Treemap: Norms and Guidelines

norms and guidelines of the group. P05 found her group by just searching for groups about the pet that she has got recently, and was surprised that there are even groups of specific species of the pet she owns. Having highly relevant information and discussions and sharing the common ground within the group, P05 feels nice about being part of that community.

Because it's very specific, I was quite surprised actually when I just Googled, the [pet] Facebook groups, but they were actually lots, but then also by species. So it's actually about a particular type of [pet]. So the information on there is extremely relevant and, yeah, is there something quite nice about being part of that community.

– P05

Groups on Facebook may also associate with other components in the Facebook ecosystem, for example with Facebook Pages. P06's group was set up based on a Facebook Page for the sports club in the university. Therefore most members of the group are also followers of the page, and he believes this may “unite” the members in some way.

Good question, it's a small tiny group, so I think that they have the page in common. Kind of unites them a bit and then.

– P06

For the movie club Frigg created, the group is only for students in her department. Members of the group need to provide their student email upon joining the group.

Therefore it is not just a group of people who is interested in the movie. Members in the group also shared similar thoughts and arguments.

It's a specific community, right? So we all study the same thing and that means first of all to some extent. I know how people think and I know what arguments work and which ones don't work.

– Frigg

#### 5.4.3.2 Flexible Guidance

Having the groups self-organize their norms and guidance on Facebook, the guidance in Facebook groups can be very flexible. P03 is a moderator of a Facebook group for people from the same home country as him living in a foreign country with 26,000 members. When being asked about whether the group has any specific guidelines in moderation, P03 explained that there is no moderation guide despite the size of the group, which became an issue for the moderators.

The group was created by an expert lady a long time ago and she doesn't really come on it so much anymore. So it mostly depends on the admins and moderators. But there's no like, there's no moderation guide, despite the size of the group. Because of the size of the group, moderation work was compared to the size not so huge that being an issue.

– P03

Even for some groups, they have rules set up and shared with the community, these rules may not be strictly abided by by their members, and can be executed flexibly by moderators. P13 is running a small group of about 50 members of a music group in his university. He explained that one of the rules in the group is only “*current member of the society*” should get access to the group. However, some members who should not be in the group are still in there because of maybe personal relationships with the community. And if that does not do harm to the community, it is “*OK*” to not follow the rules.

So I think one of the rules is that you have to be a current member of the society to be in the group, but, there are some people that are still in the Facebook group that are no longer at the university, so they shouldn't be in there really, but they are. I think that's because of personal relationships as well, or just the. It's a lot of hassle, I think for the committee to always have to take people out and people in. And it's no harm for them being there, so OK.

– P13

**Use guidelines as a backup for moderation** P05 understand the guidelines of her group as the “*common sense*” of how to behave. And the guidelines are there as a backup for the admin and moderators to refer to when they need it.

I think it’s common sense, you know how to behave, but I guess it’s their, their backup for if people are rude, they’ve got somewhere to point them to and give them a reason why they can boot them out of the group. I get that.

– P05

PLT-Frodo recalled having some rules in the group but very “*informal*”. He later recalled that the day before the interview the moderators locked one thread for “*violating one of the rules*”. This indicates that even having some informal rules, when the moderators need a backup reason for a specific moderation activity, they can refer their action to that to maintain transparency.

Yes, we do (have some rules). But they are pretty informal. I think one of them is “no orc speech”.

...

We locked a thread yesterday for violating one of the rules.

– PLT-Frodo

### 5.4.3.3 Lack of Visibility

While for Facebook groups, there are a few places in the groups for admins and moderators to publicize the guidelines of the group. However, participants reported that it is not usually easy for them to figure out where to check the guidelines of the group:

My impression was that, yeah, I’m not aware of any formal guidelines.

– P01

P05 recalled seeing “*a message*” when joining the group about some guidelines. However, since they are some general ones, and there is no other way to find out what they are about except quitting the group and joining it again, she could not recall much of it.

I’m just trying to remember when I joined, whether there was. Um, a message that came up... It was much more of a: This is kind of rules, so you don’t kind of hassle people you know, much more kind of in your face

guidelines. So I don't remember so much of that for Facebook now.

– P05

Sometimes even for moderators, it is not easy to be aware of the guidelines of their group. P13 is the admin of a group he created eight years ago, during the interview, he was checking the guidelines of the group and found it “*pretty much as it was seven-eight years ago*”. This may indicate that the new moderators may not be aware of if there are community guidelines, where to find them, or how to update that.

Interestingly, the about section is pretty much as it was seven-eight years ago. And so we should update that, but um. Yeah, it's interesting. The admins have changed frequently because as the committee changes every year the admins change as well.

– P13

#### 5.4.3.4 Tailored by Group Contexts

With usually very specific purposes of the group, the guidelines of groups can be also specifically tailored by group contexts. P05 eventually found that there are some rules for the pet group that she is in. And the rules are very specific, mentioning certain kind of posts are not allowed in the group:

But no pictures of [pet] roaming the living room floor sitting on the sofa wearing jumpers or being cuddled... There you go, there are some rules.

– P05

P11 has a guide dog and is a member of a guide dog group on Facebook. During the interview, she shared her experience of posting in a guide dog group about being upset by a puppy worker. The post received mixed replies because there are both guide dog owners and puppy workers in the group. After several times of posts like this went out of control with the group's member base, the group make it as a rule that only positive things about guide dogs are allowed in the group. Therefore norms and guidelines of groups may also be tailored by the member base of the group and the reactions from the members.

On guide dog's group, I once post something of me being upset. And there were mixed responses. And now the guide dog's group makes that limitation to only say positive things. I see multiple people doing things so I did one. So once I said I was upset by a puppy worker because they patted my guide dog, but they know they are not supposed to do that when the guide dogs

are working... I posted that on Facebook. And then the people said, oh, we are puppy workers. And they said that, you should be grateful for what we did to them. Other people have guide dogs also said we experienced the same thing. That is not right. We shouldn't feel obligated to have that like a pet because of the puppy workers.

– P11

#### 5.4.4 Relaxed Moderation

When asking the moderators of Facebook group about their moderation strategies, it is mentioned a few times in the interview that they usually take a relaxed moderation approach, which they only take actions if there is a very specific reason for it:

Unless there is a very specific topic be that you think might be inappropriate, it was very, very relaxed moderation. It was very easy to do.

– P03

(The moderation is) fairly relaxed. I don't obsess over it.

– P06

PLT-Frodo further explained that the group he is managing “*do not need much*” moderation. Therefore it is relaxed for the moderators.

TBH I am a pretty bad admin :P  
I don't do much moderation  
but then we don't need much

– PLT-Frodo

Similarly, Chris expressed that his moderation strategy is very relaxing. The group he is managing is for political discussions. Therefore sometimes opinions can be very strong. He explained that unless there is harassment in the posts, otherwise anything including criticisms is allowed.

Anything can be posted as long as it's not harassment. Even like very severe criticism against one person can be posted.

So basically, like people like to be less, how do you call it? Regulated? But then you have to make sure there is a kind of self-regulation. Then everybody feels it's focused.

– Chris

#### 5.4.4.1 Assuming People Behave in the First Place

One of the reasons moderators are confident to apply a relaxed moderation strategy in the Facebook groups is, they assume people behave in the first place on Facebook. This may due to the real-name nature of Facebook and the context of the groups. P04 described that in their group, anyone is allowed to join and they only take action when they have a specific reason.

(We are) open mind by default we'd accept anyone into the group. We'd let anyone join in with the conversations we come at it from. We assume that everything's OK unless we have a reason not to. Then we've got a lot of people motivated, we assume everything is fine unless we've got a reason.

– P04

While most moderators assume people behave in the first place without much information, PLT-JS shared that when someone first joined their card game group, some members tried to remind him that the person has some issues in the past with other boardgame groups and is famous among boardgame group moderators on Facebook. Even after knowing these, PLT-JS decided to “*not judge him based on his previous history*” so he was allowed in the group.

We also had people messaging us asking us to remove him... but we felt we had to give him a fair chance and not judge him and exclude him based on his previous history. But we kind of figured it would go down the same course...

– PLT-JS

#### 5.4.5 Moderator Vision

By knowing and engaging in their groups, moderators of Facebook groups have a vision of how their group is like. They know about the activities happening in the group. They may also be able to guess which thread may go wrong so that they can pay more attention to that.

There's usually like 20-ish new posts per day, so if you go by like 3 times per day, usually you identify post way earlier on and... So there are some topics that you know, OK, this topic will not go anywhere.

...

I also can guess in a few cases, when's the conversation would go wrong.

– P03

For P06’s case, because he is managing the main group and several subgroups of the main group, once someone is banned in one of the groups, the same actions may be applied in the other groups.

We delete the post and then block the person forever on the page or whatever. ‘Cause we have both groups know people and pages in that group which can get quite annoying sometimes.

– P06

PLT-Frodo shared that there is something that a moderator can not easily help with. Rather than moderate something wrong in the group, it may be better to lock the thread.

I am not convinced that I am a great mod.

It’s hard to ”moderate” people who are just wrong... so I tend to stay out of it, and only lock some threads where people are fighting or if someone is being an idiot.

– PLT-Frodo

In summary, Facebook Moderators learn about their groups and how to best moderating them through their time and experiences with the group. We further identified three sub-themes that may contribute to or affect moderators’ vision of their group. With this high-level vision, they will be able to choose the best tool in their moderation toolbox and applied it at the correct timing.

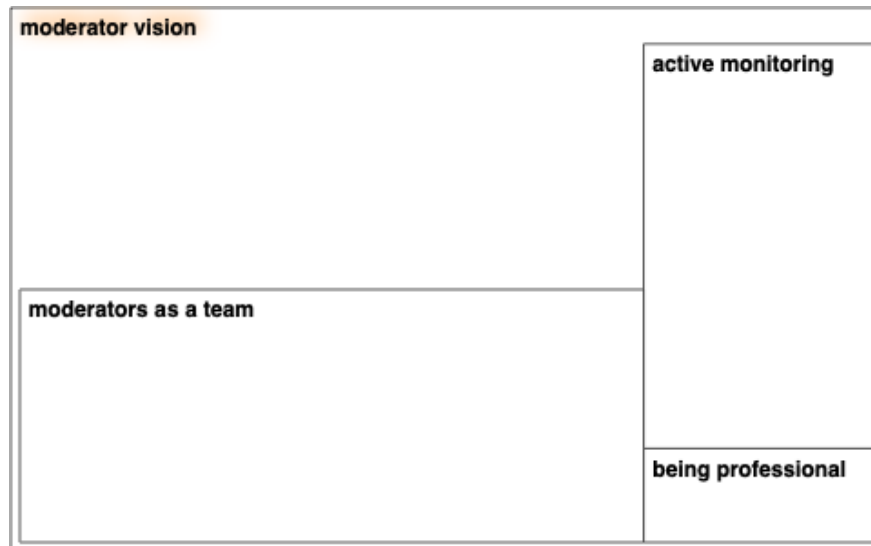


Figure 5-5: Treemap: Moderator Vision



#### 5.4.5.1 Active Monitoring

Facebook group moderators expressed one of their strategies is actively monitoring what is happening in the group. P03 stated that he check the group every day when he arrives at work in the morning.

Uh, (I check the group) early in the morning, for sure. When I arrive at work, and sometimes here and there during the day.

– P03

While P03 monitors the group activity by checking the group at a certain time of the day, P04 explained that most of them on the moderator team has the notifications turned on so that they will get notified in case any issue arises.

Generally, between the admin team, there's always someone that will see fairly quickly. Normally if the problem is on a post that one of us is post. We should be getting the notifications. Or we will get a notification that someone posted an advert; someones posted, you know, just something abusive. Or we will get a notification that someone's trying to join the group who we think isn't actually engaging in our club.

– P04

#### 5.4.5.2 Being Professional

When being asked how they distinguish their role in the group as an admin/moderator or as a normal member, P06 is very clear about his role in the group and the activities he should do.

I just post things I think will be relevant, but like moderation is more looking at each thing, not looking at the funny aspect but is looking at if it's appropriate or not and if it's just trash, to be honest.

– P06

In Frigg's movie group, there is a certain process for the group to suggest and vote for what they should watch next. She stated that the process of voting is not flawless and maybe trolled. She tried to be transparent and honest when dealing with this kind of request from the members of her group.

Again, someone tries to start a big trolling thing by selecting a stupid movie that nobody wants to watch. Someone tried to suggest watching the whole of some series that would take 24 hours, something like that. I mean, I

don't mind that trolling 'cause it's nice that people are having fun. But I would also just go in honestly and just deal with it like, I think mostly the strategy would be talked to people like tell them: this is why we're not doing what you're asking, or just be very open and explain things.

– *Frigg*

#### 5.4.5.3 Moderators as a Team

Another thing we identified through our analysis that helps moderators to build their vision is, moderators usually help each other and work as a team for the group. P04 stated that they have a group chat for all admins in case anyone wants to discuss anything.

There's a big group chat with all of the admins in it, but if it's definitely someone in particular's interests and they can just directly messaging that.

– *P04*

Similarly, PLT-JS recalled that for his group, there are five moderators on the group and they have a group chat. However, they may not talk in it every day and it is just one of the spaces for “*interactions comes and goes*”.

Sometimes we go for a month without needing the group chat. Sometimes we need it several times a day. The group is pretty peaceful and “well behaved” in general. Things get more involved for us when a person starts making trouble. So our interaction comes and goes. That particular group chat is just for Moderation talk.

– *PLT-JS*

PLT-Frodo shared that the group chat of their moderation group may be used as a tool for quick catch-ups among the moderators.

Usually, the chat is used to highlight a post that might have been reported.

So the main admin will be like, I just locked this thread

Or “I'm keeping an eye on this post”.

Other times we have used it to discuss booting people from the group

– *PLT-Frodo*

Other than having a group chat, moderators of Facebook groups may also split the workload among them.

We kind of. We split the duties of the page so the page on the group on

separate days. So when you're managing the page or managing the group as well.

– P06

Through keeping each other updated about what everyone is up to or splitting the workload so that moderators can better work as a team, moderators share visions in between them. And this would help them build their moderation vision of the group.

### 5.4.6 Caring

Through our analysis of the interview, we found that moderators of Facebook groups take care of their groups in various ways. Having their groups associated with the off-line organizations or communities only increase the care that they are able to deliver and the resources they have got to be careful about. Here we identified six themes associated with caring in Facebook groups (Figure 5-6). We found that not only moderators care about their community and members, members also acknowledge the care delivered by the community carers – admins and moderators.

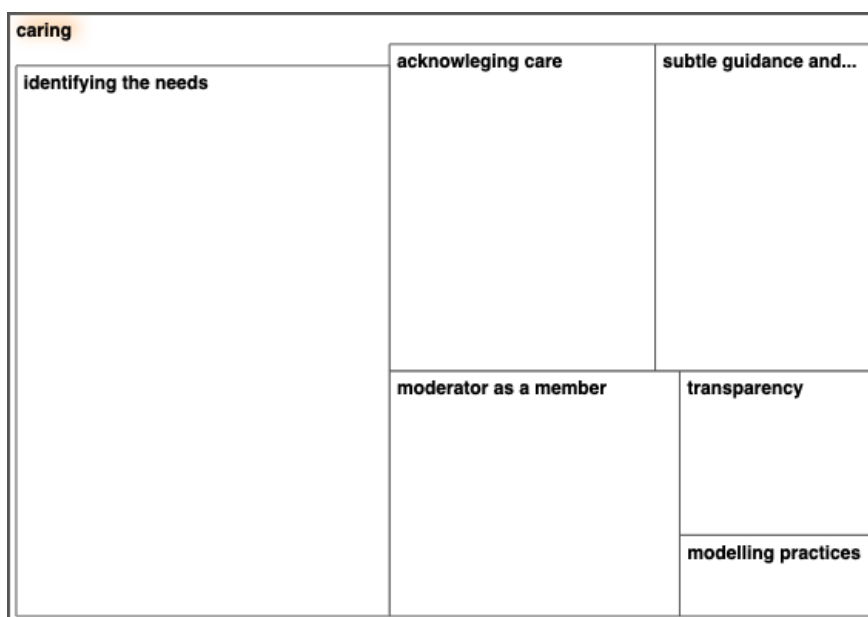


Figure 5-6: Treemap: Caring

#### 5.4.6.1 Identifying the Needs

In our analysis, we found that moderators are often able to identify the needs of their community depending on the context consulting their own experiences with the group.

While it is recognized as one of the basic work for moderators to remove undesirable content, P03 further expressed that he is able to identify whether the conversation may go wrong. Once he recognises the risks in the thread, he may put at least a warning beforehand to prevent the conversation from hazards.

I only delete a post when it's inappropriate, but I can also identify some conversations and the way they're going and, I expect that beforehand when I might be able to feel like, OK, I think this conversation will go wrong and therefore I can warn the user at least on that one.

– P03

By proactively checking on the group, moderators identify not only what to remove, but also what to respond to in the group. PLT-Frodo recalled that if people's posts "look lonely", he would attend to that by liking the post.

Sometimes I will make a post or respond to threads.  
Or like people's posts if they look lonely.

– PLT-Frodo

Sometimes clear and structured rules may be needed if it is linked to the vital purpose of the group. Frigg developed and maintained a very structured process for how movies are decided by votes from members of the group. She saw the needs of the group as a systematic way to make justifiable, collective decisions on the main activity that is going to be taken by the group members offline. And a lot of effort was put into there to make the decisions more transparent and less biased in this case.

We tried to set some very clear rules, not for behaviour because that hasn't been an issue, but still like this is what the group is for and this is also very structured about. Whenever we watch a movie, we don't just pick one. We always vote and there's a very sort of systematic way of, 1st as a vote where everyone can suggest, and then there's a vote where we pick the top 10, and then they can vote on those and. And I was mostly aware that I know that there are big groups of people who sort of do the same. So that's sort of a thing in one of the years, for example.

– Frigg

#### 5.4.6.2 Subtle Guidance and Negotiation

Through our analysis, we found that admins and moderators of Facebook groups sometimes give subtle guidance to members when they were confused. If the norms and

guidelines were challenged by certain member activities, they may negotiate with the member before deciding what actions should be taken. P04 recalled that in his group, he had people that the moderation team has to deal with. In this case, they “*explain to them without offending them*”.

But we’ve also got people who think they can genuinely help, and we have to deal with, you know, explain to them that’s not what we’re looking for without offending them.

– P04

Chris stated that in the group that he is managing, instead of publicly displaying the rules on the page, they educate people with their practice and keep reminding them if they unintentionally violate the practice.

OK, so basically there are no rules publicly displayed on the page. But then when we add people we tell them this is our practice. And then they just simply abide by that. There had been, like people doing violating the practice, not deliberately. They didn’t know that or they weren’t serious about it, so we had to remind them. Then it’s fine.

– Chris

PLT-JS recalled a member who has lots of “*rude and dismissive comments aimed at other people*” from the beginning. After working with him for a few months, the member has turned out to be able to engage with the community.

Another situation started out similarly with lots of rude and dismissive comments aimed at other people, but I worked with the guy for several months and he’s turned out to be a solid member of the community.

– PLT-JS

### 5.4.6.3 Modelling Practices

Other than educating members by gentle nudges, admins and moderators may also model the practices by themselves in the group. Admins and moderators of Facebook groups usually have a badge identifying their roles in the group. When being asked does he still engage with the group outside his moderating role, he added that he “*tried to be extra well behaved*” realizing that everyone knows he is the moderator with the badge.

But I realize that that Moderator badge carries some weight. So I try to be extra well behaved.

lol

– *PLT-JS*

Moderators not only try to model the normative practices of the group by themselves, Frigg shared that she also required others on the moderation team to be fair in the voting process for choosing the film even moderators may have the privilege to affect the voting results.

We were six admins. Three of us thought. That if you, if there's a vote and you don't like one of the movies, that one you can overrule it because you're an admin, you put in this effort. And three of us didn't want to do that like I was very much a proponent of – No, I don't want this kind of thing. I felt like it was kind of corruption 'cause I feel like we're not doing this for us. We're doing it for everyone. I want people to know. Basically, I didn't want people to join as admins because they wanted power over others.

– *Frigg*

#### 5.4.6.4 Transparency

While as discussed in Section 5.4.3.3, it is not easy to publicly display guidelines of Facebook groups, moderators sometimes make it transparent that what their decision is in the group. P01, as a member of a group with 3,000 members, she recalled that after dealing with one of the incidents in the group, one of the moderators made a post to explain their decisions and reinforce the rules.

She (the moderator) actually removed the post first, then she replied back and said: oh thank you for your opinion. It was very professional. And then I think later she posted something like “the committee decided to remove it according to like the rules”, then I think it got on.

– *P01*

For decisions made based on the rule that is not publicly displayed in the group, Frigg decided that it is also important to make it transparent for other members in the group.

OK, we have people try to sort of game the system and make fun of it. And someone would add 10 sci-fi movies so all of the top 10 would be sci-fi or something. We kind of expect people to troll us a little bit, so that would be, there was an unofficial guideline, but we were going to be honest if we used it.

– *Frigg*

#### 5.4.6.5 Moderator as a Member

To engage with their members, sometimes moderators may take off their moderation hat and interact as normal members in the group. P03 argued that moderators “*are also very active members*”. They not only do their moderation work, but also engage with the group by posting their opinions or something actively.

There’s one thing most moderators are also very active members, so you would see them post and answer, and would be very active, not only moderating and banning, but would also like to post their opinions and something like that.

– P03

P04 distinguished his role between a member and moderator by switching between “*chatting with friend*”, or being professional to “*keep the group running*”.

I think generally is quite clear whether or not I’m posting or interacting with someone who needs to keep the group running, or whether I’m chatting with my friend, talking about [sports], things like that. Pretty clear to most people.

– P04

For PLT-Fred, his strategy is explicitly saying that he is not posting with his moderator’s role at the moment, but just asking a question as a normal student.

Usually, I would say something like, I am not posting as your rep at the moment, cause the admin, are the representative of my course. So I said I am not posting as your rep. I’ve got a question.

– PLT-Fred

#### 5.4.6.6 Acknowledging Care

Not only that the moderators care for members and the community on Facebook groups, members may also acknowledge care back to the moderators using their own way. One of the approaches is flagging up problems to the moderators as soon as they noticed that. P06, PLT-KC recalled episodes in their groups about receiving reports from members

So we had an episode of someone basically posting borderline porn images and they just flagged it up straight away.

– P06

Yeah they can report. Most of the time they'll report some spam accounts.  
Many of them are bot accounts.

– *PLT-KC*

In PLT-JS's case, he received warnings from other members before working to make the person mentioned in Section 5.4.6.2 as a solid member before. This shows that the members also care for the community and moderators by helping them to identify potential issues including posts and other members.

We didn't share his background with the entire group but we had other members of the community message us several times warning us about him even when he first joined the group.

– *PLT-JS*

## 5.5 General Discussion for Study 2a: Facebook group Moderation

From our analysis, we see that the purposes of the Facebook groups our participants belong to vary from entertainment, to health, to work and can be as specific as one topic in politics. Moderation in Facebook groups also varies depending on group needs: when in the guide dog group that P11 is a member of, the moderation team decided that the group should only allow positive things because of the mixed-member base, in the political groups Chris is managing, opinions are always welcome as long as there is no harassment. To elaborate on our first research question (see Section 5.2.1 for all research questions of this study): *What kind of communities do people join on Facebook groups* (FBG-RQ1), we first start this section by rethinking the differences between online communities and communities online (Section 5.5.1). Knowing the purpose of a Facebook group will help understand the moderation in Facebook groups. Looking at our analysis and previous care-as-nurture in moderation framework discussed in Chapter 4, we later compared our findings of practices in Facebook group moderation to the normative moderation processes we suggested in Chapter 3. Finally, we discuss our findings with Section 5.5.2 to rethink the care-as-nurture as a framework in Facebook groups moderation (FBG-RQ2 and FBG-RQ3).

### 5.5.1 Rethinking Online Communities and Communities Online

Among 22 groups mentioned in the interviews, 12 of them are associated with some local groups or communities offline (Table 5.2). At the beginning of the thesis, we use the



definition from Preece (2000) scoping that online community is *a group of people who interact in a virtual environment. They have a purpose, are supported by technology, and are guided by norms and policies.* In the literature review, we argued that it is to be discussed that whether “active participation” and “intense interaction” are essential in communities (Whittaker, Isaacs and O’Day, 1997). Looking at online communities, it is also a question that if a new member of the community is in the reader phase in the Reader-to-Leader framework and will be staying in this phase for a long time based on the community norms and participation format, is this “member” still belongs to that community? In our Facebook study, a few participants mentioned that their Facebook group is mostly used as a “notice board” for the offline societies (P12, P13, Frigg, sort of P04 and Charlotte), is this Facebook group still counted as an “online community”, or is the Facebook group part of their community, or is the Facebook group an online presence of the offline community? Imagining this offline, if there is a notice board in a local area, the representatives of the local area maintains the notice board, putting up and taking down posters about local news or advertisements, is this piece of board a “community” or part of the “community”? While it is easy for us to say the notice board is part of the community, there is not an easy answer for whether the “notice board” style of Facebook groups are online communities or the communities online. Looking at the working definition we use in this thesis, the primary distinction of it depends on whether the interaction among the group of people happens in the virtual environment. However, not only that this is not measurable, but also whether a Facebook group is an “online community” should not be decided by the percentages of activities that happens online and offline. It is more important to see if the interaction in the online groups is mainly serving the needs of the community activities offline. For example, if there is a football group on Facebook, and the purpose of this Facebook group is to organize football training and matches in the university, this Facebook group is the online presence of the local football community. If this football group is mainly used for discussing football skills, exchanging comments about football matches, sharing photos about football, buying and selling training equipment, this Facebook group can be an online community of football-lovers. The online presence of the local community will be dissolved if the associated local community disbanded, while the purpose of the existence of the online space also went away with the disbanding.

However, technology makes it possible for people to interact online with a few clicks, and the boundary between online communities and communities online is disappearing. With Facebook groups, which in our study were mostly used as notice boards for local groups and organizations, the interaction space still exists online, even if it is counter-normal to interact online for their communities. Baborska-Narozny, Stirling

and Stevenson (2016) argued in the paper that, through communication on a Facebook group, it helps weak-tie residential communities to improve the physical environment and facilitate further collective action, and there is a clear overlap with the hybrid setting of the residential community between online communication and their physical interaction. With the space online available for offline communities, members can still make posts, click on others' profiles, or message the admin and moderators of the group. People discussed the courses' condition and what kind of shoes are more suitable for the course in the running group (Charlotte). Members tried to troll the group by suggesting a 24-hour watching party of a series of science-fiction films (Frigg). The purpose of a group when it is been set up may be decided by the group founders, but *successful communities evolve to keep pace with the changing needs of members and owners*. While the interview was conducted right before the COVID-19 global pandemic, we see more and more communities moving to their online space and become "hybrid". So hybridity can also be seen as a fluid, evolving idea for any community that supports member interactions as a joint function of changing online and offline constraints. It is worth thinking that how may our findings from online communities may be extended to future hybrid settings.

### **5.5.2 "Taking Care of a Fruit Tree": Reconsidering Care-as-Nurture in Facebook group Moderation**

From Chapter 4, we suggest using care as a lens to explore normative processes in online community moderation, including pruning for reinforcing existing norms, and fertilising towards norms evolve. With our Facebook group moderation study, we see that the hybridity property of communities and the real-name nature within the Facebook ecosystem affect the moderation strategies and practices in various ways. Facebook groups users usually set up or join groups with very a specific focus or purpose including community interaction online and offline. They may be less aware of the guidelines and acceptable conduct of the group, but with more overlapped vision and share a more common ground of what can be accomplished within the group. In this section, we discuss how we may use care as a lens to explore Facebook group moderation, extending to our understanding of the care-as-nurture framework in online communities elaborated in Chapter 3 and 4.

We discussed four care-in-moderation processes in Chapter 3 including norm-setting, professionalism, moderator as a member, and sharing responsibility. In this study, we found that members have less awareness about the norms and guidelines of groups in Facebook, but shares more vision and common ground base on the more specific purpose

of the group. Moderators may sometimes reinforce norms by gentle nudges when issues arise, but they may also negotiate with the members when there is a disagreement. Facebook group moderators are less professional because of the volunteering moderation environment than MetaFilter moderators, instead, they applied a much more relaxed moderation strategy within their groups. This could be due to the hybridity of groups and the real-name nature of Facebook, problems that arose online may get a chance to be resolved outside the online space. The moderator as a member strategy applies even stronger when moderators and members have the opportunity to have personal connections on Facebook. Because of the much more relaxed moderation strategy, how moderators share responsibility in between them need to be discussed more contextually because it may be affected by the offline hierarchies.

According to (Preece, 2000, p. 299)'s three steps plan of welcoming and nurturing the community, with MetaFilter study, we elaborate mainly on the last phase of community development – normative processes in online community moderation aiming at a long term support plan. Within this study, we see that users of Facebook groups value the platform as a relevant low-cost and hazardless place to seed their communities in, if they have very focused topics or purposes because everyone is on Facebook (P03, P04, sort of P05). Online communities need to get to their *critical mass* to retain other's interests and stay maintainable (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Preece, 2000). Facebook is a good place for groups to reach their critical mass. A lot of times the groups were created without thinking about why they should be on Facebook, and what other options they have on the plate. Most groups on Facebook have very specific purposes. Once the purposes of the group are clear, the needs of where in the online space the community should be seeded in appear spontaneously. Finding an online space for a local community is not as difficult as deciding where to buy your house, also Facebook's soil has enough basis for most communities' seeds to sprout. For small, self-regulated communities, Facebook's infrastructure and popularity are highly competitive among all the platforms available, not to mention that there is little cost for the online space there. Thus the first main challenge online communities in Facebook groups facing is to establish the purpose of the community so that it can attract more target audiences. If saying MetaFilter moderation is like taking care of a fruit tree, groups on Facebook also need to consider what kind of fruit tree they are going to seed, base on the Facebook soil, and how they may sell the fruit from the tree to shoppers on Facebook. For groups that are associated with a local community, they will be able to grow using the offline community strategies: student societies may present at student events offline and advertise the group there or have a link to their group on the university website. Groups which is not associated with a local community may grow by networking with other people, for example, the

other equivalent group in Frigg’s department send invitations to people they know on Facebook. Members may also request to join the group on a searching basis. For example, P05 joined the pet group by searching for the specific species of the pet, people join PLT-JS’s card game group by their needs of finding someone else to play the game together, P02 joined the buying and selling group when she first arrived in the city and trying to find some second-hand things. Therefore establishing a clear group identity with a structured, searchable focus is very important for a Facebook group.

In our study, most of the groups our participants were referring to has an established identity, a clear purpose, and have reached the critical mass. Therefore issues in the groups are more contextualized and need to be consulted closely with the background, purposes, and the member base of the group. Having a vision on what attributes of the group is the most important to tie members in the community will help identify these contextualized needs. Like Fiesler et al. (2018)’s study on subreddit rules, Facebook groups also have tailored community guidelines: the pet group P05 is in has a specific guideline about what kind of photos of the pet should not be shared in the group; Frigg made a systematic process for the group to vote for movies to watch next; Chris’s political discussion groups apply a set of guidelines for splitting the groups into smaller ones focusing on more specific political discussion. The tailored rules and guidelines for hybrid communities are more focusing on the membership requirements – either a member is only allowed to join the online community when they hold a membership for the offline community, or people with interests in the activity the community is focusing on will be able to join the online community so that they may decide to join the community offline. Successful communities evolve to keep pace with the changing needs of members and owners (Kim, 2000), and with the much more narrowed needs of members and owners of Facebook groups, it is important for Facebook group admins and moderators to share the vision and common ground with the group. For example for admins and the moderators in P01’s group of research and conferences, admins and moderators need to share the vision with their members on the area of research and the conference schedule. In order to share the common ground with the members, moderators may set up and maintain entry requirements for the group, to make sure the people they allow in share the same interests with the group (FBG-RQ2a). With that in mind, it may help with moderators relaxed moderation strategy, because people in the community are more likely to figure out “*how others think and what arguments work and which ones don’t work*”(Frigg). Though members of Facebook groups do not usually have their say in community development (Seering et al., 2019b), they choose the community to join in Facebook groups and can leave without costing them too

much once they decide the community is not for them.

Hence, care-as-nurture in Facebook group moderation extends in a way to caring about the identity and purpose of the community (FBG-RQ2). With Facebook groups, “taking care of a fruit tree” implies having the vision and knowledge on what fruit the tree is going to bear during when, therefore what kind of worms to prevent it from and what gardening tools may be applied would naturally arise. People join and participate in Facebook groups because they shared the same interests with the community, or has overlapped purposes with the community (FBG-RQ3). Moderation strategies applied should serve the purposes and respond to the needs of the community. If the purpose and identity of the community can be carefully maintained and developed by closely consulting the community needs, the growth of the group will be kept at a more steady pace with the needs. In that case, when the identity and purpose of the group are carefully maintained and developed, it naturally emerges that when and what to prune and nurture in the group will be the best for the community and its norms.

## 5.6 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, we present the Facebook group moderation study (thesis study 2a). Through 22 semi-structured interviews, we are interested in the type of groups people join on, the moderation strategies applied and how do members perceive moderation activities on Facebook groups. We inductively open coded the interviews and organize them into 6 main themes including Facebook as a networking platform, community development, norms and guidelines, relaxed moderation, moderator vision, and caring. We also identified 23 sub-themes in Facebook group moderation under the main themes reported (listed in Table 5.3).

Through our analysis, we found that our previous care-as-nurture framework in moderation (discussed in Chapter 4) extends to online communities on Facebook groups. We conclude that groups on Facebook have more specific purposes, and the purpose sometimes serves the community needs offline. We discussed that it is important to understand the hybridity nature of communities on Facebook groups. We see that moderators of Facebook groups apply a more relaxed strategy, which may due to the real name nature on Facebook and the hybridity attribute of the groups. Taking care of communities in Facebook groups should extend to establishing and maintaining the identity and purpose of the group, consulting closely to the community needs. Through this study, it comes to our attention that the arena of online community moderation may extend to offline activities, which we see as one of the limitations in our samples –

11 out of 22 groups being mentioned in the interview are associated with some offline organizations.

In the next chapter, we extend the phase of empirical work in this chapter, by bringing our insights about moderation with human moderators to bear on a technology that could support their work, using the algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups as an example tool in the case study.

## Chapter 6

# Empirical Studies about Algorithmically Generated Badges in Facebook Groups

### 6.1 Chapter Overview

In our previous chapters, we examined moderation through research literature, a series of studies on moderation practice in a well-established online community, and through interviews with Facebook group users. We have developed a perspective on moderation as a caring practice, drawing on a health concept and feminist care ethics, to frame the work of moderators. In the Facebook group moderation study, the theme of ‘moderator vision’ is becoming increasingly problematic, as the vision is vital for moderators to identify community needs and justify their moderation actions. As the scale of interactions in online communities grows, various moderation tools relying on algorithms may be applied to reduce the workload for moderators. However, it is yet a question to answer that if these tools may hinge with or hinder the care-in-nurture lens in normative moderation processes.

In this chapter, we deepen our analysis of Facebook group moderation as it may be influenced by algorithmic treatments of member activity. Specifically, we explore the current and potential role of automatically generated ‘badges’, as they are perceived, used and potentially confuse Facebook group members.

## 6.2 Study 2b: Algorithmically Generated Badges in Facebook Groups

In this section, we discuss the motivation of thesis study 2b: algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups. We first discuss provide some theoretical backgrounds through the signalling theory and computer-mediated communication and relationships. We then present how digital badges become part of online communities in general. Finally, we introduce how badges are applied to Facebook groups and raise the research questions of this chapter.

### 6.2.1 Signals in Online Communities

Previous research in computer-mediated communication (CMC) and relational dynamics (Walther and Parks, 2002) suggested that, the lack of verbal and social cues online makes it more difficult for agreements and socioemotional terms to emerge. Therefore it is important to add in certain signals such as profiles and short bios in online communities. Such signals can be created and maintained by users themselves, or with helps from algorithms. For example, when introducing someone to others, people may use words to summarise their impression of them – sometimes using tags or buzzwords for specific characteristics. On one side, this is an important way to communicate the social signals and enrich our language. However, with a limited pool of tags, the accuracy of describing people can never compare with the complexity of human beings themselves. With these tags, it is easier to know who is nice, but less easy to learn about in what way they are nice. Donath (2007) argues that the signalling system needs to be verified iteratively to be more reliable to use while norms are also evolving. People learn about norms through languages, and use them to evaluate others, improve them by shifting and applying terms to their surrounding community, which makes reputation possible (Donath, 2007).

Members of online communities usually have their profile, no matter it is pseudonymous or linked to their real identity, there is some level of self-description including basic information about self-identity such as profile pictures, names, or extra information users may want to showcase such as statuses and moral. This information can be faked online, yet others would "assume it is true" (Donath and Boyd, 2004; Boyd and Heer, 2006; Lenhart and Madden, 2007; Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield, 2007) so that they may adjust their interaction strategy based on what profile people are carrying. As Donath (2007) discussed in the *signalling theory*, no matter when interacting in-person or online, people observe each others via perceiving *signals* – features and actions



indicating the presence of hidden qualities online (Donath, 1998). Profiles are one of the first-line signals for users to know each other in online communities. While technologies provide some of the support an expanded social world needs by asking users to record these signals manually or adding them with help from algorithms, they alone are not sufficient Donath (2007). It is important to recognise that the interpretation of any signals is subjective and subtle, moreover, in online communities, textual cues require more work and normative understanding so that it conveys appropriate social information (Walther, 1992; Walther and Parks, 2002; Donath, 2007; Yu, Spiel and Watts, 2018). Gathering such information and curating signals online is a complex job for platform designers, as one of the key goals is to enable signals that are reliable yet not costly to assess (Donath, 2007; Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield, 2007). Similar to profiles, badges in online communities showcase the achievements users made in a particular area. It is a way to recognise certain contributions in online communities, indicating for example who one can go for in particular contexts. Therefore it is important to investigate what badges mean to online communities, and how to make use of badges as signals.

## 6.2.2 Digital Badges as a Supportive Tool

Digital badges have been introduced as a tool to add extra visual representation to acknowledge the role users are playing or achievements users unlock in various online communities (Anderson et al., 2013). Just like in schools, in order to motivate the students, teachers gave out stickers to recognise students' efforts and achievements. Stack Overflow introduced badges as a reward for members being "especially helpful"<sup>1</sup>. Twitch applies chat badges<sup>2</sup> to help users locate moderators and supports quicker. Twitter uses the blue verified badge<sup>3</sup>, while YouTube implements a grey verification tick<sup>4</sup> to show people that an account of public interest is authentic, notable, active, and complete. Being used in a regimented and hierarchical symbol historically, it is not easy to reconcile the competitive and ranking nature of badges in the digital world (Halavais, 2012). Algorithmic badges in online communities are a set of digital badges generated by algorithms based on users' engagement history with the community. Digital badges may also be understood as a gamification approach to encourage participation in online communities (Easley and Ghosh, 2016; Deterding et al., 2011).

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<sup>1</sup>A full list of Stack Overflow badges can be found at <https://stackoverflow.com/help/badges>

<sup>2</sup>Twitch chat badges are explained at <https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/twitch-chat-badges-guide>

<sup>3</sup>Information about Twitter verified badge can be found at <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/about-twitter-verified-accounts>



<sup>4</sup>About YouTube verification badge on channels: <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/3046484>

Donath (2007) argues that the site design such as comment flow or other interaction cues can potentially change the dynamics of a site. In online communities, these may change behaviour by making people more aware of some cues from comments or other members, with or without intentions. While digital badges can be used as incentives to encourage participation in online communities, the badges themselves or the algorithms behind them may lead to biases and conflicts which could drive the community in unpredictable and potentially damaging directions (Halavais, 2012). Research in social computing about digital badges has focus on the design of badges in online community and educational settings (Halavais, 2012; Anderson et al., 2013; Immorlica, Stoddard and Syrgkanis, 2015; Facey-Shaw et al., 2018), and the causal effect of badges (Kusmierczyk and Gomez-Rodriguez, 2018). If the design of badges eliminates costs that had functioned as signalling costs, there could be a decrease in reliability having effects on communities (Donath, 2007). As a kind of algorithmic support tool, it is yet a question that whether and how the design and use of the algorithmically generated badges may affect moderation and development of online communities.

### 6.2.3 Facebook Group Badges






Facebook introduced algorithmic generated badges to its groups in 2017, on the grounds that they would help people better learn about the other group members (Facebook-Community, 2018). At the time of writing, these badges are available for groups with more than 50 members on Facebook. Facebook aims to help strengthen the communities by getting members to know each other with these algorithmically generated badges as an extra layer of information. With these badges, it could be easier to acknowledge different roles in Facebook groups. For example, new members can identify leaders quicker, and at the same time, admins and moderators would have more ways to welcome new members and recognise current members from a different dimension.

At the time of this study, Facebook had introduced 7 badges for Facebook groups<sup>5</sup>: Admin, Moderator, New Member, Conversation Starter, Founding Member, Visual Storyteller, Rising Star. Facebook describes these badges as below:

-  Admin and  Moderator: These badges help members easily identify group leaders, which in turn enables your moderation team in keeping your community engaged and safe. This badge will always appear for group admins and moderators.

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<sup>5</sup>An updated list of Facebook group badges can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/community/whats-new/facebook-group-badges/>

-  New Member: Welcoming new members and making them feel supported is critical to building community. This badge will appear for members who have joined the group within the last two weeks.
-  Conversation Starter: Recognizes members who start meaningful group discussions. This badge will appear for members whose posts receive the most likes and comments in the past month.
-  Founding Member: Acknowledges early members who have helped grow your group. This badge is awarded to people who join within the first three days of a new group's creation and write a post, invite people to join, or share with the group within those first three days. This badge is only available in newly created groups.
-  Visual Storyteller: Recognizes members for unique contributions to the community can help spark conversation within the community. The visual storyteller badge will appear for members who share photos or videos that group members find valuable.
-  Rising Star: Recognizing new members within their first month with the group that contribute to the community. The rising star badge will appear for new members that receive the most comments and reactions on their posts and comments.

In this study, we extend the study about Facebook groups looking at algorithmically generated badges as an example of a tool that moderators might find helpful, in order to further investigate how technology may provide support to moderation work in online communities. This also provides further understanding on FBG-RQ2a – *What tools are available for Facebook group moderators to help manage their group?* (see Facebook group moderation study in Chapter 5) – in the dimension of algorithmically mediated moderation. We took a mixed-method approach combining surveys and interviews at different stages within this study.

#### 6.2.4 Research Questions

We designed 3 research questions to guide this study about Facebook group badges (FBGB-RQs). With FBG-RQ2a as a previous guide for this study, we further ask our first research question of this study on algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups: **FBGB-RQ1: What badges do Facebook group users recognise in their group?** This question is designed to gather thoughts about what kind of badges

may be of interest to Facebook group users.

To investigate if Facebook group users may correctly interpret what the badges represent, we raised the second question of this study: **FBGB-RQ2: What do Facebook group users think these badges represent?** With this question, we look forward to drawing our attention to if algorithmically generated badges can be correctly interpreted by users to give some clues on whether they correctly make use of these badges as they have been designed to be.

Finally, we ask a question aiming to investigate how algorithmically generated badges may affect moderation in online communities: **FBGB-RQ3: How do Facebook group users especially admins and moderators respond to or push back against these badges?** We also designed a sub-question for FBGB-RQ3 in order to stimulate further discussion on the relationships between badges and moderation activities: **FBGB-RQ3a: How may algorithmically generated badges shape the moderation activities in Facebook groups?**

## 6.3 Methods

As discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.3, the data collection of this chapter was integrated into the process of the Facebook group moderation study. We took a mixed-method approach in this study. We first did a pilot interview with 6 moderators of Facebook groups to explore how generally they feel coping with the newly introduced algorithmically generated badges in their groups. From what we had seen in our pilot interviews, moderators could be sceptical about the use of these badges in their groups. We then designed a survey with a set of Likert-scale ratings on each badge, which was then distributed to more general Facebook group members. We received 119 replies to the survey. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to the follow-up interviews. During the interview, participants were asked to discuss their reasons for having responded to the survey in the way they had, to strengthen the trustworthiness of the survey, and to deepen our understanding of how members and moderators have been able to incorporate badges into their regular practice. In this section, we focus on the methods of the Facebook group badge study component in the whole Facebook group study. For more details about the Facebook group moderation study component in the process, it is discussed in Section 5.3.

### 6.3.1 Pilot Interview

During the pilot interview, a set of questions were asked to get a general idea about how moderators of Facebook groups feel coping with the newly introduced algorithmically generated badges. The guiding questions about badges piloted are:

1. What tools does Facebook give you that you find helpful for running the group?
2. Have you noticed that Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups? Has your group enabled the badge functionality?
3. What badges you have seen so far? What do you think they represent?
4. How do you think Facebook decides who to give the badges to?
5. Do the badges gain your extra attention for your work as a moderator? What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with the badge?
6. How can these badges be informative for you as a moderator?

In the pilot interviews, we began the set of questions about tools available on Facebook groups to explore what tools moderators are aware of and using regularly in Facebook groups (FBG-RQ2a). We then asked specifically about badges, focusing on the interpretability, informativeness of badges (FBGB-RQ1 and FBGB-RQ2), and how moderators responded to these badges in their moderation work (FBGB-RQ3). We identified the need of involving general Facebook group users in the study after the pilot interview, therefore we designed the questionnaire and post-questionnaire interview mentioned later in this section.

### 6.3.2 Survey about Algorithmically Generated Badges in Facebook Groups

We then designed a survey (see Appendix B.2 for the full survey), asking questions about people's general interests in Facebook groups and specifically the badge function in Facebook groups. The survey was published with Google Forms and the link to the form was posted on social media channels. In addition, physical posters were used on the campus of the University of Bath to advertise the study, using a QR code linking to the Google Form. Participants were required to be more than 18 years old, to have joined one or more Facebook groups, and to participate in the study only once. In order to foresee the limitation of our sampling strategy, demographics data including education and gender (Spiel, Haimson and Lottridge, 2019) were collected in the survey. For each survey collected, we donated £1 to one of the charities participants

could choose after they had responded to all survey questions. The survey was live from November 2019 to February 2020. One of the main goals of the survey was to gather responses from participants who are involved in Facebook groups and to encourage them to participate in the post-study interviews. The survey itself was anonymous. Participants were invited to leave their email addresses at the end of the survey if they were willing to chat more about Facebook groups in the follow-up interview. Out of 119 responses we collected, 26 participants left their email addresses for follow-up contact this way.

To provide information about what badges participants have noticed, we began the survey with some general questions including:

- Have you noticed any Facebook badges in your groups? (Yes/No/Maybe/What is Facebook badge?)
- Which badge have you seen in Facebook groups? (Admin / Moderator / New Member / Conversation Starter / Founding Member / Visual Storyteller / Rising Star / I haven't seen any of them / Others: )
- Which badge do you own in Facebook groups? (Admin / Moderator / New Member / Conversation Starter / Founding Member / Visual Storyteller / Rising Star / I don't have any of them / Not srue / Others: )

These questions provide a descriptive background of the use of Facebook group badges. The icons corresponding to each badge were also added next to each badge's name in case of participants recall only the look of the badges but not the name. We then designed three Likert-scale rating questions (Likert, 1932) asking participants to rate the interpretability and informativeness of the badges, and differentiation on the posts or comments written by someone with a badge. The questions and scales are:

1. From 0 to 5, how much do you think you understand what these badges represent?
  - 0: Never seen this badge
  - 1: Have seen this badge but don't know what it means
  - 2: Have seen this badge but not sure what it means
  - 3: I think I understand this badge, just from its name
  - 4: I have read and am confident I understand the descriptions of this badge
  - 5: I know exactly what this badge means and what to do in order to gain

this badge

2. From 1 to 5, how informative do you think these badges are?
  - 1: Not informative at all
  - 2: Somewhat informative
  - 3: Moderately informative
  - 4: Very informative
  - 5: Extremely informative
3. From 1 to 5, how different do you think a post (comment) reads if it is posted by someone with a badge?
  - 1: No difference at all
  - 2: Somewhat different
  - 3: Moderately different
  - 4: Very different
  - 5: Extremely different

The Likert-type scale of each question has been tailored to make sense within the context of Facebook group badges. Numbers assigned to the Likert-type items express a “greater-than” relationship, however how much greater is not implied (Boone and Boone, 2012). For example for question 1, we add an extra scale on 0: Never seen this badge to exclude the noise from participants who have not seen the badges but make a random guess of the scale. This series of three questions are designed to explore if and how Facebook users recognise the use of the algorithmically generated badges in general. We also revisit the participants’ answers to these questions during the post-survey interview in order to deepen our understanding of how may the badges shape the community activities in Facebook groups.

### **6.3.3 Post-Survey Interview about Algorithmically Generated Badges in Facebook Groups**

Upon signing up to the post-study interview, participants were invited by email to book a time for being interviewed online or on campus at the University of Bath. 26 out of 199 survey respondents have shown interest in being interviewed and have their

email addresses left at the end of the survey. 16 participants finished the interview at the end of the study.

During the interview, questions about participants' connection to Facebook and experiences with Facebook groups were asked (See Appendix B.3.2 for the full interview protocol). Participants were asked to recall and elaborate more on their ratings of the Facebook badges to provide deeper insights to show how they see the badges. Both descriptive and comparative questions were asked to stimulate more conversations on the badges. Example questions can include:

- About [question], you rated [badge] at [scale], could you explain why you rated it as [scale] please?
- About [question], you rated [badge 1] at [scale 1], but [badge 2] at [scale 2], could you tell us why they are different for you please?
- About [question], you did not give any ratings on [badge], could you explain more about this please?

After going through the survey with participants. Two questions were asked to investigate how badges may affect their activities in Facebook groups, and how what kind of badges may be useful for their groups:

- Do the badges gain your extra attention? What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with the badge?
- How can these badges be informative for you?

Within the survey and the interview, we mainly asked participants to elaborate on their understanding of the badges and on their potential informativeness. This is because we did not want to pre-assume that the badges were used merely as a gamified incentive for encouraging group engagements. Rather we look at whether the algorithmically generated badges could offer some utility to Facebook group users especially moderators, and how the badges may affect community activities.

## 6.4 Results Summary

In this and the next section, we present the results of the Facebook group badge study. We first begin with some descriptive results from the survey, to give a general picture about badges in Facebook groups. We then present the results of qualitative analysis in the form of three main themes derived from participants' interpretation of badges,



the use of badges, and understanding beyond the badges.

We received 119 responses for our survey. Among all the respondents, 77 (64.7%) of them are woman, 39 (32.8%) are men, 1 (0.8%) of them is non-binary, and 2 (1.7%) participants preferred not to disclose their gender. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of education level of our respondents.

Highest degree completed	Number and % of respondents
High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent	26 (21.8%)
Some college credit, no degree	9 (7.6%)
Bachelor's degree	15 (12.6%)
Master's degree	21 (17.6%)
Doctorate degree	12 (10.1%)
Prefer not to disclose	1 (0.8%)
Not response	35 (29.4%)

Table 6.1: Highest degree or level of school participants have completed (If currently enrolled, highest degree received).

We asked participants what categories of the group they joined on Facebook using the categories on Facebook groups. 88 (73.9%) respondents join hobbies and interests groups on Facebook, with Education comes in the second category. Figure 6-1 summarises the categories best describing the groups respondents join of Facebook.

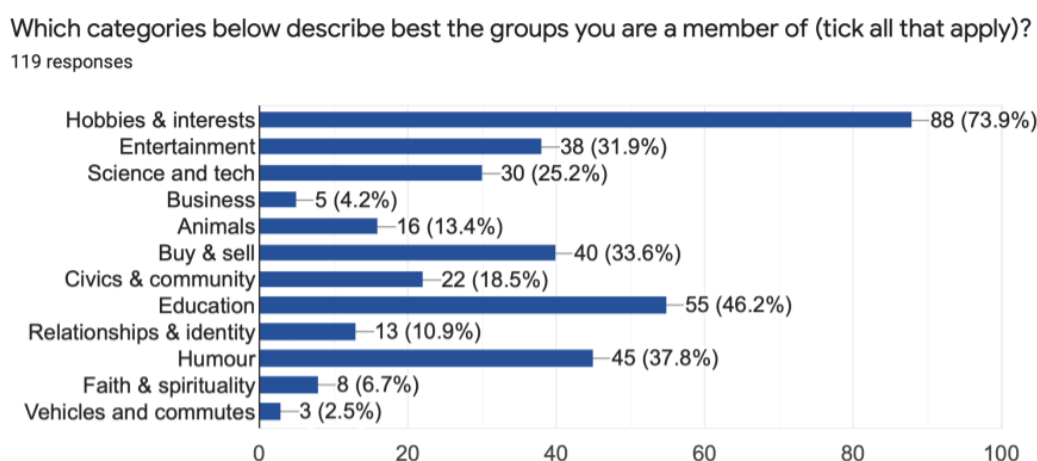


Figure 6-1: Categories describing the groups respondents are a member of

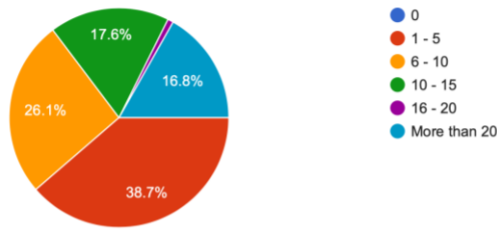


Figure 6-2: How many Facebook groups are you in? (119 responses)

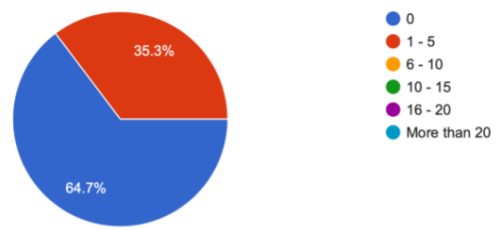


Figure 6-3: How many Facebook groups are you moderating? (119 responses)

To further explore the familiarity of our respondents to the Facebook groups, we ask them how many Facebook groups they are in (Figure 6-2) and how many Facebook groups they are administrating or moderating (Figure 6-3). From the responses we received, we can see that the results within this Facebook group study are mostly from members of Facebook groups, who are in between one to ten Facebook groups.

55 out of 118 respondents (46.6%) check their Facebook group on a notification based strategy. While 70 out of 117 respondents (59.8%) replied “Yes” with the question indicating they have noticed Facebook badges in their groups, 79 out of 115 respondents (68.7%) recognised the Admin badge in their group in later questions. This indicates that it may not be clear for some participants what is an automatically generated Facebook badge, and aligns with the reply for the question – Have you noticed any Facebook badges in your groups – 24 (20.5%) of the respondents select the choice “What is a Facebook badge”.

Badge Name	participants have seen	participants have owned
Admin	79 (68.7%)	19 (17.4%)
Moderator	57 (49.6%)	12 (11%)
New Member	56 (48.7%)	15 (13.8%)
Conversation Starter	31 (27%)	5 (4.6%)
Founding Member	17 (14.8%)	11 (10.1%)
Visual Storyteller	15 (13%)	0 (0%)
Rising Star	22 (19.1%)	5 (4.6%)
Top Fan*	4 (3.5%)	2 (1.8%)
Haven't seen/own any	26 (22.6%)	65 (59.6%)
Total responses received	115	109

Table 6.2: Answers for questions: Which badge have you seen / do you own in Facebook groups?

\* We did not add Top Fan as an option in the survey because this badge is only for Facebook Pages. The numbers shown in this table are based on the number of respondents entering it in the ‘Others’ field

Table 6.2 summarises the distribution of badges respondents have seen and own. From the result, we notice that while most of the respondents have seen some badges including Admin, Moderator and New Member badge in Facebook groups, a lot of them did not have a badge for themselves yet. This indicates that our results may lean towards users of Facebook groups who understand badges from a bystander perspective.

With the three Likert-scale questions, we wished to explore how general Facebook group users may understand badges. We did not have any hypotheses set for these ratings, but rather focused on the descriptive interpretation of the data, with further support from our qualitative data.

**Understandings** Table 6.3 and Figure 6-4 summarizes the results of how much participants think they understand about what the badges represent. From the figure, we can see that badges representing the factual roles users play in online communities lean towards a higher score including Admin, Moderator and New Member badges. From the number of participants expressing they have never seen this badge, it may be because that their group is either not big enough to be able to get this badge in the group, or it is difficult to gain these badges. Although the general idea behind each badge is clear, the actual rules that are used to award any badge are not very clear with the information publicly provided by Facebook.

**Informativeness** Table 6.4 and Figure 6-5 summarise the answers for the second Likert-scale type question: How informative do you think these badges are. With the Admin, Moderator, and New Member badge having both of their mean and median value over 3, Founding Member also have its mean and median value both at 3, which indicates most participants think these badges are in between moderately informative and very informative for them. The Visual Storyteller and the Rising Star badge are in between not informative at all and somewhat informative for the participants. This may need to be supported by the qualitative data later.

**Differentiation of the posts/comments posted by someone with a badge** Figure 6-6 and Table 6.5 shows the answers for the third Likert-scale question: From 1 to 5, how different do you think a post(comment) reads if it is posted by someone with a badge? We can see both admin and moderator have their mean value and median at 3 or more, which indicates that most participants agree with posts or comments posted by someone with the Admin and Moderator badge reads more than moderately different for them. For the Conversation Starter, Visual Storyteller, and Rising Star badges, arguably the most algorithmically allocated of all current Facebook badges, the

Badge	n/a	0	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Median	STD
Admin	0	15	6	4	50	19	25	3.07 (3.51)	3 (3)	1.54 (1.07)
Moderator	0	27	5	3	50	18	16	2.63 (3.40)	3 (3)	1.68 (0.99)
New Member	1	27	1	1	44	17	28	2.91 (3.77)	3 (3)	1.79 (0.94)
Conversation Starter	2	51	2	8	46	6	4	1.71 (3.03)	2 (3)	1.61 (0.76)
Founding Member	1	46	0	5	42	10	15	2.13 (3.49)	3 (3)	1.85 (0.90)
Visual Story-teller	1	72	7	21	16	0	2	0.91 (2.33)	0 (2)	1.27 (0.89)
Rising Star	1	63	3	28	17	2	5	1.21 (2.6)	0 (2)	1.47 (0.98)

Table 6.3: Summary of responses to questions: From 0 to 5, how much do you think you **understand** what these badges represent? \*In the brackets, the statistics were calculated excluding the “0” responses

(n/a: did not attempt to this question; 0: Never seen this badge; 1: Have seen this badge but don’t know what it means; 2: Have seen this badge but not sure what it means; 3: I think I understand this badge, just from its name; 4: I have read and am confident I understand the descriptions of this badge; 5: I know exactly what this badge means and what to do in order to gain this badge)

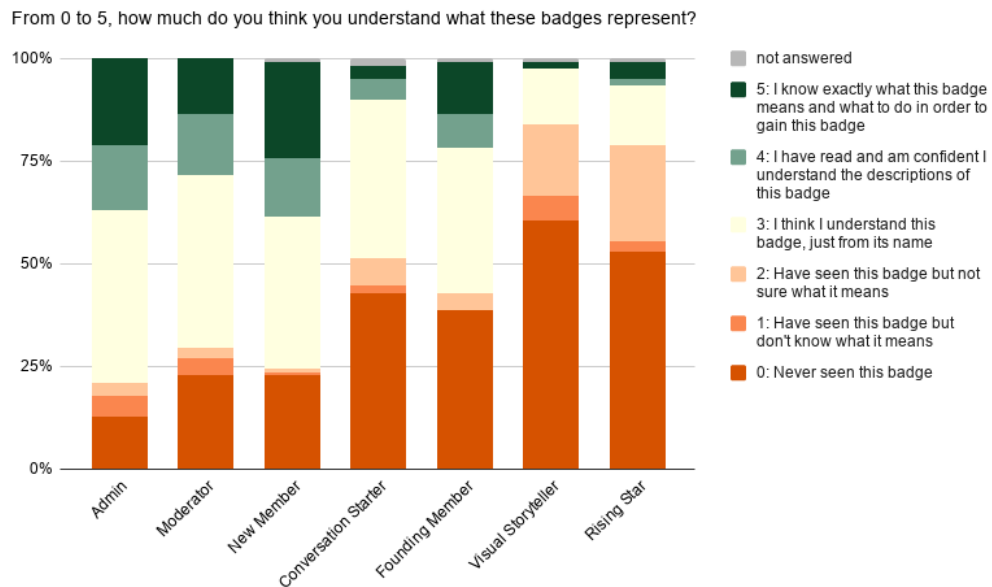


Figure 6-4: From 0 to 5, how much do you think you **understand** what these badges represent?

Badge	n/a	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Median	STD
Admin	2	4	12	17	41	43	3.91	4	1.11
Moderator	2	7	14	19	41	36	3.72	4	1.20
New Member	3	8	12	24	37	35	3.68	4	1.21
Conversation Starter	3	22	35	42	13	4	2.5	3	1.03
Founding Member	3	16	26	34	22	18	3	3	1.26
Visual Storyteller	3	54	39	20	1	2	1.78	2	0.89
Rising Star	3	47	45	21	2	1	1.84	2	0.84

Table 6.4: Summary of responses to questions: From 1 to 5, how **informative** do you think these badges are?

(n/a: did not attempt to this question; 1: Not informative at all; 2: Somewhat informative; 3: Moderately informative; 4: Very informative; 5: Extremely informative)

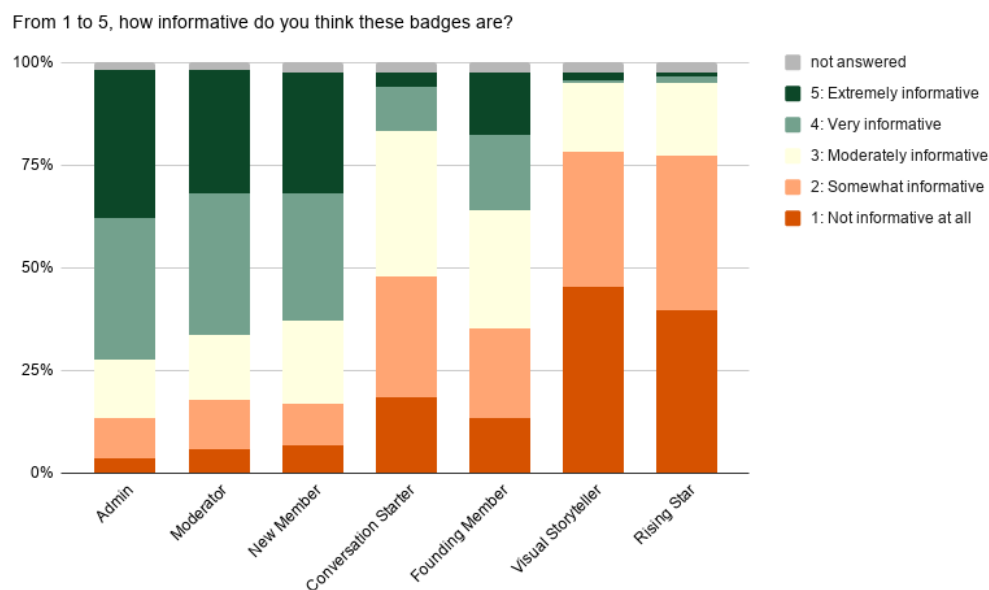


Figure 6-5: From 1 to 5, how informative do you think these badges are?

Badge	n/a	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Median	STD
Admin	3	15	9	29	37	26	3.43	4	1.28
Moderator	3	20	14	33	30	19	3.12	3	1.31
New Member	4	37	41	23	13	1	2.13	2	1.02
Conversation Starter	4	63	28	17	7	0	1.72	1	0.93
Founding Member	4	44	24	26	14	7	2.27	2	1.26
Visual Storyteller	4	72	25	14	4	0	1.57	1	0.84
Rising Star	3	66	30	13	6	1	1.67	1	0.93

Table 6.5: From 1 to 5, how **different** do you think a post(comment) reads if it is posted by someone with a badge?

(n/a: did not attempt to this question; 1: No difference at all; 2: Somewhat different; 3: Moderately different; 4: Very different; 5: Extremely different)

median rating was 1: most participants indicated that posts and comments written by someone with these badges are in between no difference at all and somewhat different for them. We look for further support from our qualitative data for this.

In summary, through these three Likert-scale style questions, we may see that there are differences between badges with different uses. For badges describing the factual roles members may play in online communities, such as admin, moderator and new member, it may be easier for others to understand and to make use of these badges. However, for badges describing achievements or indicating incentives such as conversation starter, visual storyteller and rising star, it may need more effort to be interpreted within the contexts of Facebook groups. In the next section, we present the qualitative results of this study. We look into the qualitative data to further our understanding of how each of the badges in Facebook groups may be interpreted within each community. We also explore how may the badges affect activities in online communities on Facebook.

## 6.5 Interview Results

As described previously, we performed 22 semi-structured interviews including six in pilot interviews, 16 in post-survey interviews from Spring 2019 to Spring 2020. In the previous chapter, Table 5.1 summarises the demographics of participants interviewed, and Table 5.2 presents the general information of groups the participants focused on during the interview. Through the analysis, we identified three main themes including: 6.5.1 Interpreting Badges within Facebook Groups, 6.5.2 The Use of Badges in Facebook Groups, and 6.5.3 Understanding beyond the Badges in Facebook group, and 14 sub-themes in the interview (Table 6.6). We begin this section by discussing how

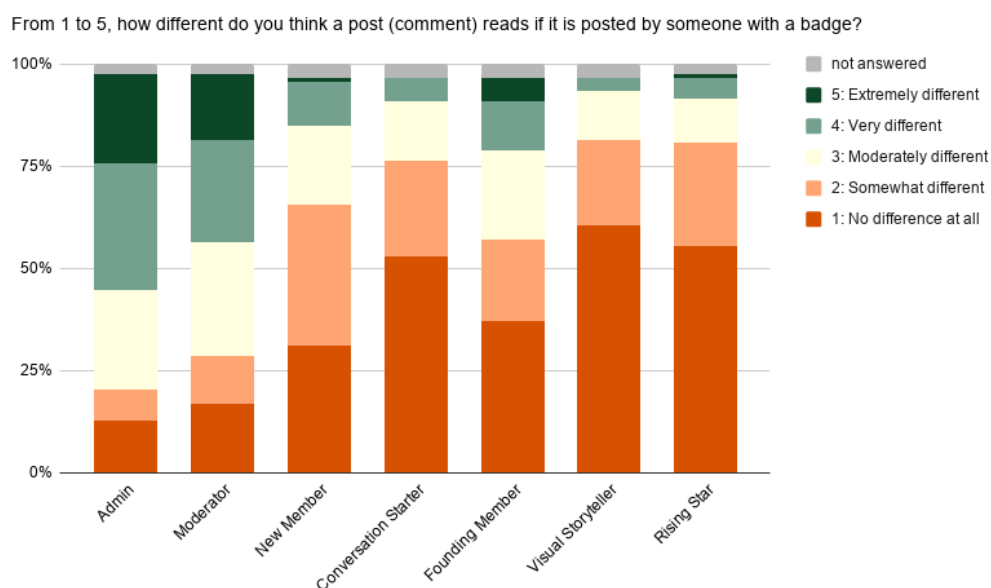


Figure 6-6: From 1 to 5, how **different** do you think a post(comment) reads if it is posted by someone with a badge?

participants interpret badges in Facebook groups (FBGB-RQ1 and FBGB-RQ2). Then we discuss how participants reported they may use the badges in their Facebook groups (FBGB-RQ2 and FBGB-RQ3, somewhat FBGB-RQ3a). Finally, we present the understanding from the participants beyond the badges (FBGB-RQ2 and FBGB-RQ3).

### 6.5.1 Interpreting Badges within Facebook Groups

From the previous section (Table 6.3 and Figure 6-4), we see different badges may have different interpretability. This may due to users try to understand the badges from how they are named, their own experiences and the group context. Our participants reported that Facebook group badges are sometimes lack of interpretation. In this section, we report our participants' attempts in understanding each badge used in Facebook groups. Figure 6-6 shows the treemap of coding in this section. The size of each square represents the coding references.

#### 6.5.1.1 Lack of Interpretation

During the interview, a lot of participants said that they are not sure about what the badges mean by only the name. P13 stated that the names of the badges are not clear

Section	Codes
6.5.1	<b>Interpreting Badges within Facebook Groups</b>
6.5.1.1	Lack of Interpretation
6.5.1.2	Admin and Moderator
6.5.1.3	New Member
6.5.1.4	Founding Member
6.5.1.5	Conversation Starter
6.5.1.6	Visual Storyteller
6.5.1.7	Rising Star
6.5.2	<b>The Use of Badges in Facebook Groups</b>
6.5.2.1	Emphasizing Roles and Increasing Exposure
6.5.2.2	Hints and Biases
6.5.2.3	Feeling Special
6.5.2.4	Community-Tailored Badges
6.5.3	<b>Understanding beyond the Badges in Facebook group</b>
6.5.3.1	Knowing the Person before the Badges
6.5.3.2	Content Matters More than the Badges

Table 6.6: Final codes for Facebook group badge study

enough for users to correctly interpret, using the example of rising star badge:

I don't think I know what those things are, and I don't think that the names of the badges are clear enough to... if I just saw that someone had a rising star badge, I don't know. I wouldn't know what that means.

– P13

To help interpret badges in Facebook groups, it may be helpful to have a specific page set up with a comprehensive guide, which needs to be easily spotted or reached by the members. P14 adding to that expressing users are not aware of the guide and explanation about these badges. And it may be too much effort for users to specifically search for this guide:

I don't know if this is a comprehensive guide. For like what badges exactly mean on Facebook? But maybe that's like every group. I mean, it might be that maybe I'm just not aware of it.

– P14

Having experiences with Bulletin Board System style communities and Twitch badges, PLT-KC understands the badges are based on algorithms developed by Facebook. And data including the number of reactions and comments are included in the algorithm. This may indicate that having experiences with other platforms or even in other formats



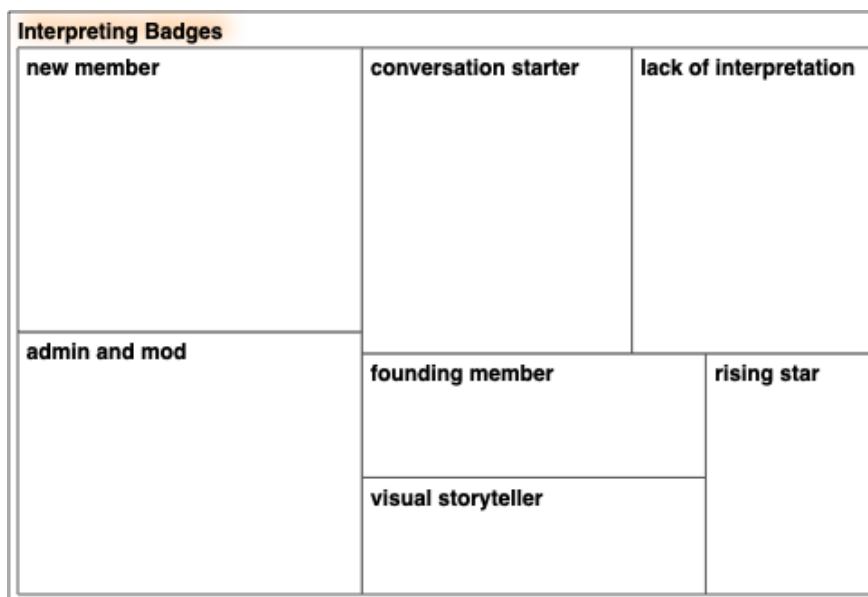


Figure 6-7: Treemap: Interpreting Badges within Facebook Groups

may help interpret badges.

I think it's based on their Facebook algorithm, and try to see how many likes and comments this person gets from posting in the group.

– *PLT-KC*

Sometimes it may not be that the Facebook badges are lack of interpretation themselves, but rather users are not motivated enough to find out what they are about. By saying badges other than the admin and moderator ones are “*totally random*”, P02 is not interested in getting to know about other badges.

But except the administrator and moderator badge, because, again, the other badges, like for me, they're totally random.

– *P02*

Similarly, Chris stated that he is “*not bothered*” to read the information Facebook provides about if there is any difference and what they are between different badges, even for moderator and admin. The badges are confusing, but he still recognises that there are differences between them.

Sometimes I found it... confusing, like sometimes like what is this moderator and admin really mean? And everything is like, I don't bother to go and read all these differences in Facebook provides. And visual storyteller and

the rising star, I mean, obviously I don't know that. These are a little bit confusing, but they may have differences.

– *Chris*

P05 commented on the visual representation of the New Member badge. She mentioned that it is not clear whether the icon of the New Member badge is clapping hands or a waving hand. Both interpretations of the visual representation make sense for representing new members of the group. However, the icon is a bit small to be spotted.

where it says new member and it's got the kind of I thought it's clapping, but it's a waving hand. It makes sense, but it's not very visible.

– *P05*

In summary, there is still room for Facebook group badges to improve their interpretability. It may be helpful to create a dedicated comprehensive guide, use names closer to the context of online communities or in general social media platforms, motivate users to find out the meaning of the badge, and use sensible visual representations to differentiate the badges.

#### 6.5.1.2 Admin and Moderator

Participants learn about admin and moderator badges naturally (P12 because of this widely used term in online communities and daily life. P14 describe admin and moderator as the role handling daily affairs and essential supports in the group:

Well so admin it's obviously the admin.

– *P12*

So I think they are like the description of the person's role within the group really clearly, so you know that the admin and the moderator and they handle all the daily affairs of the group and everything essentially.

– *P14*

However, there are still some confusions in details about for example whether an admin is the person who “*starts the group*”. It is mostly accepted that the person who found an online community may be the administrator of it. However, it does not mean that an admin has to be the founder of Facebook groups. A group may have multiple admins on Facebook, which for P11, it may not be clear on it:

I think maybe when you open the group you get the admin badge.

– *P11*

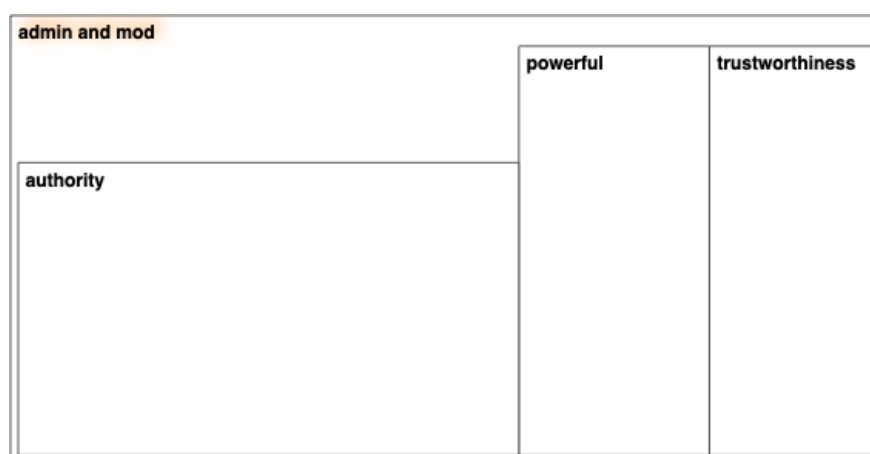


Figure 6-8: Treemap: Admin and Moderator

While most participants understand admin and moderator badges are mainly representing the factual role people have in the group, different attributes of admin and moderators were discussed during the interview. Figure 6-8 presents the coding reference of sub-themes under admin and moderation badge. This would help understand what admin and moderation mean to people and having a badge with them may enforce the meaning of the roles.

**Powerful** Participants understand the admin and moderator have power over the group including taking down contents and membership controls. P01 expressed that admins can “decide” what happen to the group content and membership:

I thought admin means the people that are can decide what happens on the page. For example, they have the right to ban people and allow someone to join the page if it’s a private page.

– P01

Similarly, P14 recognised that the activities done by admins and moderators should be taken “seriously”, thus she pays more attention to the corresponding badges:

I think I take it more seriously, like I pay more attention to the Admin and Moderator badge.

– P14

Charlotte rated five on the informativeness scale (5: extremely informative) for Admin and Moderator’s badge. She explained that these badges are useful for her because the posts by admin and moderator may give a “warning” like signal.

I think they (the admin and moderator badges) would be useful. They kind of to give you not like a warning, but maybe you know, sort of like a warning. I think they would be useful. I would be quite like to see them.

– Charlotte

**Authority** It is mentioned by a few participants that admins and moderators could represent the authority figures in the group. P01 explained that the admin and moderator’s authorities come from their vision in the group, and it will increase the trustworthiness of their posts.

I think the biggest difference is I would definitely think they have more authority and they know what they’re doing. So I think it’s the badges would definitely make me trust the post more, or the comment more.

– P01

Similarly, P14 explained that the admin and moderator’s badge carries the “perception of a little bit of authority” because they may have a better vision over the entire group.

Again ‘cause like they are in charge, they have, I think this is the perception of like a little bit of authority. Because they’re in charge of the entire group. So when you read the comments and it is just like the sense of experience.

– P14

While explaining why she rated it as 4: very different for admin and moderator badge in the question – how different do you think a post or a comment reads if it is posted by someone with a badge, Charlotte mentioned her own experiences within a local running group. The admin and moderators of the group will intervene in the posts when a definite decision or clarification is needed. And having badges to emphasize their roles would be helpful to identify the authority in the messages.

From what I’ve seen, (the admins and moderators) don’t always comment on everything. They will kind of come in when there’re lots of questions and clear up, maybe posting definitively saying that – this is it, everyone needs to be here by 9:00 o’clock and this is it”. So that’s why I thought maybe quite... definitely the admin is a quite important and quite useful thing for everybody as well.

– Charlotte

**Trustworthiness** Trustworthiness and authority usually come together within our interviews. In the previous section, P01 mentioned that she “*trust the post more*”

because admins and moderators ‘*have more authority*’ in the group. P05 joined a pet group about a specific species of her pet two weeks before the interview. She mentioned that a post by admin would be more official. For example, if a post about how to deal with worms is posted by an admin, it is more official and authoritative information, which may stimulate more engagements within the group.

I would expect if it was an admin post that it would be about, something official about the organisation or the group. I mean this one, she’s an admin and, it’s worms and how to deal with them. So I guess it’s kind of like you know she’ll be posting stuff that’s a bit more authoritative and ought to generate discussion so.

– P05

When explaining why she thought the posts made by admin and moderators are “extremely different”, P02 think the admin and moderators “take care of” the group and all posts they write may have a purpose.

Because, again, you know that they are in charge of a group, so they take care of the group so what they post is not like random.

– P02

From the moderator’s perspective, PLT-JS is an admin of a card game group with 2,500 members. He mentioned that the badge carries some weight with it, which encourages him to be more cautious and well behaved while wearing the badge. Therefore having the admin and moderator badge on may remind the admin and moderator themselves about their role while posting, adding an extra layer of concern to their activities in the group.

I realize that that Moderator badge carries some weight. So I try to be extra well behaved.

– PLT-JS

### 6.5.1.3 New Member

Within the questionnaire, the mean value of how much participants *understand* new member badge is at 3.77 (excluding the answers from participants who have never seen the badge), which is the highest amongst all seven badges given. It is clear to our participants that what kind of and how members can get a new member badge. The main obscurity of the badge is how long the members can be “new” to the group (P03, P05, Chris):

It's to me someone who just joined the group. I don't know how long you keep it. But yeah this one is pretty clear to me here.

– P03

New members? People that have recently signed up? But I don't know how long that stays on there either. How long are you a new member? Is that a week? Is it a year?

– P05

But we don't know how long they are new and other things, right?

– Chris

P04 is administrating several Facebook groups for a sports club at the university, with the biggest one has 2000 members. When checking which badges are enabled for the group, P04 found that the New Member badge was turned off by one of the moderators. He further explained that why the New Member badge is not suitable for their group:

I'd agree with it, being off. Don't think it's especially relevant and also because of the nature of the club, most people will be a new member around the same time around freshers week.

– P04

In P04's case, we see that a badge for the role that most people in the community can fit in may not be informative for the members of the community.

From our analysis, we further identified two strategies people may have when seeing a post written by someone with the New Member badge in Facebook groups including lower the expectation, being patient and empathic (Figure 6-9).

**Lower the expectation** While only expressing that the posts and comments written by someone with a new member badge read “somewhat different” in the survey, P04 further explained that he would not want people ignoring the posts if it is a “*stupid question*” to someone new:

Other than it should read the same or so, I wouldn't want to see people ignoring that too, assuming it's a stupid question just to someone new. But, you know, new members are going to have questions that might be obvious to someone who's been in the group as long as someone like me. So I think there is, you know, some use to, being aware of who's new.

– P04

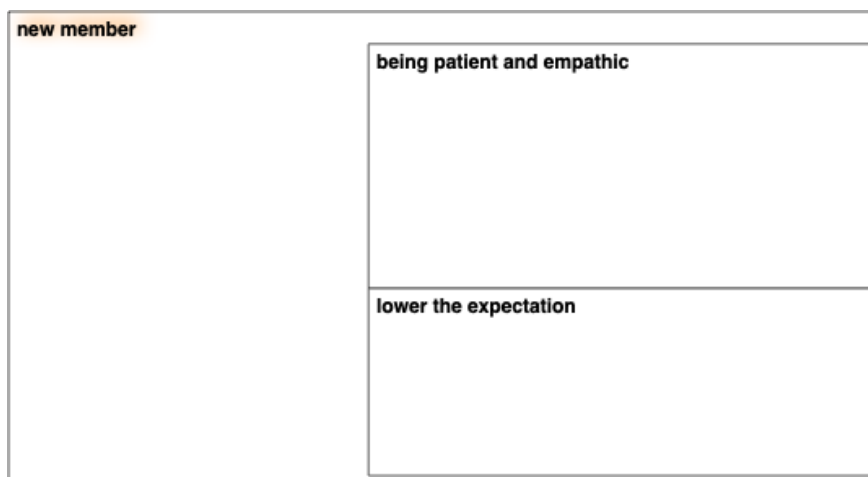


Figure 6-9: Treemap: New Member

Similarly, Charlotte explained that new members may have questions that are obvious to old-timers and it is “*very informative*” for her to see the new member badge.

And just because of the kind of questions they might be asking might seem really, really obvious to someone who was already like a longtime member. So it will be kind of nice to just go: oh OK yeah, they don’t know because they are kind of new thing.

– Charlotte

P07 is a member of a food and recipes group with around 13,000 members for two to three years. She explained that other than asking questions which may be obvious to others, new members may unintentionally violate the community rules. With the new member badge, it is possible to take it into consideration while reading the post:

It seems like they are new to the page, so probably you might be more likely to expect that they accidentally violate like, one of the rules. For example, they might be vague in their description of recipes, whereas people that post more often might give the recipe or are sure to not violate the rules. So you might take that into consideration when you read the post.

– P07

**Being patient and empathic** Other than lower the expectation of the posts while reading them, seeing the new member badge next to a post may encourage others in the community to be more patient and empathic with the new member. P11 explained why the new member badge is “*very informative*” for her by

I guess uh, it's helpful to know if they are new in case they wrote something inappropriate or be against the rules so be patient.

– P11

When new members violate a rule, P07 explained that it would be “*easier*” to nudge them with the rule so that they can learn about it. Chris also stated that the approach would be “*much more gentle*” by knowing the person is new.

Yeah, especially with the new member thing. If they violate a rule, I think it's easier to say oh well, you have to follow this rule, but you know what your new members so it's OK. Just know in the future that this is the rule.

– P07

If it's a new member, if the person make some mistakes and if I see there's a new member, I mean obviously the approach would be much more gentle than the person I did not know.

– Chris

Other than being patient and empathic when there was a problem already, P08 shared his opinion that when new members selling stuff in buy & sell kind of groups, people may “*pay more attention*” to the products on sale. In this case, a New Member badge is translated as a “New Seller” badge in the group.

I'm also a member of a [sport] group where you can sell items to do a [sport]. And if you're a new member that I feel like people would pay more attention to the new products that you have to offer for sale.

– P08

#### 6.5.1.4 Founding Member

While Admin, Moderator, and New Member badges can be interpreted based on users general experiences online, there appear to be various interpretations on the Founding Member badge during the interview. Facebook introduce the Founding Member badge as “early members who have helped grow the group”. The badge is awarded to people who join within the first three days upon the group has been set up, and also having contributions like writing a post, inviting others to join, or sharing to the group. Participants in the interview tend to interpret this badge from its name, and it is difficult to get to explain the contribution identified by algorithms. P06 explained the badge as a representation of someone who has been in the group “*for a long time from the beginning*”. P03 also thought a founding member is someone who has been in the group



since it was created.

Maybe within the first hundred members of the group? Or something shows that they've actually been there a long time and been there from the beginning.

– P06

So founding member to me it's clearer than admin. So actually I realise that I'm an admin on the Facebook group and I didn't create it. So founding members to me were like, oh one of these people who was the person here when the group was created.

– P03

Other than just being a member of the group from the beginning, P01 guessed that someone would get a Founding Member badge if they created a group but gave up the administrator role.

It means just the people that first started the page. So even if a person did first starts a page, that person might not decide to administrate it. So then she can give that administrator badge to someone else. But they will keep that founding member badge because they are the ones that started the page.

– P01

P14, who is a member of a group about memes with 600,000 members for 1.5 years, has thought about the extra contribution layer beyond the founding members being in the group from the beginning. She mentioned that having the “*descriptive*” aspects in the Founding Member badge is more transparent than even the Admin and Moderator badge because it is telling something that is believed to be a “fact” – they founded the group.

I guess the founding member would have had more insight into what they intended to group for when they actually created the group and sort of invited people, and like, oversee the content. But yeah, I think Founding Member is the most descriptive badge because it actually tells you when the person joins. ‘cause even with admin and moderator, it doesn't necessarily tell you like what their role involves actually doing. But founding member, you know, for a fact you actually know they founded the group.

– P14

**Expertise in the group** On top of being the “elder” member of the group, participants indicated that founding members are believed to have some expertise about the group. P10 specifically stated that founding members should have more knowledge on the history of the group, but not necessarily an expert other than that:

Being a founding member gives you an advantage of saying... OK, do you know that this person has said that in the group, a year ago when it was founded then? But that makes sense, but I don't know why their opinion should matter more than others.

– P10

P05 also thought that while “*you shouldn't assume*”, people may still assume that founding members could have a good level of knowledge.

You shouldn't assume, but you would perhaps assume that they would have a good level of knowledge. So again, if somebody asked a specific technical question, you might think actually they're going to have a good level of knowledge.

– P05

#### 6.5.1.5 Conversation Starter

From our interview, the Conversation Starter badge usually associates with the number of posts made by the user and the engagements with the post. P06 stated that people with a Conversation Starter badge may “*post something where people would comment a lot on*”. P05 also recognise the badge as someone having “*high engagements*” in the group.

I think they give it to somebody who posts a lot of new topics asks questions, has high engagement.

– P05

While it is not difficult for people to understand this badge is one of those badges that would require some active participation in the group, the detailed criteria for getting the badge is not clear for some participants. P02 expressed that she is not sure about “*how often*” you need to do to get a Conversation Starter badge, while P14 is also “*not sure about mechanism*” behind the badge.

OK, conversation starter so that person post something and that start conversation, but I don't know how often you have to do that to earn this

badge.

– P02

I think if someone initiates a new topic of conversation within that group, they essentially have that badge, but I'm not sure the mechanism like how Facebook identifies it as being a conversation starter.

– P14

Similarly, P13 thought that it needs extra clarification on the Conversation Starter badge to avoid ambiguity.

So conversation starter is easier for me to kind of has a guess. I guess they just talk a lot to other people. Then I wasn't clear if they talk a lot to other people and then continue talking, or just start the conversation. So there's a bit of ambiguity there.

– P13

While most of our participants does not own a Conversation Starter badge, P11 has experience owning the Conversation Starter badge in some groups. She mentioned that the criteria of when you will get the badge is not transparent and it does not feel consistent. She thought she has got the badge after adding a long post to the group, but it is not always the case.

I think (I received a conversation starter badge) because I posted a long post. But I don't know. Other times I post a long post as well and then don't get it.

– P11

**Debatable starter** It is not difficult to understand that users need active engagements to get a conversation starter badge. However, a few participants also noticed that whether the Conversation Starter badge should be treated as an incentive to encourage participation in the group is still debatable. P04 specifically mentioned that it is important to not only look at the level of engagements but also the “*usefulness*” of engagements they made.

I think in some groups it can be useful to see: Oh, this person brings up valid question things like that. I think of the times there're some groups wherein I see a badge like that, I rolled my eyes and assume they've got nothing useful to say and they're just determined to get as much engagement as they can without actually adding anything useful. The same idea of, if

they just upload something with a lot of mistakes, there'll be thousands of comments and people telling them that they're wrong. That doesn't make them useful.

– P04

Similarly, P07 also noticed that the Conversation Starter badge may be a sign of “*conflicts*” and “*debates*”. Without assessing whether the conversation is positive, people with the Conversation Starter badge can potentially be “*quite argumentative*”.

Maybe for conversation starters, if there's lots of conflict going on on the page or a lot of debate, then maybe conversation starter could give some kind of indication about that, potentially. I think it could be either. It could be that they are very engaged with the page, but if you look at their comments and they seem to be quite argumentative then potentially it could be negative as well.

– P07

From the other perspective, P10 stated that sometimes as in the original post, users may not want to have a conversation, instead, they are just sharing information. If they ended up being rewarded the Conversation Starter badge for some reason, it may not be what they expected.

You might have like a big post, so maybe you're not posting once a month. But you write an essay. Or you can post every day with “hi, how are you”. I don't think the person is more of a conversation starter. Yeah, I haven't even thought about this, but again, there are lots of ways for anything to be posted. The content of your post sometimes might be something that is just information, and if that's the cause to make the conversation starter. But you might not even want to have a conversation.

– P10

While the previous participants are mostly describing the Conversation Starter badge with assumptions, PLT-Frodo, who has been a moderator for a card game group with more than 2,000 members for more than a year, has experienced dealing with a “*conversation starter*” in his group.

There was a guy we had to boot from the group recently, but he got the conversation starter badge because he kept making these threads that generated a lot of discussions. But the problem was that he was an idiot, so the threads were always drama and we had to keep an eye on him. The main

admin also spoke with him in private messages and got personal abuse. He's also sent me some private messages before but I ignored the guy.

– *PLT-Frodo*

This indicates that the algorithms of the Conversation Starter badge did not take into account the quality of engagement. Moderators may have conflicts with algorithmically generated badges. And they may add their own experiences to the interpretation of the badges, and this is not necessarily aligned with how the badges were designed as.

### 6.5.1.6 Visual Storyteller

During the interview, some participants understand the Visual Storyteller badge is for “*somebody posts a lot of video or pictures*” (P05). A few participants tempted to over-explain it on the texts it is associated with (P06, Chris).

Is it just a large block of text with an image? I guess there's some algorithm based on the number of words that they're using and then just if there's a number of images with it or not.

– *P06*

So how do you think like... It's maybe the frequency. If I keep on posting a particular type of post, that say, I put pictures and then caption this. I guess that must be like something they would count as a visual storyteller.

– *Chris*

Similar to the Conversation Starter badge, the Visual Storyteller badge also has the problem of not counting on the positiveness of the engagements people may have. P04 explained his own experiences on seeing the Visual Storyteller badge with his opinions on the quality of the posts.

Visual storyteller, I've got no idea what that means. I just see it quite a lot and again, a lot of the time it's someone who I think it's just interested in getting engagement regardless of whether or not it's positive.

– *P04*

P12 is a moderator of a university sports club with about 133 members. He explained the only case he could recall about someone who has a Visual Storyteller badge. With his experience on it, he argued that the Visual Storyteller badge “*doesn't really tell much*” other than the people constantly posting pictures.

So the ones I think the people that I know who've got visual storyteller

badges in some of the group are, people who post ads for music evenings, like this kind of thing. I don't know. Yeah having Visual Storyteller as a badge, that doesn't really tell me much about what they're doing, or it just means they post pictures.

– P12

With the case of a problematic member who owns a Conversation Starter badge in the previous section, PLT-Frodo gave another example of a member with the Visual Storyteller badge that moderators have been intervening on.

There was also a guy who got that storyteller badge because he kept posting photos of stuff he wanted to sell, and we had to ask him to tone it down.

– PLT-Frodo

#### 6.5.1.7 Rising Star

With Rising Star being interpreted as “*someone who is posting more and more frequently*” (PLT-JS), a few of participants have various thoughts on that. P04 and PLT-Frodo added the joining time as a concern on top of that, and P14 added to that they may also receive a lot of likes on their comment

I'm guessing someone who either joined recently, or has been quiet until recently, but has been getting more and more involved over the past few days or weeks.

– P04

AFAIK these badges are assigned based on post frequency. So if someone is a newbie and posts a lot, they will get that rising star badge.

– PLT-Frodo

If someone's slowly becoming more popular, like if maybe they've made a comment and someone likes it a lot.

– P14

While explaining why he rated the Rising Star badge as “very informative” in the survey, P12 stated that as a moderator, it is “*handy to know a keen member*”.

I think rising stars, someone is it looked. It seems like if someone is new but posting a lot more. I suppose to me if someone who's got like the rising star, I think that's like they're posting a lot. But then although, I think it's handy to know a keen member is here.

– P12

Other than whether the Rising Star is informative for others in the group. P08 was very sceptical about it and showed no interest in getting a Rising Star badge.

Maybe comment a lot? Like post a lot? Like a lot of things? Yeah, I wouldn't ever feel like I needed to be the rising star in a Facebook group, to be honest. I wouldn't see that as something I would aim towards.

– P08

During the interview, P10 shared his experience on a special case whom he thought should not get the Rising Star badge. From his experience, when deciding on the Rising Star badge, the algorithm does not count the engagement history before the most recent time a member joining the group. Therefore the badge may not make sense and can be cheated for a member who left the group for a while then joining again. We expect this to be the same case on the New Member badge. While the badge represents some properties of a member's role, it may not agree with the actual role they play in the group.

Well, I guess this is someone who was new and has posted lots of things. But again, I'm not sure how you need to be or how many things you need to post so. Yeah, again, I've seen the Rising Stars who are definitely, definitely not supposed to be a rising star another time. I'm not sure if this is actually true, but other times you have people who leave the group and then come back. I think when they come back, they become the rising stars, but they have been in that group for two years.

– P10

### 6.5.2 The Use of Badges in Facebook Groups

The second group of themes we identified focuses on the use of algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups. Figure 6-10 presents the coding references under the use of badges. From our reading of the interview about Facebook badges, we argue that the badges may be useful in emphasizing the role and increasing exposure of members in Facebook groups. Badges may also give hints and at the same time biases to people in the group. Users may feel special if they have a badge with them. Finally, with the interview, participants discussed if and how may the badges be tailored within the context of their communities.



Figure 6-10: Treemap: The Use of Badges in Facebook Groups

### 6.5.2.1 Emphasizing Roles and Increasing Exposure

Having a badge with someone’s profile may emphasize the role they play in the community and increase their exposure to others. Figg runs a Facebook group for a movie club in her university. They organize movie watching events with the Facebook group. She explained that one benefit of having the organizer of the event as admin or moderator of the group is, the admin and moderator badge would give some credits to the organizers, even they are not in charge of the Facebook group, such as someone shopping for soda for the events.

But it might, like some of the others who were not very popular at all and who mostly took care of, maybe shopping for soda or whatever they did. Maybe for them, it’s nice that actually when they posted something, it says they are more or less an admin, or to be echoed as an admin. So I think in that case it’s kind of nice that, ‘cause I also don’t like taking credit for everything, right? So I think it could do something, but I can’t say for sure.

– *Frigg*

Chris took the example using the Visual Storyteller badge explaining that the badge carries and expose the history of a particular person.

So if you know if someone has a badge that says visual storyteller, it gives an indication that... It’s basically indicating the history of a particular person, the badge.

– *Chris*

The badges may also increase exposures in other ways for the moderators. P03, who



is a moderator for a culture group with around 26,000 members for five years, talked about as a moderator he usually pays more attention to posts or comments by someone with a badge, as the badge may indicate something within the conversation.

If I see... if I see a very long post and if I see like, if I notice a badge that would be for a specific user, we usually check it. So because if I see a badge from the original poster, I will assume it's a new member. So usually this catches my eyes because I just look at it and if it's within the conversation itself, it might suggest that maybe the conversation is going too far and the moderator or I mean just came and said. OK guys, please calm down and things like that. So it will make me focus my attention on that specific maybe subset of a discussion as well.

– P03

**Badges as a roadmap to people** Since badges are helpful to emphasize the roles in the group and increase exposure for people, our participants mentioned that they may use this as a roadmap in the group when help is needed. P02 said that she “*instantly knows who's in charge of the group*” with the Admin and Moderator badge. Similarly, P11 showed that she knows who is in control and who to go to with the badges.

But I think I've seen other people saying that oh I will message the admin... I can report something to the people who are in control. That is the only reason I can think of now. Maybe New Member, Conversation Starter will be helpful, in case they post about the same thing.

– P11

Chris argued that the badges are “*classifying*” people so that it makes it “*easier*” for people to figure out who they would like to include in their posts.

Thing is, it's classifying people, so then it makes your life easier if you're making a post, and if you want many people to reach out, and it makes your life easier, you know whom you want to tag.

– Chris

### 6.5.2.2 Hints and Biases

P12 is running a group for a university sports club with about 133 members. During the interview, he mentioned that he knows most of the members at events offline. Thus the New Member badge becomes a hint for him when he saw a name in the group he is not familiar with, by seeing if they have a New Member badge with them, he is able

to guess whether this person is a new member who has not attended events before, or is an old member he was not aware of at the events.

Because I think typically if. If it's an unknown name that comes up. It's handy to know if someone is new or just someone who didn't know before already. So I think it's yeah that's probably one of the most useful I think.

– P12

Frigg added to it that in her group, new members usually were welcomed by the group members with another moderation tool Facebook provides. However if she saw someone with the New Member badge she did not greet them at the post, the badge could be a hint for her reminding that she has missed the *“hello post”*.

The person who added them would say hey everyone, says hi to this person, so we kind of didn't need it because they would all sort of being posted. But I think if I had somehow missed that post and I then saw this new badge then I would probably go look for them so I could find the hello post and actually say hi. 'Cause I would feel bad for not having said hi.

– Frigg

P01 explained that the badge itself biases her in a way to remind her of the role these people are playing in the group, but seeing what actually people with these badges are doing also *“reinforces”* her understandings of the badges.

So I think it's two things: one, the badge itself kind of biases me, but also because I did see the admins or the moderators being helpful. I think those experiences kind of reinforced my thought that the mods the admins and the founding member, they are the ones that are likely to know what they're doing. So I think that also reinforced that initial thought.

– P01

Therefore for Facebook group users, the meaning behind the badges may not be statically defined by Facebook. While the badges biases how they think a certain group of users with the badge might behave, their experiences with these people would also reinforce their understanding of the badges.

After having concerns on a few cases with the use of badges (see Section 6.5.1.5 and 6.5.1.6 with the badges, PLT-Frodo started that the badges give moderators an impression that these are the people moderators *“spend most time moderating”*.

I feel like the people who get the badges are the people we spend most time

moderating...

– *PLT-Frodo*

### 6.5.2.3 Feeling Special

Users may feel they are special for having a badge in Facebook groups. While answering what strategies he used if he saw one of the posts made by someone with a badge, P06 explained he believed that the badge owners have “*actually devoted a lot more effort*” to deserve the “*credibility*” from Facebook.

Yeah, they’ve earned something. So I guess that’s what Facebook is trying to show that there’s more credibility behind that particular person in the group, ‘cause they’ve actually devoted a lot more effort.

– *P06*

P07 stated that for the food and recipe sharing group that she is in, there could be other people who are “*passionate about it*” and appreciate a badge to recognise their participation.

Uh, personally, I’m not so engaged with the page to want a tag like that, but I do think some people might be very passionate about [food] or uhm, yeah and appreciate to have a badge like that.

– *P07*

As the only one in our interview participants who owns the Conversation Starter badge, P11 treated it as “*a sticker*” rather than a reward.

No. Not really (a reward). Just something like a sticker. I don’t know.

– *P11*

From the moderator’s perspective, badge owners in the group can look “*trustworthy*” to others. However, the badge usually associated with only the number of the posts being sent, without taking the quality into account and should not be interpreted beyond that.

Well, sometimes a person can get a badge and look “*trustworthy*” to other people. But posting a lot doesn’t mean you’re knowledgeable about anything or trustworthy. But I haven’t had a real issue with that.

– *PLT-JS*

**Rewarding** Despite P11 does not see her Conversation Starter badge as a reward, a few participants thought it could be rewarding by owning a badge. P07 recognised that though for some people it may be just another tag on them, some others may think it as a reward.

I think some people would consider it a reward as well.

– P07

P14 expressed that in some conditions, the New Member badge may also represent someone's "*new interest*" in the group, therefore is encouraging for them.

I think it represents this person, maybe has taken in new interest in this particular group. Maybe like encourage them to participate more.

– P14

From the moderator's perspective, PLT-Frodo see badges should be like a reward for members in the group even though within the current way it functions, the moderators may have different opinions on it.

I think it would be more like a reward. The badge system doesn't work in my opinion. As they have it now.

– PLT-Frodo

**Demotivated by being special** While owning a badge may make the badge owners feel special in the group, people who do not value being exposed as the "special" one may be demotivated by having the badge with them. P02 has a Top Fan<sup>6</sup> badge for one of the pages she follows. She thought she did not do much to be given a Top Fan badge and felt being "*blackmailed*", because it is trying to chase her to "*engage more of the group*".

I didn't do anything special to earn it and it's like, uh, I got that badge, and then I felt somehow like they are trying to make me engaged more in the group. So it's like – OK, you have this badge – but then you have to be as active as previously to keep this badge? This is like a kind of blackmail for people.

– P02

Similarly, P07 has seen followers of a Facebook Page about food and recipes she is

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<sup>6</sup>The Top Fan badge is only for followers of Facebook Pages but not in the Facebook groups. We did not include the Top Fan badge in our survey and interview protocol, however, participants may refer to it during the interview.

managing. As she also has experience in managing other pages and YouTube channels about mental health disorders, she raised her concerns about the Top Fan badge in those contexts. It may not be suitable for the page's followers of Facebook Pages to be called "Top Fan" on mental health or other similar pages.

I think on some pages it can be useful. So for example the [food] page. 'Cause, it can be rewarding if you've got a top fan badge. But especially if it's a page about mental health disorders, like in my pages about eating disorders, I don't think it would necessarily be rewarding to be a fan 'cause you might not want necessarily like family your friends to see that you engage with the page maybe?

– P07

Frigg also mentioned her experiences of getting a Top Fan badge for a page of her university. She expressed that she felt "weird" of being identified as a "fan of the university" by just leaving one comment on the page.

And I noticed in the actually in one of the main university groups or maybe the department group. I'm not sure that if I made a comment it would say like Top Fan about me and I thought that was really weird. 'cause I'm not a fan of the university. I did apparently and I don't comment a lot. It's just that not a lot of people comment so. Yeah, so I notice it because I felt weird about being called a fan because I don't think they understand what's going on here.

– Frigg

This further indicates that while designing badges which could affect different online communities, it is important to take the community background into account. In the next section, we present the themes "community tailored badges", discussing how our participants mentioned badges can be tailored within the context of their communities.

#### 6.5.2.4 Community-Tailored Badges

During the interview, participants were asked how they may design badges for their Facebook groups. F01 mentioned that the badges should be more "diverse and flexible that the community members can come up with", which indicates that while designing badges, it may be valuable to consult community members.

So I think there should be more definitely more diverse and flexible, diverse badges that the community members can come up with. Even that Face-

book doesn't provide it.

– P01

P08 is a member of her course group and would like a “*worst dedicated scientist*” badge for her. She argued that people take badges which describe the “*factual*” ones more seriously than the other ones.

Maybe like The worst dedicated scientist, but it would be like a joke, people wouldn't really take these badges seriously... Maybe if it was factual ones like New Member or Admin, they would take it seriously. But if it's like Rising Star or Best Scientist then they don't pay much attention to it.

– P08

With the “standard set” of badges Facebook provided, PLT-Biscuit thought there are a few certain badges not suitable for his group such as Rising Star because – in a newly created and active group, everyone may have the badge at the same time.

Because given that it was a very short group I think everyone was a rising star at some point.

– PLT-Biscuit

**Community control over badges** Other than having more diverse badges fulfilling various needs of different communities, our participants argued that it is also important to give the community some control over the badges. P01 raised that there could be a procedure by which admins and moderators can pre-approve badges. She also stated that if users are allowed to come up with their own badges, it could strengthen the bond in the community

But I assume there should be a procedure that the admins and the moderators can allow the badges before people can understand. But I think people should have the freedom to come up with their own badges... I actually think those would be pretty helpful and like strengthening the bound. I personally believe it that way.

– P01

From the moderators' perspective, PLT-Frodo gave a “*better way*” for how the badges could be assigned within the Facebook groups. To date of the study, admin and moderators can only turn on or off a specific badge for their group completely. They have no control over who gets which badge in their group other than the algorithms. PLT-Frodo thought that the admin and moderators could supervise on the distribution of

the badges by approving the badges to members after they fulfilled the badge criteria.

I just thought of a better way of doing it. Facebook ought to assign the badges automatically, and then we approve the suggestions manually.

– *PLT-Frodo*

### 6.5.3 Understanding beyond the Badges in Facebook group

With the interview, our participants tried bringing their own experiences beyond the badge adding an extra layer of meaning to interpret badges. They also see the person and post content beyond the badge. P04 stated that for example for the Conversation Starter badge, depending on a set of variables including the community and the time, it may be valued differently depends on information beyond the badges.

I think sometimes it can be helpful to see who it (conversation starter) is, that's posting things that are actually... I guess, engaging and useful. But other times you know, depending on the group, depending on the community of the group, or the times, I think that it's someone who's just posting... only wanting that engagement, or with only wanting to see the comments going up without actually contributing.

– *P04*

We further identified two themes that users may take into account while understanding the value of algorithmically generated badges, including knowing the person before the badges, and content matter more than the badges (Figure 6-11).

#### 6.5.3.1 Knowing the Person before the Badges

During the interview, our participants often mentioned that they recognised the person before seeing the badges. This may due to the networking nature of Facebook (discussed in Section 5.4.1 Facebook as a Networking Platform). P02 stated that when the group size is feasible for people to identify individual members, badges are “*not needed*”. However, if you do not know others, badges can be the “*guide*” of knowing people.

So it depends on the group because if you know the person, you don't need badges. But if there is like the big group when you don't know people, you are guided by the badges, because you don't have any other way of... knowing people.

– *P02*

P06 further expressed that for active members of the groups that he is in, their names

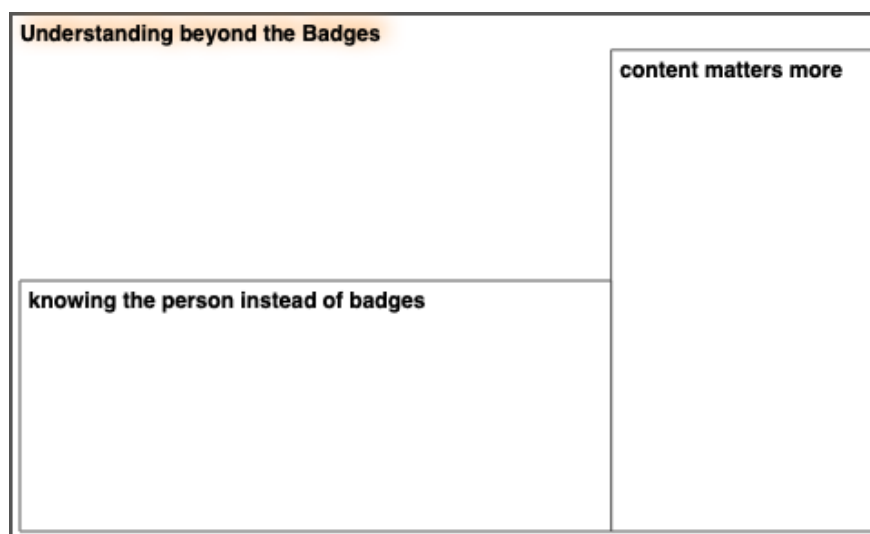


Figure 6-11: Treemap: Understanding beyond the Badges in Facebook group

“comes up all the time in the notification”. Therefore people may be aware of them by their names rather than from their badges.

Yeah yeah, we notice the person (before their badges). Cause you see the name comes up all the time and you don’t notice... There’s no badge when the notification comes up,

– P06

Similarly, as a moderator for a university sports club with about 133 members, P12 did not see the badges adding information to posts by someone he already knows.

I think ‘cause I’m quite a senior member of the [sports] club. I know all of the people personally. So I don’t... I kind of don’t really see the badge done an influence on how I think about the post because I know them, mostly.

– P12

For moderators of bigger groups (with 2,500 members), PLT-JS recalled that most people who are active enough to be eligible for a badge usually “*earns attention*” from him before.

I usually see the name before I see the badge. Most people that earn badges earn my attention before they earn the badge.

I guess it just tells me that person is very active in the group.

I usually notice they’re active as well...

– PLT-JS



Similarly, PLT-Frodo expressed that with the admin vision he has got via “*looking at this group a lot*”, the badges may not add much information. However, for groups that he does not engage in as much, it might give him a sense of “*who is active*”.

Maybe it’s my perspective as an admin.

But I don’t really think they tell me anything about the members. Then again, I look at this group a lot.

Maybe if I looked at some other group, it might give me a sense of who’s active.

– *PLT-Frodo*

With that, we may conclude that for people who pay enough attention to know others in Facebook groups personally, their knowledge of the person may exceed the information given by the badges. In this case, badges would be less affect their impression of the badge owner.

### 6.5.3.2 Content Matters More than the Badges

Other than knowing the badge owners personally, our participants also mentioned that it is the content of the post matters more than whether the original poster has anything attached to them. P02 see the badges as just a “*visual part*” of the post. For her, the contents matter more than whoever posted it.

I don’t pay more attention to posts of people with badges. It’s mostly... I look at the visual part, and it’s like the image... But what really matters to me is the content of the post, not who posted it.

– *P02*

P03 asked “*so what*” while explaining why a post by a Conversation Starter badge owner reads somewhat different for him. What he is interested in is the content of the post and the information carried by the post, rather than how many replies it is going to have.

Also, if something is tagged as a conversation starter, so what? I mean, I’m more interested in the content of a post here, not on the somehow subjective statement that this is a conversation starter. Yeah, for me, a successful post is supposed that has a lot of interesting information and a lot of answers. I don’t need a badge for that.

– *P03*

## 6.6 Discussion

Any badges system carries a set of ethical expectations with them, and it is important to make sure that these expectations are consistent, cohesive, and appropriate to the context (Halavais, 2012). From our survey, we see from the pattern of the ratings there are mainly two sets of expectations brought with the Facebook group badges: the Admin, Moderator, New Member, and somewhat Founding Member badge are describing **the roles of members in the group**, while Conversation Starter, Visual Storyteller, Rising Star badge are more marking **the achievements members have made** (FBGB-RQ1 and FBGB-RQ2).

Through the interview with our participants, the Admin and Moderator badge brings largely the meaning of authority in Facebook groups. Members trust the posts by admins and moderators more and thought the posts to be more authoritative and powerful. Wearing the Admin and Moderator's badge next to their name would emphasize the authoritativeness. The New Member badge and Founding Member badge describes the two edges of experience in the group – while the New Member badge owner means someone who is inexperienced in the group, Founding Member badge owners are believed to be the experienced ones with special expertise in the group. These badges are more describing the “*factual role*” (P08) people play in Facebook groups.

For the Conversation Starter, Visual Storyteller, Rising Star badge, while both moderators and members understand these badges are intended to mark someone's achievements in their group, such achievements may not be valued by both the badge owner and the bystanders. From the previous chapter, we understand that the identity and purposes of Facebook groups can be very diverse, specific, focused, and may link to their offline presence. Since these badges work in a binary way that when users' contribution is above a certain threshold will have the badge, and the ones whose contribution is lower than the threshold have nothing to show. It may weaken the sense of rankings or level-up with this system, but more focusing on the sense of differentiation or being special among others.

While digital badges have no explicit value with them, having badges in online communities, they naturally inherit what is being valued by the community. Facebook is a huge platform with such a diverse user base and type of groups, having one set of badges being dumped globally do not always work. While different communities value things differently, it is important that the assessment and issuing process of the badges remain open and documented (Halavais, 2012). Roles such as admin, moderator and new member are self-explained therefore shares a basic layer of meaning across all

communities. However mostly being understood as incentives for engagements, badges like Conversation Starter, Visual Storyteller, and Rising Star may not align with the community identity and will be challenged when others recognise the badge owners do not deserve to be awarded the badge. People may lose trust and will not be motivated to put in the effort if the badge is not valued by them.

The badges can be hints for others pointing at more information (Halavais, 2012), they can also bias people's judgements. For example, new members in online communities tend to have this "privilege" of violating the norms unintentionally and not costing them as much as old-timers. Also from our previous studies, admin and moderators may sometimes engage with the group as normal members to build a closer relationship with the members. Having the admin and moderator badge with them all the time, is taking away their opportunities in standing at an equal height as the members. Therefore badges changes how people see the posts in some ways. However, this effect is limited. When the community is small enough for members to recognize each other, badges can not take over people's own judgements.

For someone who takes care of and has an overall vision of the community, they may add their experience while interpreting badges (FBGB-RQ3). Closely monitoring the group, moderators will recognise outstanding or abnormal behaviours before it is being picked up in the badge algorithm. In this case, if the badge, as an algorithmically generated label, is agreed upon by the moderators, moderators may recognise the value of the badges. Once the admins and moderators did not agree with what the badge values the badge owner for, admins and moderators will overtake the badge with their own experiences: *"I have seen Visual Storytellers who mainly posts posters of advertisement in the group"*, *"the Conversation Starter is the one who keeps making threads of drama so we have to keep an eye on him"*. With that, while moderators see posts by badge owners as noteworthy, they may not agree on the badge. The use of algorithmically generated badges influences the moderators' vision of community activity, and they may adapt their moderation strategy accordingly. Therefore we present our design suggestions on designing badges as a more supportive tool for online communities like Facebook groups in the next section from three different perspectives: transparent and sensible qualification; members' supervision over badges acquisition and curation; and badges tailored by the community.

### 6.6.1 Badges as a more Supportive Tool in Facebook groups

Badges for Facebook groups are designed to acknowledge admins and outstanding members in the group (FacebookCommunity, 2018). In order to better support admins and

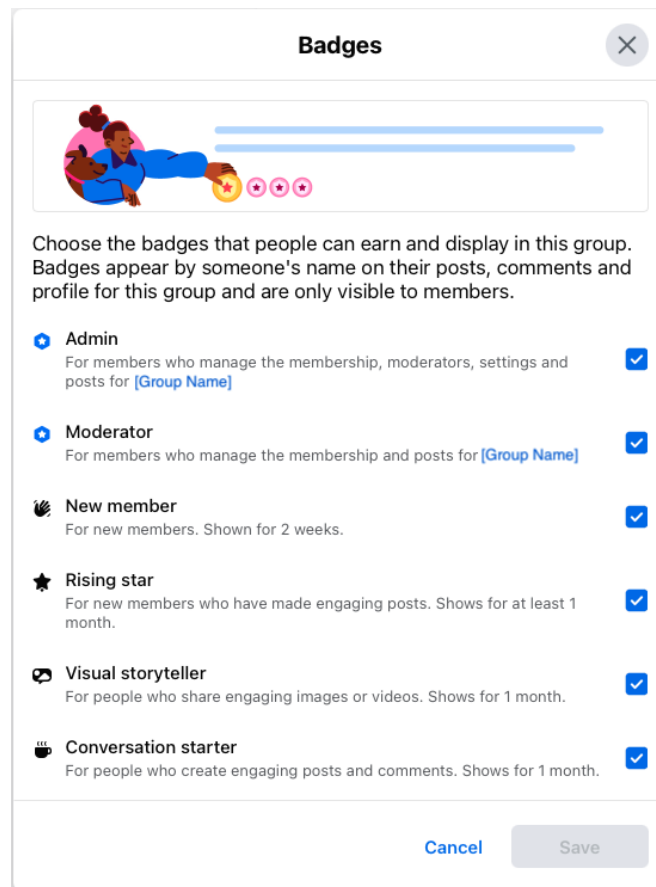


Figure 6-12: Badge management panel for Facebook group admins and moderators

members of Facebook groups to acknowledge specific roles and achievements, we suggest the platform owners and designers think of the design of badges considering for example transparency, explainability, iterability and flexibility. Here we discuss from three perspectives aiming to design badges as a more supportive tool for Facebook groups.

#### 6.6.1.1 Transparent and Sensible Qualification for Badges

While Facebook does not explicitly give badges as incentives to members, members perceive them as a special recognition of their role or achievements in the group. For all badges, no matter about roles or achievements, it is important to be transparent about what they are representing, and how to be qualified for them. Figure 6-12 shows the badge management panel for admins of Facebook groups. It has the icon and names of badges available, with badge descriptions, and checkboxes next to the badges for admins to enable or disable them for the group.

For badges describing roles of members in the group, it is important to be transparent about if and what privilege or responsibility this role is entitled in the group. For example, the differences among *admin*, *moderator*, and *founding member* are sometimes confused to general members. It is sometimes the same important to be explicit about what privilege or responsibility specific roles are **not** entitled, for example, *founding member* only indicates that its owner helps found the group, and they do not have moderation duty in the group. For badges recognising achievements, it is important to correctly interpret and deliver the information of how users may become qualified for the badge. The algorithms applied to generate the badges must be transparently explained. It is clear that algorithmically generated badges do not add values but introduces more noises if they can not be correctly interpreted by the users. For example, in Figure 6-12, it is clear that the new member badge shows for 2 weeks, and the rising star badge shows for at least 1 month. However, it is very ambiguous for the users to know from when they have been given the badge. To further reduce confusion, it will also be helpful to use more sensible descriptions rather than ambiguous ones – for example “engaging posts” is being used to describe *rising star*, *visual storyteller*, and *conversation starter* badges in Figure 6-12, but how and who should decide if a post is engaging? Previous HCI research has looked into how engagement can be measured in different contexts (Doherty and Doherty, 2018). However, for Facebook groups, it is yet a question to ask whether a post is engaging if it receives a number of replies and reactions. Through our analysis, users prefer to think only positive engagements should count towards the “engaging posts” pool, which with the algorithm of Facebook group badges, users may still get a *conversation starter* badge if their posts usually generate some not-so-friendly engagements. We must be also careful about how transparent we want the algorithm to be. Being too explicit on what to do in order to achieve a badge may result in users cheating the badge system. Therefore it is important to balance between being transparent but not too explicit on the badge description, so that the badges can be correctly perceived by the members.

Other than being transparent and sensible for digital badges in online communities, it is also important to make this information visible and easy to access. As the front-line members of the group, admins and moderators should be introduced to the badges information before they are applied in the group. At the time of writing, Facebook shows the description and number of badges in the group, once users hover their mouse on the badge icon. Admins and moderators can check the badges available for their group (Figure 6-12) through group settings on Facebook. Admins may benefit from it if they know what badges are available for all groups on Facebook and what to do for their group to be qualified to be given access to certain badges that are currently not

included. Users including members and admins may also benefit from it if there can be pushed notifications about updates on badges or other new tools added for their groups.

#### **6.6.1.2 Members' Supervision on Badges Acquisition and Curation**

For badges generated by or with algorithms, it is important to include some reviewing process by the members or admins before they become public. Donath (2007) suggests that a signalling system must evolve, so that it can become more reliable. And online communities also need to evolve to keep the community sustain. Digital badges, which generally supporting as conventional signals of online communities, need to be iteratively verified and maintained to improve their reliability. As in Figure 6-12, admins can only enable or disable the badge for everyone in the group instead of taking away certain member's badges in Facebook groups, which makes it less flexible when dealing with individual cases of information mismatch. Similarly, members should be able to report or raise their concerns if they identify any issues with the badges. With the participation from admins and members, it will reinforce what badges mean in the community and increase the reliability of badges distribution.

In other cases in our study (*rising star* badge in Section 6.5.1.7 for example), members themselves may not be fond of revealing badges they received to the public without notice. They may find themselves in conflict with the badge, or simply do not want to expose this extra signal to others. Such cases require users to have more control over what others could see about them in the group. Furthermore, if members have too many badges, they should be able to curate their badge display by prioritising the one they want to show. Badges in online communities, should be like stickers ones get in schools – students can get it when specific requirements are fulfilled with supervision by teachers and classmates, and can choose to stick on the ones they prefer or tear up the ones they dislike.

#### **6.6.1.3 Badges Tailored by the Community**

Online communities are all different. There is not a set of badges can fit all the groups. It is important for badges to make sense in context with different online communities in order to maximize their values for the community. In our study, admins and moderators are sometimes also committee members if the Facebook group is used by a university society. It will make more sense to reveal that information to members online other than having the general name as admin/moderators. Reddit allow subreddits to personalise their communities by choosing their own words to replace “members” or

“online” (for example in Table 6.7). In contemporary popular culture, some fandoms use collective terms to identify their fans which helps to bring the community into existence (Peyron, 2018). Like decorating a community hall, personalising the online venue for communities will increase the sense of presence and engagements. Allowing online community members to have tailored names for badges may encourage the participation as they can add special values to the community. This will also add values to how algorithms may be interpreted by different communities, to make the algorithmically generated badges more sensible and flexible to be adapted in different communities.

Subreddit	Personalised terms for	
	“Members”	“Online”
r/pokemon	Pokémon Trainers	Online
r/harrypotter	Witches & Wizards	on the Marauder’s Map
r/AnimalCrossing	Mayors	looking for a New Horizon!
r/kpop	trainees	currently debuting
r/knitting	knitters	knitting
r/soccer	Season Ticket Holders	In Attendance

Table 6.7: Example personalised community terms for subreddits

In summary, algorithmically generated badges, though they may not be designed specifically as a moderation tool, they shape how moderators see the community members by giving hints and biases at the same time. Through our analysis, most participants argued that they value the person behind and the content of the post more than the badges, however, their vision may still be affected. To maximise the use of the badges in online communities, especially the badges as incentives, it is important to consult the community about what they value. It is important to keep the issuing process of the badges transparent, consistent, and cohesive. With Facebook groups, it may be better to have the admins and moderators to supervise or approve the badges when it has been picked up by algorithms. It may also worth thinking to allow the communities to personalise the name of the badges, so that there can be more exposure to what the community values.

## 6.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we extend the phase of our empirical work with Facebook groups, to further investigate how human moderators may bear on automatic moderation tools using algorithmically generated badges as a case study. We draw our attention to how may these badges be interpreted and valued by the community, and whether the badges

would shape the vision of moderators and their moderation strategies.

Through our study, we summarized that there are mainly two kinds of badges applied in Facebook groups, depends on whether the badge is describing the factual role people play in the group or intend to be used as incentives to mark the achievements of users. We argue that the badges describing factual roles people play may serve as a road map for members, but can not overtake the personal connections if there is any. The badges used as incentives need to be aligned with what the community values to maximize its use. All badges give hints and biases to users, and in the other way, users' experiences with the badge owners add to their understandings of them. Moderators may adjust their moderation strategies based on whether they agree with what has been delivered by the badges in the community. We argue that algorithmically generated badges should be designed closely with the community, and the process of issuing the badges should be transparent, consistent, and cohesive, with the supervision of community caretakers to best assist the care-as-nurture moderation practices as another algorithmic tool.



## Chapter 7

# Conclusion

In this chapter, we first summarize the progress made in this thesis and discuss the contribution in each chapter. We then revisit the research question raised in the introduction. We also discuss the main contribution of this thesis, focusing on different angles of care including care-in-moderation to provide some insights for online community admins, moderators, owners and platform designers; and how to apply care-as-nurture as a lens while exploring care-in-moderation. Finally, we note some limitations of this thesis work and discuss the possibilities for future work.

### 7.1 General Discussion

The initial goal of this thesis is to investigate the normative processes in online community moderation and its relationships with the community norms maintenance and development. We aimed at exploring what kind of behaviour in online communities motivates moderation intervention, as well as how do moderators conceptualize their work in online communities and how members perceive the moderation activities. As online communities need to keep their pace up with the changing needs of community members (Kim, 2000), we hope to look into community norms and seek the relationships between moderation strategies and norm evolution. We further look into if and how technologies may assist human moderators in their work, to open the space for further scaling and generalising our findings in normative moderation processes.

Since the main objective of this thesis is to explore online community moderation and the norm evolution, in chapter 2, we reviewed and discussed the background research in HCI and CSCW about online community moderation to prepare for the theoret-

ical background and setting the scope for this research. We look into the history of how the definition of online communities changed as technology developed (Preece, 2000; Bruckman, 2006). We discussed the social roles in online communities (Preece and Schneiderman, 2009), with extra focuses on the newcomers and moderators – as newcomers are more likely to challenge the existing norms in online communities, and moderators have the power and privileges to decide if and how community norms may be developed. We also look into research about online community moderation and governance in CSCW and HCI field, revisiting the taxonomies of online community moderation summarised by Grimmelmann (2015). To further elaborate on our initial aim, we discuss the literature about norms and guidelines in online communities. We decided to further scope on dissent as one potential challenge in online community moderation after reviewing several terms including “deviant behaviour” (Bruckman et al., 1994, 2006, 2018), “mischief and mayhen” (Kirman, Lineham and Lawson, 2012), and “misconduct” (Sternberg, 2000) in online communities, looking at broader opportunities to characterise the moderation work as the process to engage with challenges to community norms.

By closely working with MetaFilter (Chapter 3) an online community which has a well-established moderation culture of the site providing the foundation for the positive engagement (Silva, Goel and Mousavidin, 2009) and the high-quality content it produces. Through thematic analysing three sets of data: an archive of moderators’ comments on the site, interviews with the moderating team, and a discussion with the member of the community, we see moderation on MetaFilter is not only removing undesirable contents from the site, but also closely embedded with the care frame in multiple layers. Understanding the layers of care extends to the previous work by Preece (1998) on empathy in online communities. The mutual care between moderators and members creates the foundation for community growth and improvement (Pettersen, 2011). Moderators’ work can include routinely handling dissents and developing rules for the community (Seering et al., 2019b). Unlike commercial content moderation (Gillespie, 2018), moderation on MetaFilter do not aim for efficiency or scalability, but more focusing on the long term plan to support and sustain the community growth. This further extends to Grimmelmann (2015)’s taxonomy of online community moderation, considering adding the fifth dichotomy to it with *managing* vs. *caring*: moderation can either be a tool to maintain high-quality content or an integrated process with the goal of community building. And for the Reader-to-Leader framework raised by Preece and Schneiderman (2009), it might be useful to add a phase overlapping or in between collaborator and leader, using the term *carer* for participation in online communities taking the pervasive care activities in online community moderation into

account. Using care as a lens to explore normative moderation processes in MetaFilter moderation, we further raised some care-in-moderation practices to guide community caretakers and to provide an account of strategies they may consider in moderation. This includes: norm-setting, professionalism, moderators as community members, and sharing responsibilities. However we understand that caring acts vary in the explicitness and the match (Korth, 2003), and these practices though have value for moderation in other online communities, moderators, or community caretakers, would still need to value the mutual care in their moderation activity to be best of identifying and justifying when and what moderation tool to be used to best serve the community goal.

In order to bring the conceptual findings in Chapter 3 with existing care ethics literature in HCI and CSCW, and lay the groundwork for our later studies, we reviewed previous research about *care* as a developing moral concept (Tronto, 1993) in Chapter 4, seeking opportunities to calibrate and extend our understanding about care as a lens in normative moderation processes from the MetaFilter study. Fisher and Tronto (1990) argued that there are four phases in caring activities including caring about, taking care of, care-giving, and care-receiving. Later Jaggar (1995) added the justificatory of care act as being able to justify the appropriate identification of needs is an important aspect to distinguish care work from just work. For online communities moderation, it may worth look into whether moderation as care work to maintain and develop the community norms and goals can be distinguished by the moderators' vision and ability to justify the appropriate identification of community needs, so that moderation strategies can be applied properly in line with the needs. We later discussed using care-as-nurture as a layer of concern in online community moderation. Derived from the metaphor of moderation in MetaFilter – “taking care of the fruit tree” – quoted from *Eyebrows McGee* in our MetaFilter study, we further segment this metaphor into (1) pruning for reinforcing existing norms, and (2) fertilising towards norms evolve, in order to further make sense of care as a lens in normative online community moderation (Weick, 1995; Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor, 2020). We argue that using care-as-nurture as a lens to explore normative processes in online community moderation provides the opportunity to deliver an understanding of moderation that is not narrowly concerned with removing undesired content or members violated to community norms, but involves thoughtful and justifiable decisions and active support and development for the community.

Taking our insights that moderation is the care work to pro-actively maintain support and development to the online community, we further contest this frame in Facebook groups moderation. With Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, we present our Facebook group

study, further using care-as-nurture as lens to explore moderation in Facebook groups. We seek for if and how Facebook group admins and moderators see their volunteered role in Facebook groups as a kind of care work. We also look into how technologies may assist moderation using care as a frame by a case study looking into the algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups. Through our analysis, we found that since Facebook groups have more specific purposes and identity, some may link to local communities (Baborska-Narozny, Stirling and Stevenson, 2016), the moderation as care work span to the purposes and activities the group conduct. Through consulting the care-as-nurture frame in the study, we identified that challenges in contemporary moderation work of online communities are mostly focusing on the moderation activities online, while the arena of communities and moderation is being stretched by the hybridity aspect of communities. We see moderators applied relaxed moderation strategies in Facebook groups, which may due to the real name nature, clear and well-established community goal, and the hybridity nature of the groups. When designing algorithmic tools like badges, it needs to be consulted with the community identity and purposes. When using automation tools like algorithmically generated badges, moderators also applies their moderation vision to assess the value of the badges in their community, therefore, adjust their moderation strategy accordingly. Algorithms are not adding values if it is not being correctly, consistently, and cohesively interpreted by the community. Their moderation vision in Facebook groups is beyond the online space of the community, but also combined with the careful exploration overseeing the platform and the shared identity, purposes, activities and goals of the community. Instead of providing a textbook style of moderation guidance for online communities (Seering et al., 2019b; Kraut and Resnick, 2012), using care-as nurture as a lens to explore normative processes in online community moderation provides the opportunity and flexibility to not only pay attention to the moderation activities online, but also look into careful activities moderation team performed outside of their online playground, anticipating the pace of the changing needs of communities. Applying care as a frame in moderation would also help them build their careful moderator vision, to better identify the community needs and justify the moderation tools, strategies for their moderation action in the best arena and timing.

### 7.1.1 Research Questions

In this section, we discuss the initial research question of this thesis, providing the road map on how they have been explored in each chapter.

- *RQ1: What kind of behaviour in online communities motivates moderation inter-*

*vention?*

Online community moderation has long been explored in a textbook approach documenting and cataloguing the moderation tools and strategies to help maintain online communities responding to dissents (Seering et al., 2019b; Kraut and Resnick, 2012; Grimmelmann, 2015). By closely working with MetaFilter (Chapter 3), we explored the normative processes in online community moderation using care as a lens. We see that not only the counter-normative behaviours will attract moderators' attention, dissents challenging the existing norms may also motivate moderators to engage in the discussion and pro-actively maintaining or developing the norms and guidelines of the community. From our work with Facebook group moderators in Chapter 5, we see that moderators intervention may expand beyond the online space of the community if the arena of the community stretches over the platform to off-line activities identified by the community purposes and goals. Through our case study on algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups, we see that the mismatch information recognised by algorithms and moderators' vision may shape the strategies moderators applying with the tools provided. Applying care-as-nurture in exploring online community moderation, we see the behaviour motivates moderation intervention as the behaviour challenging community norms and goals from various perspectives including members, between moderation teams, technologies, and platforms.

- *RQ2: How do moderators conceptualize their work in online communities?*
  - *RQ2a: Can moderator activity influence the development of online community norms?*

There are different metaphors moderators applied to make sense of their work (Seering, Kaufman and Chancellor, 2020). We argue that to support a more sustainable community fulfilling the changing needs from members and owners (Kim, 2000), moderators should see their work as a *care* work to proactively identifying and properly justifying the needs of the community, in order to maintain and develop the community norms. Through our Facebook group moderation study in Chapter 5, we see moderators of hybrid communities may share their role in the community between the moderators of the online community and the representative, manager, organizer, or committee member in their offline community. By seeing their work in online communities as community carers, we see them combine their vision beyond the online space of the community therefore their moderation strategies are shaped in multi-dimensions.

- *RQ3: How do community members perceive moderation in online communities?*

- *RQ3a: How might community member attitudes toward moderator activity influence the development of community norms?*

Through our MetaFilter study in Chapter 3, members acknowledge being taken care of by MetaFilter moderators. They identify ambient humanity and perceive moderators as individual human beings actively engaging in the community. Members value moderation as the foundation of community. With mutual trust between the members and moderators, members believe moderators are maintaining an environment that allows them to freely voice their opinions on the site. This mutual trust will also reflect in moderators' work to allow them to care in their moderation activities. In our Facebook group studies in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, community members perceive moderation in online communities with the identification and purposes of the community. Some moderators may share a similar role in the relevant offline organization. Members share the vision and common ground with moderators of Facebook groups, therefore less counter-norm behaviours would need moderation intervening in Facebook groups, which may lead to the relaxed moderation strategies of Facebook group moderators.

- *RQ4: How might technologies assist human moderators in their work?*

In both the MetaFilter study (Chapter 3) and the Facebook group moderation study (Chapter 5, moderators all mentioned that they have a dedicated channel for the moderation team for communication and collaboration when needed. In the study about algorithmically generated badges in Facebook groups, we see that moderation tools are not always being used as intended. Technologies assisting in online communities are always being interpreted and applied by the context and purposes of the community. And algorithms would not add values to the community if cannot be correctly, consistently, and cohesively interpreted with the community norms. Moderators do see the posts by members with badges as noteworthy, influencing their vision of community activity and may adjust their moderation strategies accordingly.

## 7.2 Care-in-Moderation in Online Communities

Looking at contemporary moderation in online communities, Grimmelmann (2015) presents a taxonomy for online moderation across different platforms (see Table 2.2 for details). Four dichotomies are used to describe the spectrum of potential approaches. Using care as a lens to explore online community moderation, we see the moderation arena expand from the virtual environment of online communities to wherever activities of online communities may happen. Therefore in this section, we discuss three main characteristics of communities that may impact moderation including member-

ships, (virtual) environment, and technology. Through the care-as-nurture lens, we see moderation as active support and development for the community and engage with the community throughout the whole journey, and these three main characteristics play a big part in the scope of online communities in this thesis.

### 7.2.1 Memberships

Membership requirements play a big part in scoping the norms of online communities. It usually includes information about the purposes for which the community is set up, and the entry requirements of the online community. An online community with stricter *membership control* may have less burden on content moderation. If it costs members more to become a contributor to an online community, they may be more likely to abide by the norms and guidelines of the community (Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2003). However, having stricter membership control may mean that it is less flexible for the group to grow, which may lead to more serious problems when errors happen in moderation. The membership requirements also have a big effect on the *size* of the group. It is similar to running a school – if the entry requirements are lowered, more students will be able to join the school, therefore more rooms need to be created, and more teachers may be recruited. With careful concerns on memberships of a group, it would require the online community actively reviewing the scope of the community, reiterating the norms of the community in the pace of the environment, also identify potential moderation needs and take actions earlier in the stage. With the previous example, care-as-nurture will provide the vision to the schools that more rooms or teachers would be needed at some point, so that the school can take actions on that earlier, either by investing more rooms/staffing, or adjust their entry requirements in the allowed time, rather than solving issues when there are too many students to accommodate in the place. Bringing care as a layer of concern on online community membership control provides more steady support to balance the community population and the resources, to be in pace with community development.

### 7.2.2 (Virtual) Environment

It is important to notice that in our initial scope of online communities, the virtual environment is where most activities of the community take place. However, with communities moving hybrid, the moderation arena stretches from the virtual world to hybrid. From our Facebook studies, we see that the *hybridity* of communities is one of the main factors for admins applying a more relaxed moderation to the group. The face-to-face component of hybrid communities strengthened the social ties be-

tween community members. Communities with *stronger social ties* among members have more channels for communication, therefore could be more flexible when moderation intervention is needed. The hybrid moderation requires moderators to have a tridimensional vision of the environmental changes of the group. With care-as-nurture as a layer of concern in the community space, it can help stimulate the community contribution more timely. At the same time, it can help assess potential breaches in the specific environment, so that actions can be taken earlier to prevent further harm to the community.

Similarly, the *topic dependencies* of the community environment will also affect the moderation strategy applied in online communities, especially for hybrid communities. Online community discussion usually happens around what is trending recently: university society groups are usually busy during the term time especially the beginning of semesters; academic conference groups have more questions and new members joining close to the deadlines; local residence groups are more active when events are happening; political groups are busier when the political environment changes. In the MetaFilter study, the moderators identified the needs of extra relief space for members during the US election season, therefore they took action and started the weekly MetaTalk thread. Apply care-as-nurture as a lens would help community caretakers closely monitor the environment of the group and make adjustments accordingly.

### 7.2.3 Technology

Furthermore, technologies available may also impact moderation strategies in online communities. Kiene and Hill (2020) argue that there is strong evidence of the relationships between the size of the community and the use of user-innovated bots. Similarly, Kiene, Jiang and Hill (2019) suggest that moderators are likely to transform their experiences from other platforms to align with their past expectations while innovating and deploying new technologies to their community. For online communities relying on big platforms such as Facebook groups, Reddit and Discord, for experienced moderators, they may shift their previous moderation experiences to the new group. However, for new moderators of small and medium communities, especially the hybrid ones, moderators usually have not much experience moderating a group. Therefore it is important for them to learn about what technology is available on the plate for them. If they do not have previous experience to copy from, they may borrow common sense in their daily life dealing with problematic behaviours. without digging into what technologies provided by the platform is available to them. Using care as a lens in online community moderation could help encourage moderators to explore technologies available in hand



for them, no matter the new ones or based on their previous experiences. Knowing about the technologies in time will allow the community to adjust their moderation strategies accordingly – for example to reduce human workload by using moderation bots in Discord. Designing technologies to support online community moderation with the care lens would help platform designers to make tools more cohesive across different platforms, therefore reducing the learning barrier for new moderators. Ideally, future technologies designed to help moderation in online communities should be designed with how diverse the online communities may be in mind, so that the tools can be generalised to bigger platforms.

### 7.3 Care-as-Nurture for Exploring Care-in-Moderation

For the first care in this thesis, we suggested using care-as-nurture as a lens to explore normative processes in online community moderation. With that, it leads to us expanding our research vision to more dimensions moderation activity may happen including the type, the place, the timing, and the tools in moderation work. We argue that with care-as-nurture as a lens to explore online community moderation, it entails proactive engagement from the moderators, not limited to just responding to counter-normal behaviour when it is spotted or flagged. We see that the moderation arena stretches to space where community activities and goals may happen: for example moderation intervention may happen in offline community activities if misbehaviour in online space persists. Using care-as-nurture as a lens to explore online community moderation would give us the flexibility to move away from the previous textbook approach, go beyond documenting the processes of moderation (Seering et al., 2019b; Kraut and Resnick, 2012), and discuss by case, by context, with regard to community health. The care-as-nurture lens is the driving force behind our findings of care-in-moderation.

The second care in this thesis is the care in online community moderation. We argue that online community moderation should be treated as care work in communities. This care consists of social nuances of care consideration overlaying the normative moderation activities. With care-in-moderation, care plays out on multiple levels in different ways in online communities. The community as a whole care for the collective purposes and identity of the community, therefore cares about the discourse and space where discussions can be more freely voiced. In order to achieve that, the moderators take care of members concerns by identifying the needs and justifying the moderation decision. Members care for the moderators by acknowledging their care and assisting to flag up and communicate their concerns. Platform or owners of the site care for the staff by backing them up with the responsibility of difficult choices and responding to

logistic requests. Understanding of the layer in Care-in-Moderation is based on Preece (1998, 2000)'s research on insights about empathy in online communities and care ethics research in CSCW and HCI (Toombs et al., 2016; Fisher and Tronto, 1990; Korth, 2003). Sitting in caring practices, individual and communal action by moderators around dissent can reveal fundamental stances within a community towards its future viability, therefore keeping a similar pace with the community needs.

## 7.4 Thesis Limitations and Future Work

There are no studies in this thesis without limitations. We recognise that the selected communities and platforms do not fully represent the online community world. Different from most online communities on Reddit and Discord with volunteered moderation, MetaFilter moderators are paid, and Facebook groups are built within Facebook's real name nature. When applying the implications of this thesis to other online communities, we must be cautious so that the implications can be best tailored by different online communities, considering for example the sizes, membership, purposes and other contexts of the community.

For the MetaFilter study, it cannot be ignored that there is the survivorship bias in our sampling (Brown et al., 1992). Although the MetaFilter study drew upon three complementary data sources, we did not actively seek out the perspective of members who were banned or had left the community. In each phase, most of our participants are members or moderators of MetaFilter at the time of the study. While some opinions given by the members are critical during this study, the survivorship bias could affect our care-as-lens perspective by having only included the current members. More research is needed considering the validity of implications for the care-as-nurture stance in online communities that are more perhaps driven by external social factors, such as in educational, work or health care settings (Huh, Yetisgen-Yildiz and Pratt, 2013).

For the Facebook group studies in Chapter 5 and 6, most of the groups mentioned by our participants have some links to their institutions or workplaces (see Table 5.2 for details). Though a few bigger Facebook groups whose members are less bounded with each other are included in our data (Table 5.2, PLT-Frodo, PLT-JS, P05, P07, P11 for example), more research is needed to validate whether our implications about Facebook badges can be applied to Facebook groups that are bigger, and have members less bounded, also to online communities using pseudonyms such as Reddit groups. We must be cautious about our implications of the Facebook groups studies, as there are biases caused by the real name nature of Facebook and the hybridity of Facebook groups

being included in our samples. Future work is needed to validate the implications with online communities that have less tie strength than Facebook groups.

Despite that all online communities in this thesis do not scale to size for automated moderation to be considered properly, with the flexibility of the care lens, the research space for human-centred moderation opens in multiple dimensions including space, place and time moderation activities and strategies may apply to. At the same time, this further introduces limitations of our work for not having enough data documenting moderation activities outside their online spaces, but only seek for social nuances from the traces with the data within the online community and what moderators and members are telling us. Considering this, it would be interesting to see how may using care as a lens to explore moderation in online communities performed in other platforms such as Reddit, or in other formats such as Discord voice channel moderation (Jiang et al., 2019).

We anticipated that the limitation of the methodological choices we have made during this thesis. While a large portion of this thesis is based on qualitative data, the subjective nature of the analysis is not avoidable. We try to reduce the effects of subjectivity and increase the reliability of results by active member checking in Chapter 3, and by introducing some mixed-method approach in Chapter 6. We also recognise the methodological issue of developing our own Likert-scale in the Facebook group badge study and try not to rely on too much of the scale, but rather seek advanced support with the qualitative data. It would be interesting to see our results being contested by quantitative researchers, maybe in communities which has a bigger scale, or in commercial moderation settings.

A further prominent limitation of these thesis studies is that our initial aim of building a picture of the relationships between how may moderation on dissent challenging the online community norms lead to the evolution of community norms is not fully accomplished by this thesis. We did not stick to the communities for long enough or engage with them deep enough to track the evolution of norms, but rather again relying on the nuances reported by the members and moderators in the studies. It would be worth for future studies to properly document versions of norms of the community and further define whether a change in norms may count as “evolved” or “stagnated”, how may that link to dissents challenging the existing norms and moderation intervention on dissents, and whether that would help the community to maintain a more freely voiced and constructive discussion environment.

## 7.5 Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, we aimed to understand the normative processes in online community moderation and its relationships with the maintenance and development of community norms. We performed studies with two platforms as the case in online communities, using care-as-nurture as a lens to explore the moderation practices on these two platforms. Our investigation results in a *care* framework in online community moderation consists of multiple layers including the individual level as members and moderators, the community level, and the platform level. The care-as-nurture lens also expands in other dimensions, challenging the boundary of online communities, as careful moderation activities may happen outside of the online space of the community. Although caring acts vary in the explicitness and the match between what was being expressed and what was felt (Korth, 2003), we provided a list of observed care-in-moderation actions as the guidelines for online community owners, moderators, and platform designers to consult, having *care* adding as a layer of concern to moderation is distinguished by the moderator's vision of identifying the needs of community and justifications of actions taken. While the list of observed actions is provided, they should not be used with textbook approaches, each case of careful moderation must be treated with regards to community health and vision.

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# Appendices

# Appendix A

## Study Material for MetaFilter study

### A.1 University of Bath Computer Science 13-point ethics checklists

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Department of Computer Science

#### 13-POINT ETHICS CHECK LIST

This document describes the 13 issues that need to be considered carefully before students or staff involve other people (“participants”) for the collection of information as part of their project or research.

1. *Have you prepared a briefing script for volunteers?* You must explain to people what they will be required to do, the kind of data you will be collecting from them and how it will be used.

For the interview with MetaFilter moderators, a briefing script will be prepared and sent to the participants before each study (see Appendix A.2). Participants will be asked to read and agree with it.

For member checking with the MetaTalk thread, we added our backgrounds to the beginning of the MetaTalk thread and indicate that the comment made in the thread will be considered public and be included in our analysis. We also further

anonymise and slightly paraphrase the quotes when using it for publications. The text to remind participation and anonymization is quoted below:

“Feel free to MeFiMail me directly. We’ll monitor this thread as well and will also answer any questions you may have about our research. Comments made here are considered public and will be subject to paraphrasing and anonymisation as quotations in academic publications. Contributions sent via MeFiMail are treated as confidential unless indicated otherwise.”

2. *Will the participants be using any non-standard hardware?* Participants should not be exposed to any risks associated with the use of non-standard equipment: anything other than pen and paper or typical interaction with PCs on desks is considered non-standard.

Both interview participants and participants in the MetaTalk thread will be using their own machine. There is no non-standard hardware needed in this study.

3. *Is there any intentional deception of the participants?* Withholding information or misleading participants is unacceptable if participants are likely to object or show unease when debriefed.

All participants will be briefed before each study. They will be informed that the research focus is on “which behaviour attracts moderator interaction, which strategies they use to engage and how members react to moderation.” We do not anticipate any intentional deception in this study.

4. *How will participants voluntarily give consent?* If the results of the evaluation are likely to be used beyond the term of the project (for example, the software is to be deployed, or the data is to be published), then signed consent is necessary. A separate consent form should be signed by each participant.

The interview participants will be asked to express their consent in the chat upon being interviewed. Participants participated in the MetaTalk thread have been given briefing and are aware about their comments in the thread will be considered public and be included in the analysis.

5. *Will the participants be exposed to any risks greater than those encountered in their normal work life?* Investigators have a responsibility to protect participants from physical and mental harm during the investigation. The risk of harm must be no greater than in ordinary life.

There is no any risks than those encountered in their normal work life in the

studies.

6. *Are you offering any incentive to the participants?* The payment of participants must not be used to induce them to risk harm beyond that which they risk without payment in their normal lifestyle.

There is no payments as incentive in this study. MetaFilter partnered with us in this study and the result of our study will be shared with MetaFilter for their further investigation. Moderators participation are based on their voluntary.

7. *Are any of your participants under the age of 16?* Parental consent is required for participants under the age of 16.

All of our participants will be above the age of 16.

8. *Do any of your participants have an impairment that will limit their understanding or communication?* Additional consent is required for participants with impairments.

All of our participants should not have any impairments that will limit their understanding or communication and will be asked to disclose whether they have difficulties in reading text.

9. *Are you in a position of authority or influence over any of your participants?* A position of authority or influence over any participant must not be allowed to pressurise participants to take part in, or remain in, any experiment.

No. Participants will be recruited through peer networks and open advertising. They will not be placed under an obligation to participate.

10. *Will the participants be informed that they could withdraw at any time?* All participants have the right to withdraw at any time during the investigation. They should be told this in the introductory script.

It will be written on the briefing script that the participants could withdraw at any time. They can access the saved interview data at any point within two months after the interview and are given the opportunity to correct any factual errors. They are also given the chance to refuse to answer any questions asked in the interview. The investigators will also tell the participants before the study to make sure they understand they can withdraw at any time.

11. *Will the participants be informed of your contact details?* They should be given the details of the researchers as part of the debriefing.



Yes, the lead researchers' contact email are left with the participants in the briefing, debrief, and at the end of the MetaTalk post.

12. *Will participants be de-briefed?* The student must provide the participants with sufficient information in the debriefing to enable them to understand the nature of the investigation.

The interview participants will be debriefed at the end of the interview. The lead researchers will add a debrief post at the before the MetaTalk thread being closed.

13. *Will the data collected from the participants be stored in an anonymous form?* All participant data (hard copy and soft copy) should be stored securely, and in anonymous form.

Interview participants will be given the chance to choose a pseudonym for them at the end of the interview. All interviewed transcripts will be identified with the pseudonym they have chosen, and all data (hard copy and soft copy) will be stored securely. There will no be links between the participant's name and their pseudonym. The MetaTalk thread reply is considered as public, participants are participating in the thread with their MetaFilter handles.

## A.2 Consent Form for MetaFilter Interviews

The interview will take about two hours, if held in chat or voice call. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the Metafilter Moderation Research Project. Our ethical conduct requires that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore acknowledge this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be saved
- you can access the saved interview data at any point within two months after the interview and are given the opportunity to correct any factual errors
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by Bingjie Yu and Katta Spiel as research investigators

- access to the interview transcript will be limited to those two people and academic colleagues and researchers with whom they might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed. You may choose a pseudonym for that case.
- the data stemming from the interview will be kept until the end of the research project (foreseeable up to two years) or deleted upon request of the interviewee at any point in the future
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

By explicitly acknowledging this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time or refuse to answer certain questions;
2. The interview data or extracts from it may be used as described above;
3. I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
4. I can request a copy of the my interview data and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
5. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Contact Information

Bingjie Yu

E-mail: [b.yu@bath.ac.uk](mailto:b.yu@bath.ac.uk)

Katta Spiel

Email: [katta@igw.tuwien.ac.at](mailto:katta@igw.tuwien.ac.at)

## **A.3 Structure for Semi-Structured Interviews**

### **A.3.1 Demographic Data**

Age, Gender, Education

### **A.3.2 Connection to the Site**

- Since when are you affiliated with the site?
- When did you start as a moderator?
- Do you still engage with the site outside of your moderating role? How do you distinguish between the two?

### **A.3.3 Site Development**

- What do you think makes people engage with MetaFilter instead of alternatives?
- How did the site develop in recent years/since you've become active on it?
- Where do you see it develop in the future?
- Does this differ from how you would like it to develop further and if yes, how?

### **A.3.4 Collaborative Environment**

- What are the site's guidelines? Which additional ones do you have within the moderating staff?
- How do you relate to the other staff members?
- Which tools are at your disposal? Do you use all of them? How?

### **A.3.5 Personal Strategies**

- Which kind of strategies do you use?
- What is your process? How do you get aware of a problematic interaction and what are the follow-up steps? Which behaviours are deemed as problematic?
- How do your strategies differ from other staff members?

### A.3.6 Experiences as a moderator

- Do you have any experience outside of Metafilter? How does it compare?
- Do you like being a moderator on Metafilter? How would your engagement with the site look like if you weren't a moderator?
- What kinds of memorable moderating experiences did you have so far?

### A.3.7 Our findings

- In our analysis we found three main areas in which moderators commented with their 'moderator voice': establishing punitive actions (e.g., comments deleted, stop doing this, do it elsewhere), making background actions transparent (e.g., changed the link, fixed a typo, deleted on request) and taking care of members (e.g., by providing links to crisis hotlines, pointing out perspectives in which comments could be hurtful). How does this relate to your own experience?
- Another finding stems from the types of conflicts we saw (that lead to deleted comments). There was egregiously offensive behaviour intended to troll, but also conflicts arising from insensitivities. What did we miss?
- We also noticed that while moderators would engage conversationally in the same way as other members, occasionally, their comments could be seen as a 'softer' guide towards the conversation. Does this happen consciously and if yes, is this an individual or collective decision (among currently online staff)?
- Finally, our leading theory of the success of moderating strategies (even those which traditional research would see as counterproductive, e.g., calling out) relies heavily on the care activities for members and the active conversational participation of moderators. Is this part of a collective understanding of moderating strategies?

# Appendix B

## Study Material for Chapter 5 and 6

### B.1 Interview Protocol for Section 5.3.1

1. **Demographic Data** Age, gender, education

2. **Moderation Experiences**

Can you tell me about a memorable moderation experience you have had with your community?

(a) Connection to Facebook

How long have you been on Facebook?

How long have you been involved with Facebook groups?

What kind of Facebook groups you are mainly in? (Focus on one of them later)

When did you start serving as a moderator with a Facebook group?

Do you still engage with the group outside of your moderating role?  
How do you distinguish between the two?

(b) Facebook Group Development

What do you think makes people engage with this group instead of alternatives?

- How has the group developed since you have become active on it?
- How do you see it developing in the future?
- Does this differ from how you would like it to develop further and if yes, how?

(c) Moderation Environment

- What are the group guidelines for members of the group you moderate? Which additional ones do you have within the moderators?
- How do you relate to the other 'staff' members?
- What tools does Facebook give you that you find helpful for running the group?
- Have you noticed that Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups? Has your group enabled the badge functionality?
- What badges you have seen so far? What do you think they represent? How do they compare with other algorithmically generated descriptors for community members (e.g. )?
- How do you think Facebook decides who to give the badges to?
- Do the badges gain your extra attention for your work as a moderator? What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with the badge?
- How can these badges be informative for you as a moderator (admin, moderator, founding member, new member, conversation starter, rising star, visual storyteller)?

(d) Personal Strategies

- What kinds of strategy do you use in Facebook Group moderation?
- What is your process? How do you become aware of a problematic interaction and what are the follow-up steps? Which behaviours are deemed as problematic?
- How do your strategies differ from other moderators?

(e) Experiences as a Moderator

- Do you have any experience outside of Facebook Group moderation?  
How does it compare?
- Do you like being a moderator in Facebook Groups? What do you think your engagement with the group would look like if you weren't a moderator?

## B.2 Survey for Chapter 6 about Facebook Badges

### Facebook Group Questionnaire

My name is Bingjie Yu. I am a researcher in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Bath. I am conducting this study as part of my PhD project. This questionnaire asks you about your experiences using Facebook groups, whether as a member or a moderator/admin. It is motivated by an interest in fostering better engagement between people in online communities. In return to your kindness, for each answer we collect in this questionnaire, we will donate £1 to charities you choose at the end of it.

### Time Commitment

We estimate that it will take you between 4 and 8 minutes to do this questionnaire according to our pilot study, though this will vary depending on your level of interest.

### Description of Study

This study has the following objectives:

- Understand how members interact in Facebook groups
- Understand how admins/moderators take care of their Facebook groups
- Identify challenges in fostering better experiences in Facebook groups
- Help to improve tools that could address these challenges

This study has been subject to the Department of Computer Science, University of Bath ethical review process and has been approved by the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number: 19-277). If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, via email: [psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk](mailto:psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk).

### **Participants' Rights**

- You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher (Bingjie Yu, b.yu@bath.ac.uk) before answering this questionnaire.
- All questions are optional. You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.
- You have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without giving a reason, even after an answer has been submitted.
- You have the right to contact the researcher and access your saved questionnaire data at any point within two months after submitting the answers, and you will be given the opportunity to correct any factual errors.

### **Benefites and Risks**

We do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation. Your participation in this study is voluntary.

### **Confidentiality/Anonymity**

This is an anonymous questionnaire. No data about your personal identities would be asked in this questionnaire. The data gathered from this study will be stored securely by Bingjie Yu as the main research investigator of this project. Any potentially identifying details, including your name, will be removed. Your data will be identified only by a participant number or a pseudonym not associated with your identity. Other members of this project are only able to access the anonymous data.

### **Data Retention and Publication**

The data collected will be securely archived and retained after this study finishes for further research. Other researchers might be granted access to this preserved data for further research, providing that they agree to preserve confidentiality. Subject to your consent, data extracted from the study may be used during presentation at conferences or published within academic papers.

Once the project is completed, the anonymous information you have given to me will be kept safely by the University of Bath. If you give your consent, it may be used by other genuine researchers, with the University of Bath's approval, under the strict



rules governing the confidentiality of your information. So again, your name, or any material that might identify you, will never be used or given to anyone.

### **What do I do if I would like to take part or have any more questions?**

You can contact me, Bingjie Yu, to arrange a suitable time or to discuss any questions you might have. Email: [b.yu@bath.ac.uk](mailto:b.yu@bath.ac.uk). You can also speak to the supervisor of the project, Dr Leon Watts. Email: [l.watts@bath.ac.uk](mailto:l.watts@bath.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Chair of the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, email: [psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk](mailto:psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk). Our address is:

Department of Psychology  
University of Bath  
Claverton Down  
Bath, BA2 7AY

Many thanks for taking the time to read this. I would be delighted if you would be willing to take part.

### **Consent to Study**

**In order to consent to participate, you MUST meet the following criteria.**

Do you confirm that you:\*

- More than 18 years old
- Has joined one or more Facebook groups
- Has not participated in this study before

Do you confirm that you have\*

	Yes	No
been given information explaining about the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
received satisfactory answers to all questions you asked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
received enough information about the study for you to make a decision about your participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study and free to withdraw your data prior to anonymisation \*

	Yes	No
at any time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
without having to give a reason for withdrawing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

By ticking the checkbox below, you agree with that:

- I understand the nature and purpose of the procedures involved in this study. These have been communicated to me on the information sheet accompanying this form.
- I understand and acknowledge that the investigation is designed to promote scientific knowledge and that the University of Bath will use the data I provide for no purpose other than research.
- I understand that the data I provide will be kept confidential, and that on completion of the study my data will be anonymised by removing all links between my name or other identifying information and my study data. This will be done by within two months after participation, and before any presentation or publication of my data.
- I understand that the University of Bath may use the data collected for this project in a future research project but that the conditions on this form under which I have provided the data will still apply.

\*I hearby fully and freely consent to my participation in this study.

Date: Day / Month / Year

### Demographic Data

**What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.**

1. Prefer not to disclose
2. No schooling completed
3. Nursery school to 8th grade
4. Some high school, no diploma
5. High school graduate, diploma or
6. the equivalent

7. Some college credit, no degree
8. Associate degree
9. Bachelor's degree
10. Master's degree
11. Professional degree

**What is your gender?**

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to disclose
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**About Facebook Groups**

**What kind of Facebook groups do you belong to?**

Long-answer text

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**Which categories below describe best the groups you are a member of (tick all that apply)?**

- Hobbies & interests
- Entertainment
- Science and tech
- Business
- Animals
- Buy & sell
- Civics & community
- Education

- Relationships & identity
- Humour
- Faith & spirituality
- Vehicles and commutes
- Other...\_\_\_\_\_

**How many Facebook groups are you in?**

- 0
- 1 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 10 - 15
- 16 - 20
- More than 20

**How many Facebook groups are you currently moderating or administrat-  
ing?**

- 0
- 1 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 10 - 15
- 16 - 20
- More than 20

**If you are monitoring/administrating any groups, about how many members  
does the largest community have?**

Short-answer text \_\_\_\_\_








**How often do you check Facebook groups?**

- A few times every day
- A few times every week
- I check whenever there is a notification for me






**Have you noticed any Facebook badges in your groups?**



- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- What is Facebook badge?

**Which badge have you seen in Facebook groups?**

-  Admin
-  Moderator
-  New Member
-  Conversation Starter
-  Founding Member
-  Visual Storyteller
-  Rising Star
- I haven't seen any of them

**Which badge do you own in Facebook groups?**

-  Admin
-  Moderator
-  New Member
-  Conversation Starter
-  Founding Member

-  Visual Storyteller
-  Rising Star
- I don't have any of them

### Facebook Group Badges

**From 0 to 5, how much do you think you understand what these badges represent?**

- 0: Never seen this badge
- 1: Have seen this badge but don't know what it means
- 2: Have seen this badge but not sure what it means
- 3: I think I understand this badge, just from its name
- 4: I have read and am confident I understand the descriptions of this badge
- 5: I know exactly what this badge means and what to do in order to gain this badge

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Admin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moderator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conversation Starter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Founding Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual Storyteller	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rising Star	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**From 1 to 5, how informative do you think these badges are?**

- 1: Not informative at all
- 2: Somewhat informative
- 3: Moderately informative
- 4: Very informative
- 5: Extremely informative

**From 1 to 5, how different do you think a post (comment) reads if it is posted by someone with a badge?**

- 1: No difference at all
- 2: Somewhat different
- 3: Moderately different

	1	2	3	4	5
Admin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moderator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conversation Starter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Founding Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual Storyteller	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rising Star	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4: Very different

5: Extremely different

	1	2	3	4	5
Admin	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moderator	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conversation Starter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Founding Member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual Storyteller	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rising Star	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Do you know any other existing online community has a badge system you would recommend?**

Long-answer text

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**Thank you so much for your participation!**

Thank you for taking your time to complete this questionnaire!

We are also looking for participants who is willing to be interviewed regarding this survey. The interview will take about 30 minutes to one hour with \*ONLINE\* chats/video calls/voice calls (depends on what you prefer). Each participants of the interview will get a £10 Amazon voucher (or eGift cards in their own country with equivalent amount if in other currencies).

**If you are willing to chat with us more about Facebook groups and participate in our follow-up interview, please leave us your email address.**

Short-answer text

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**Final consent: Having participated in this study**

\*I agree to the University of Bath keeping and processing the data I have provided during the course of this study. I understand that these data will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in the information sheet, and my consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Regulation.

## **B.3 Materials for Chapter 5 and 6: Post Survey Interview**

### **B.3.1 Information Sheet for Individual Interviews**

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Bingjie Yu and I am a researcher in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Bath. I am conducting this study as part of my PhD project and is motivated by an interest in fostering better engagement between people in online communities.

#### **What is this study about?**

Thank you for taking part in the discussion group and for agreeing to take part in this next phase of the study. I am looking for individuals to take part in an interview with online access. In this interview I would like to talk to you about some examples of alcohol marketing on social media as well as your own social media use. I am interested in how young adults use Facebook, especially when it comes to planning nights out and interacting with alcohol brands and bars and clubs online.

#### **What would I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed about your experiences with online community moderation for between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview could take place with an online conference service Zoom (text/audio/video chat) remotely, or in person with the interviewer at University of Bath, according to your preferences. With your permission, I would also like you to log on to your Facebook profile aside, and we can talk about how you use Facebook groups with examples from groups that you are in that you are happy to discuss. Questions mainly about your moderation experiences, the group development, tools and strategies being used in moderation will be asked during the interview session. The discussion will be voice recorded so that I can catch everything and transcribe it for analysis later. No recording of your screen will be made



in the interview.

After completing the interview you will be given a £10 gift voucher to thank you for taking part.

### **Do I have to take part?**

Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary, and you are free to make your own choice about whether you want to participate. If you agree to take part you can choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to, and you are free to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without giving a reason.

You have the right to access your saved interview data at any point within two months after the interview and you will be given the opportunity to correct any factual errors. After two months of your participation the interview transcription will be completely anonymised so we will not be able to correct it as we won't be able to identify your interview data.

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered. If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

### **What will happen to the interview recording?**

Interview participants will be audio-recorded (if you decide to participate by audio or video call) and kept on a secure file. And audio will be transcribed into text within two weeks of the each interview. The original recording will be destroyed after being transcribed. If you decide to participate by text chat, the chat log will be kept on a secure file. Then any personal information in the interview will be anonymised so that no person can be recognised from it (e.g. names, online community handles, locations, institutions). You will receive a copy of the masked transcription from me in two weeks after the interview, to give you the opportunity to correct any factual errors. After two months of the masked transcription being sent to you, the data will be completely anonymised. I will destroy the email thread discussing about your transcription so that no traces can be tracked in your participation.

### **What will happen to the information I provide?**

Should you decide to take part, the interview will be recorded. These recordings will then be typed up and the files stored on an encrypted password-protected computer by Bingjie Yu as the main research investigator of this project. Any potentially identifying

details, including your name, will be removed. Your data will be identified only by a participant number or a pseudonym not associated with your identity. The interview information will not be linked to any contact details that you provide and will be stored separately so you cannot be identified. Other members of this project are only able to access the anonymous transcription of the interview.

Once the project is completed, the information you have given to me will be kept safely by the University of Bath. If you give your consent, it may be used by other genuine researchers, with the University of Bath's approval, under the strict rules governing the confidentiality of your information. So again, your name, or any material that might identify you, will never be used or given to anyone.

**What will happen to the results of this research?**

What you tell me will inform our project on how to foster better engagement in online communities like Facebook groups. I may use extracts taken from what you have told me, however these would not identify you to anyone. The findings of the research may also be published in research journals or used in presentations. If you would like to be sent a summary of the findings, we can arrange for this.

**What do I do if I would like to take part or have any more questions?**

You can contact me, Bingjie Yu, to arrange a suitable time or to discuss any questions you might have. Email – [b.yu@bath.ac.uk](mailto:b.yu@bath.ac.uk)

You can also speak to the supervisor of the project, Dr Leon Watts, Email – [l.watts@bath.ac.uk](mailto:l.watts@bath.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Chair of the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, Email: [psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk](mailto:psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk). Our address is:

Department of Psychology

University of Bath

Claverton Down

Bath, BA2 7AY

Many thanks for taking the time to read this. I would be delighted if you would be willing to take part.

### B.3.2 Interview Protocol

#### 1. Connection to Facebook

- How long have you been on Facebook?
- What kind of Facebook groups are you in on Facebook? And how long have you been with them?
- As you know, this is a study about what it's like to admin or moderate a Facebook group. So how many groups do you currently admin for?
- Which group are you most closely working with? (Focus on the group later?)
- How's the group like? How many members/posts per day? Roughly how often do you check the group?

#### 2. General Moderation Experiences

- Can you tell me about a memorable moderation experience you have had with your community?
- Do you still engage with the group outside of your moderating role? How do you distinguish between the two?
  - + Do you think the moderators of your group still engage with the group outside of their moderating role? How do you distinguish between the two?

#### 3. Facebook Group Development

- What do you think makes people engage with this group instead of alternatives?
- How has the group developed since you have become active on it?
- How do you see it developing in the future?
  - + How would you like it to develop in the future

#### 4. Moderation Environments

- How would you describe your general approach to moderating the group? (N/A for non-moderators)

- Do you have any formal guidelines or rules for moderating your group? (Any additional ones do you have within the moderators? )
- Do you moderate the group collaboratively with other staff members? How do you relate to the other 'staff' members?
  - + Do you think moderators of your group work collaboratively with other staff members? How?
- Do you use any tools to help you moderate? What tools does Facebook give you that you find helpful for running the group? (N/A for non-moderators)

#### 5. Facebook Group Badges

- Have you noticed that Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups? Has your group enabled the badge functionality?
- What badges you have seen so far? What do you think they represent or how do you think Facebook decides who to give the badges to?
- Going through the rating of badges in the survey and ask for extra explanation.**
- Do the badges gain your extra attention? What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with the badge?
- How can these badges be informative for you?

#### 6. Moderation Strategies

- What kinds of strategy do you use in Facebook Group moderation? (N/A for non-moderators)
- What is your process? How do you become aware of a problematic interaction and what are the follow-up steps? Which behaviours are deemed as problematic?
  - + Which behaviours are deemed as problematic in the group? How do you become aware of a problematic interaction and what are the follow-up steps?
- How do your strategies differ from other moderators? (N/A for non-moderators)

#### 7. Experiences as a Moderator

- Do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook Group moderation? Would you like to talk a bit about it?

### B.3.3 Debriefing Form

#### Debriefing Information

Thank you for taking part in this project which has been investigating the investigation of design parameters for constructive online discussion environments. Your contribution is very much appreciated.

Thank you again for participating. If you would like to speak to me about the project please get in touch. Bingjie Yu – [b.yu@bath.ac.uk](mailto:b.yu@bath.ac.uk)

You can also speak to the supervisor of the project, Dr Leon Watts – [l.watts@bath.ac.uk](mailto:l.watts@bath.ac.uk)

Our address is:

Department of Computer Science,

University of Bath,

Claverton Down,

Bath, BA2 7AY,

UK

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I confirm I have received a voucher to the value of £10 for participating in the University of Bath project ‘An investigation of design parameters for constructive online discussion environments.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

This study has been subject to the Department of Computer Science, University of Bath ethical review process and has been approved by the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number: 19-277). If you have any concerns related to your participation in this study please direct them to the Chair of the Department of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, email: [psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk](mailto:psychology-ethics@bath.ac.uk).

## B.4 Interview Transcriptions

### B.4.1 Pilot Interview: Facebook Group Study

**PLT-007**

B: So first thing is like could you tell me about some memorable moderation experience you have with your group? Like you can think about examples you've been involved.

PLT-007: Yeah, emm... So from time to time, emm... it happens that some members publishes something unrelated to the group (OK). To advertise something that they want. So... in that case that post, I make sure that that post doesn't appear in the group because I would consider that spam. Unless it's really good somehow. And it happened a couple of times since I am managing this group.

B: OK. So how long have you been on Facebook can you remember?

PLT-007: Erm, in this group for three years.

B: In this group for three years?

PLT-007: The group I am managing.

B: OK cool. So what kind of group do you identify is? What the group is about.

PLT-007: Erm... (long pause) so that I can explain this... Just a community members. It is a group wherever you post... because I am not the only admin (Eh) We post about the events that our society runs, mainly.

B: So erm you have been three years with them. How many moderators in there?

PLT-007: 5.

B: 5? How many members?

PLT-007: 239 last time I checked. Just a community of young students. So it's... can I mention this the group type of the society (yeah yeah you can mention it)? It is the catholic society of University of Bath. So let's say it's not really... kind of a club people just meet for events.

B: So you've been with them 3 years. How long have you been moderating with that group?

PLT-007: Yeah, for 3 years since I am in.

B: So, you join the group and then you become a moderator as soon as you join it?

PLT-007: I think shortly after (Shortly after?). So I've been in this society since I am here in Bath so... and I've been in the committee from the second year and when you are in the committee they also... the new admins change in the group. So I think, starting from my second year... That mean shortly after.

B: OK how do they recruit their moderators?

PLT-007: People are in the committee of the society will become moderators automatically.

B: OK cool. Erm... so (long pause)... Do you still engage with the group outside your moderating role or like... are you just moderating in it?

PLT-007: Yeah yeah. I regularly with some of them. Well obviously not all the people are in the group. There are some people I don't really know.

B: OK cool. So you've mentioned about something that not related to the group that would appear, sometimes someone post that thing. Erm... What kind of those thing is like? Could you give an example?

PLT-007: Emm, I don't remember this specific instances. But (OK it's fine) anything that isn't related let's say so if they try to advertise something personal or some personal project, (OK cool) yeah they advertise a link to some website that isn't related to what we do.

B: (OK cool) Erm is this a private group or a public group on Facebook?

PLT-007: Er it's complicated because from this year, some point this year it's private. We changed it. But in the past it has been public for a quite time, for a short period.

B: OK cool. Do you know why they changed it to private?

PLT-007: Yes. One reason is that erm when you create an event, some people get invites automatically other people don't. And one of my friends suggested that it was because the group was public (Ah OK). So we changed it into private and the reason was that it should have notify when we create an event. So that base on the privacy settings that people have if the group is closed, it should... We think that, I think that should have it for this reason.

B: Cool so... Right. Have you been recently seen that so Facebook introduce this group badges thing for members?

PLT-007: Group badges? (Yeah) I am not sure about what that is.

B: I'll show you about this. (Showing on laptop) So basically this is the new feature that Facebook has with their groups. They have the things like admins and moderator, new member, group anniversary, like all the badges. Have you seen any of this ?

PLT-007: Erm the admin one. I think I am familiar with the first one.

B: So you've only seen the admin one (Yeah). Have you seen something like conversation starter? (Erm no) Or OK, visual story teller (No no)? So you've seen the admin one. Could you please check that if the group enabled this functionality please? It should be in the group setting of the admin page.

PLT-007: I am talking about this (pointing on the badge on the phone) icon, this badge. I did some research about this and it appears automatically if you have enough members in your group. Before this year, we admins, we didn't have that badge. So, but at some point we got it automatically because we got enough members. I think it's the number of 200.

B: Well the number they said is 50.

PLT-007: No I mean in order to have that badge, your group needs to have more than 200.

B: More than 200? They said 50 in their blog.

PLT-007: Well they might have changed it. Because we didn't have it, the other two months ago.

B: So what do you think about this, what do you think about this badge thing?

PLT-007: Er it's useful. Because it helps to distinguish... Yeah I mean the admin one is definitely useful because thus people in the group to see if a post is official or not. That's one useful feature, but I don't know about the other badges.

B: OK so do you think this badge has gain extra attention for your work as a moderator?

PLT-007: It might I think. I think that people consider that post official from the group.

B: So like they can see if the event is organised by the official society members?

PLT-007: Yes yes.

B: OK cool that's interesting. What kind of strategy do you use in your Facebook moderation. Like how often do you check the post? Do you check every single post?



Do you read comments? What strategy you have?

PLT-007: Yeah right not I am able to check everything because the group is not particularly active in terms of posts that come from normal members. Because we normally posts about our events and people just see them and rarely they reply with a comments. I am able to check them all.

B: Do you have any collaborations between moderators? Like you said there are 5 of them. So if you see something problematic, is there any collaboration?

PLT-007: Yes I am the most static one because my role in the committee is media officer. But other people in the committee and the admins they sometimes post as well and they are able to moderate.

B: So do you tell each others when you moderate something. So you said like I delete this post at... Or do you just delete it without telling them?

PLT-007: When it's obvious I just delete it. But if I am undecided I contact the other admins.

B: Cool that's new thing to know. Erm last question, do you have any experience outside Facebook group moderation? Have you been involved in moderating something outside Facebook groups?

PLT-007: No I don't think so.

B: I think that's pretty much it. Thank you very much.

### **PLT-Biscuit**

B: How long have you been on Facebook?

PLT-Biscuit: Don't know? Something like...

B: It doesn't have to be exact time.

PLT-Biscuit: Something like 9 years or so.

B: OK. So when you were studying your undergrad?

PLT-Biscuit: No. It was in high school.

B: OK. So what kind of facebook groups are you mainly in?

PLT-Biscuit: Politics? Emm... like interest groups like maybe... chess... or maybe people who I was a colleague with, or so.

B: OK so how long have you been with the group that you were moderating?

PLT-Biscuit: Emm I was there at the beginning so, for three weeks? Something like three weeks to a month.

B: OK so it started by the first week you ...? (Yes) OK, so as you know this is a study about what is it like to admin or moderate in a Facebook group. How many groups are you currently admin for? Like including that one or?

PLT-Biscuit: Just that one.

B: Just that one? It is the first time (you're moderating a Facebook group?)

PLT-Biscuit: I mean. No no, I am actually administrating some other groups. But they're quite small but at most 15 people or so. So I don't know the exact number but I think I might admin them for my high school colleagues group but that's like 20 members or something.

B: OK. So that's like in the later questions let's focus on that big group. So, like how's the group like?

PLT-Biscuit: It is very active.

B: How many members or posts per day?

PLT-Biscuit: 150 or so members. And yeah maybe with a post every few hours.

B: A post every few hours!

PLT-Biscuit: Yeah maybe that's like 5-10 per day or something.

B: So are you a moderator or an admin of the group?

PLT-Biscuit: I was an admin.

B: OK roughly how often do you check the group?

PLT-Biscuit: Mah... About twice a day or something? It depends on when I... because you get notifications so. I usually just reply to notifications or if you know I am actually involved in conversation of the group. I just check other things like that before.

B: So would you like to talk about a memorable experience you had with that group?

PLT-Biscuit: Err. I don't have memorable ones. What do you mean by memorable?

B: So like when I talk about moderation in that group, is there like an example or is there something like you would really like to talk about the experience?

PLT-Biscuit: No. I don't know. I don't think there is anything like specifically that.

B: OK so, do you still engage with the group outside your moderating role?

PLT-Biscuit: Yes.

B: How do you distinguish between the two? Or do you not distinguish them?

PLT-Biscuit: Emm I don't distinguish them.

B: So you just participate as a normal member? (Hmm-hm) and with the privilege of being an admin?

PLT-Biscuit: ..... Yeah you can think of it like this

B: OK so it's fine. So how has this group developed?

PLT-Biscuit: Just from a conversation we had. We had this specific purpose to make some changes to our RP statued. That was all of the conversation it was all about. Some specific changes, so on that group there're only the people amongst us. We actually wanted those changes and bidding it. So weren't allow on the group or other people who were against those things and so on.

B: OK currently you quitted the group right? (Yes) Does the group still exist? (Yes) So how do you see it develop in the future?

PLT-Biscuit: Emm things are gonna be fine but I'm not involved in even normal discussion as well because I didn't feel... I feel I don't have time for it. So I asked other people to take my role.

B: So how did you become an admin on it?

PLT-Biscuit: Because we were like a core group for 15 people or so, who started the whole thing. And then we added other people. So yeah.

B: So there were like all 15 people were they all admins of there group?

PLT-Biscuit: Yes. I am not saying exactly 15 I am just estimating.

B: So what do you think makes people engaged with the group instead of alternatives?

PLT-Biscuit: I don't think there are any alternatives for that very specific reason of this group is for.

B: OK about the moderation, how would you describe your general approach to moderate the group?

PLT-Biscuit: Well I would look for... The most I had were rudeness or insults which we delete it. But other than that, we also kicked ... So it was only for people who, so we had some proposals and it's only for people who support those proposals. And ways to make them turning to be achieved. So if people were clearly, either from the group outside the group you know, if they didn't support those things, then we'll kick them out of the group. And even you know, without actually replying, maybe not accepting them at all, or without actually replying to their post or something. Even if they weren't for the specific things.

B: OK you said it is for like a political party right? So you just don't allow to people to come in if they don't support this party?

PLT-Biscuit: No it's more specific than that like if they don't support some specific changes inside a party. (Then you kicked them out?) Yeah, they all have to be party members. But, yeah.

B: OK that's interesting to know. So do you have any formal guidelines or rules for moderating your group?(Yes) Like just now you said, like, are they formal guidelines?

PLT-Biscuit: Yes, I don't remember what they are exactly but they're very broad like: don't be rude, don't debate, don't sth like that.

B: OK so any additional ones do you have within the moderators?

PLT-Biscuit: Not specific ones like that.

B: So do you moderate the group collaboratively with other staff members?

PLT-Biscuit: Sometimes we discussed it afterwards some decision that was made not by me. But some other people made decisions and some other admins weren't happy with it. This was discussed but this was never my case.

B: OK how do you relate to the other staff members. I mean, how do you talk to each other?

PLT-Biscuit: On messenger yeah.

B: So you have like a group for specifically admins of that group?

PLT-Biscuit: Yeah so basically, not specifically for admining but we're like the people who started the group. And it's the same ones.

B: Do you use any tools to help you moderate?

PLT-Biscuit: No.

B: OK have you noticed that Facebook has introduced the badges to the Facebook groups? (Yes) Has your group enabled the functionality? (Yes)

PLT-Biscuit: So badges are those rising star and... Yeah.

B: What badges have you seen so far?

PLT-Biscuit: Yeah rising star, visual story teller, conversation starter, I think I have seen them.

B: So for those badges, what do you think they represent?

PLT-Biscuit: I mean I looked the conversation starter up is someone posts. And they gets rising stars if the ratio between the number of post and the time they've been is some interval that affects... Visual story teller is for posting pictures that things.

B: OK so how do you think for example conversation starter, Facebook decide who to give these badges too?

PLT-Biscuit: I really think this is just for like a treasure. Like, I mean obviously it's some more complicated that I think with them. But simplify it, it'll be like number of posts per time or something.

B: OK do the badges gain you extra attention when you are moderating the group?

PLT-Biscuit: No. I don't think so.

B: What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with a badge?

PLT-Biscuit: I don't think I take that thing any different. Because given that it was a very short group I think everyone was a rising star at some point. I'm not sure about that.

B: How can these badges be informative for you as a moderator? Or do you think if they're informative for you now? (No) Do you think there's a way for them to be informative?

PLT-Biscuit: No I mean I think there might be but I think there're not many so...

B: OK so how do you become aware of a problematic interaction?

PLT-Biscuit: Er by notification and relative activities in the group.

B: And they use like rude words or inappropriate post?

PLT-Biscuit: Yeah but it's mostly not posts. It's more comments.

B: So do you get notifications for all the comments?

PLT-Biscuit: Yes for the posts I was engaged in discussions so I guess because we were so many people involved. There's always someone who need some specific attention.

B: How do your strategies differ from other moderators?

PLT-Biscuit: I think we probably share the same strategies.

B: Do you have any moderation experience outside Facebook group moderation?

PLT-Biscuit: No.

B: Do you like being a moderator in Facebook groups?

PLT-Biscuit: Yes? I quit the group not because I didn't have time to moderate, I quit the group because I don't have time for the discussions. So if I had time to be just directly the members or those thing. Yeah but I'm...

B: Interesting. I think that's the end of the interview. Thank you very much.

### **PLT-Fred**

Transcript

B: So the first question is, how long have you been on Facebook?

PLT-Fred: Long? On Facebook in general?

B: Yeah. Not in the groups but when did you start using Facebook?

PLT-Fred: (Check on phone) About 10 years ago maybe? But that might be an over-estimate again I can probably find out. If that's more helpful I guess.

B: You can just make a guess it's fun.

PLT-Fred: I think about 10 years.

B: About 10 years ok. What kind of Facebook groups are you in mainly.

PLT-Fred: Mainly, university society groups. So groups I am actually have an involvement with the other members in real lives as well.

B: So as you know this is a study about what's like as an admin or moderator about Facebook group. How many groups are you currently admin or moderating?

PLT-Fred: Emm, so two groups. But one of them is smaller than I think the criteria that you noted.

B: So focus that one has more members. So could you describe how this group is like, like how many members are they?

PLT-Fred: There are about 75 members in the group.

B: How is the post thing like. Like how many posts per week/month?

PLT-Fred: So it's not often, once a week. They might tend to come in burst because it is an academic group. So it's more to share events. So as an admin, I ask as... I post things to the shared groups to get people give me information that is used to plan the other things. But as a member of the group, I sometimes post things to ask questions, for my own benefits or to help me. So probably once a month? Sometimes once and sometimes twice.

B: OK. So roughly how often do you check the group?

PLT-Fred: Emm... Probably once or twice a month depends on if I am posting for myself or as a moderator.

B: So you check the group when you are trying to post your

PLT-Fred: Only when I need to yeah.

B: Do you check the group when there're other posts came up? Have you got notifications if there're other posts in it?

PLT-Fred: Yeah I think people posts other things. I am just having a look for someone posted anything, was in March actually...

B: OK that's fine. So are you an admin or a moderator of the group?

PLT-Fred: Oh I didn't know the difference.

B: You go to members and it should show if you're an admin.

PLT-Fred: I am an admin.

PLT-Fred: There're 5 admins, and no moderators.

B: How many admins can you see?

B: Do you have any memorable moderation experience in the group?

PLT-Fred: Oh I see... Emm... No.... But I suppose as an admin I moderate the comments because there aren't any moderators so

B: You moderate the comments like?

PLT-Fred: Well, in that we look at them and see.

B: Do you actually remove comments or edit comments?

PLT-Fred: We never need to do it.

B: But you do look at them.

PLT-Fred: Yeah when someone post something inappropriate we will remove it but, because it's not a group, it's... everybody knows each other or will outside the group so it's not that this opportunities for strangers to join the group and post things there.

B: So as you said just now you post for your own benefit as well. Do you think you still engage with the group outside of your moderating role?

PLT-Fred: Yeah, probably... You mean the people in the group outside?

B: Outside of your moderating role.

PLT-Fred: Yeah, I would.

B: How do you distinguish between these two?

PLT-Fred: Usually I would say something like, I am not posting as your rep at the moment, cause the admin, are the representative of my course. So I said I am not posting as your rep. I've got a question.

B: So you will say like specific things when you're posting as a member you mean?

PLT-Fred: Yeah. Or I might just ask a question and is kind of clear that I am asking for myself and not for everybody else.

B: Yes that's nice to know. So when did you join the group?

PLT-Fred: We've been in there about a year and a half ago.



B: OK did you become a moderator right after it?

PLT-Fred: No I became a moderator within the last 6 months.

B: OK how has the group developed since you have become active in it?

PLT-Fred: Probably stay as very static. In that, no one's been added or been removed because it's been no new students or students leaving.

B: As a moderator how do you think it develop in the future?

PLT-Fred: I imagine the next time more people join the course, they'll be added if they want to use it. I've also thought that we eventually might need to remove people if the purpose of the group is only for current students. That's something that needs to be discussed moving on. And there might have to be an alumni group for example to set up. And I might become a moderator for that group.

B: Haha it's nice to know that. How would you describe your general approach to moderate the group?

PLT-Fred: I would, if anyone else post any comments check them to make sure they are appropriate for the group. And that's it when I was an admin, and I probably just read it. Hmm... Commentswise, there's not a lot of activity actually in term of conference stuff.

B: Do you have any formal guidelines or rules for the group.

PLT-Fred: I don't think so... I'll have a look at the about section. Hmm, it's just loading, hopefully... There's nothing in the about section. So, no we don't have any formal rules at there, you must be a student of the group, or the course to be in the group.

B: So, hmm, any additional rules you have within the moderators?

PLT-Fred: Oh so I just did see that the group is for current or former [organisation] student so the people on my course. That's probably the only rule. What was your last question again?

B: Any rule do you have within the moderators

PLT-Fred: No we don't have any rules that we've told each other. We might ask before we post something. Just to make sure that there's nothing that they want to add or we should act differently. But no we don't have any explicit ones.

B: OK then do you think you moderate the group collaboratively with other moderators?

PLT-Fred: Yes it's a good question.... Hmm I'd say about 2/5 of the moderators do most the work. And the others are there... kind of more... because they're reps.

B: OK so how do you relate to them.

PLT-Fred: We speak outside of the group really. And it's more of a, another way of reaching everybody. So different people use different...

B: OK so it's more about the community rather than this specific fb group.

PLT-Fred: Yeah. So some people on the course would use information about the events or ask questions. Other people might send out an email to the mailing list. Other people might just talk to each other. So it's another avenue where we can share information.

B: So it's mainly like there're the same people who is building this community. And fb group is just a tool you're using?

PLT-Fred: Yeah it's another medium for communicating with everybody in the group and as reps we kind of have to do it. Otherwise no one else would moderate the group. Because the academic staff members aren't in this group. Both of them might get wind of email of that sent if it is not sent to a specific mailing list.

B: Oh it's nice to know that. Do you know any tools fb give you that you find helpful to run the group?

PLT-Fred: I sometimes find the seen by useful to get like a proxy how many have seen the post. But I don't know how much I trust it. Because sometimes it looks like 7 people have seen it when I know maybe 12 half or something like that. So that's why I say a proxy because I am not sure how accurate it is. Hmm.... Other tools, there are the general ability to share events or photos or ask propose that thing can be useful. Although not everybody in the group would respond. And I see that as the people that don't respond either are former students, so it is not relevant to them, or aren't bothered. So that does kind of given impression of how many people within the community engage outside of facebook as well. Bingjie: Emm cool. Have you noticed that fb has introduced badges to the fb group.

PLT-Fred: I hadn't know. Bingjie: Have you seen any of them (showing examples on a phone)?

PLT-Fred: Is that like, official badge?

B: Yeah have you got like an admin badge when you post things? Next to your name?

PLT-Fred: Not to my knowledge. No.

B: Could you navigate to the members page, and there should be the names of it, have you seen any badge next to any name?

PLT-Fred: No. I just want to correct something actually that I joined the group actually only 11 months ago, which is interesting. Because I have been a student for about 18 months. So I joined the group a bit later but I am not sure how long I've been an admin, so probably about 6 months. That's probably still true that 6 month but no badges. All I see is a little setting buttons next to the the names of the people.

B: Actually I'll show you some example. So it looks like this. Could you go to the group settings to see if that functionality has enabled?

PLT-Fred: No we don't have that. So we've got, as a closed group, to start with, so anyone could find it but only members can see who's in it and what they post. And I can change the privacy if I want. And the group type is school or class. So maybe that has something to do with it. I can't change that. And I've got an option to choose who can approve members. And in now case any member can add other members but an admin or moderator has to approve them. So I suppose there's a stricter version there rather than anyone being able to add anyone. And then there's the description box but there's no option I can see in the group settings for changing or adding these badges.

B: Sure that's fine. Have you seen these badges in other groups you're in?

PLT-Fred: I can have a little look. I am not aware of them. But I can check if..

B: If you're not aware of them it's fine. It doesn't matter.

PLT-Fred: But I also use m.facebook.com, I don't use FB app.

B: I think you can see it on the webpage as well. It doesn't really matte. Cool do you have any moderation experience outside FB moderation?

PLT-Fred: Online? Yeah I did a little bit when I was a teenager but I wasn't very active in doing it. And didn't really feel qualified... (laugh)... in a sense to do that well. And I didn't last very long. Cuz I fed up... it's too much pressure.

B: Emm would you like to talk a bit about why it's too much pressure?

PLT-Fred: Hmm it was quite a big online community.

B: Where's that? Like reddit?

PLT-Fred: No it was a different forum. It's a forum for LGBT people. I think it was not running anymore because the creator wasn't able to maintain it cuz they weren't any moderators. And I felt a lot of the people who use the forum are probably more experienced than I was and I was meant to be moderating them.

B: And that's why you got stressed?

PLT-Fred: Ah yeah I supposed so I am not really wanting to make any judgement is it appropriate or not. And quite complex as well like the different levels and the different types of member, and kind of different guidelines that people are meant to follow but didn't all was follow. But you don't want to be mean as a moderator. But at the same time, that was my role, so... And that only smaller group that I've been kind of lead a moderator

B: Right. Thank you very much for that.

### **PLT-Frodo**

Frodo: Hi

B: Oh hi

Frodo: Hi there. Sorry I am a little late. It's the academic way

B: That's alright. That gavie me some time to try something new

Frodo: (Y) Well, whenever you're ready

B: Sweet! So before we start the interview, would you mind reading the information form and sign the consent form for me please? Participant Information Sheet <https://goo.gl>

Frodo: Sure ;) Done

B: (smile) Sweet thank you

Frodo: I can give some suggestions. Only minor (later)

B: Yeah sure of course lol So would you mind giving us some demographic data including age, gender and education about yourself please?

Frodo: I am 33, male, and I have a doctorate

B: Thank you. So how long have you been on Facebook and how long have you been involved with Facebook groups?

Frodo: Probably been on Facebook for more than 10 years I think. I remember making an account back when I was an undergrad. That would have been around 2004. So maybe not quite 10 years actually :P

with groups - involved in what way? As an admin of a page?

B: Yeah that is my next question. So when did you start joining FB groups and when did you start serving as a mod with a group?

Frodo: Right. About groups, I'm not sure - probably a few years

Frodo: I think the first group I ever joined was something to do with my masters degree, someone made a group so that we could all stay in touch (spoiler alert: we didnt stay in touch)

B: Not surprised

Frodo: Nowadays I use groups for two things: to keep up with work-related stuff or to do stuff with hobbies and interests

for the hobbies, I am in a number of groups around different card games

Let me have a look at my Facebook

B: Yeah that's a good point

Frodo: I'm looking at my shortcuts on the left, these are the groups I use most apparently. There are a bunch of gaming related ones

for different card games, or groups related in some way (I'm in a group for a shop back in [city])

the group I help moderate as an admin is called [boardgame] players

I have been an admin of that for more than a year I think

B: How did you become a mod of the [boardgame] players group?

Frodo: I know one of the other admins and he made me a mod

I'm not sure how or why that happened now

I think it was after I met him in real life. He founded the group

I met him after conference

In [city]

B: Have you been actively participating in the group before you became a mod?

Frodo: I think so? It has grown a lot over the last year

I think it was small when I joined it. Now we have over 2000 members

I don't think I was posting that much, just responding to threads. I remember responding to a thread saying that it would be cool to meet up for a game, since I'd be in [city]

then we got talking and met up out there

B: Sounds cool Do you still engage with the group outside of your moderating role since you become a mod? How do you distinguish between the two?

Frodo: 2,253 members

engage in what way?

B: Like participating as a member than a professional mod?

Frodo: I guess? Sometimes I will make a post or respond to threads

Or like people's posts if they look lonely

B: (btw it is interesting how Skype is trying to be smart and suggesting you some replies)

Frodo: Haha

I don't think I have that update...

auto replies are bad

B: Yeaht that's true. So do you have any group guidelines for members of the group you moderate?

Frodo: Yes we do

But they are pretty informal

I think one of them is "no orc speech"

B: In what way?

Frodo: and the other one is that we ask people not to speculate about when the game will end, because it got boring

by end we mean, when will they stop making it

That's the only topic where we lock or delete threads, pretty much

Because it's not constructive and it may put off newer players

I think those are the only two guidelines we have

The moderation approach is quite informal and hands off, since it's not a huge group and people are mostly chilled out in this community

B: So does that mean other than the ones you have written in your group 'guidelines', there are some additional ones between the mod?

Frodo: Not really

We have a group chat called [boardgame] admins

B: How do you use the chat?

Frodo: If something comes up, usually it gets discussed in there to make a decision

TBH I am a pretty bad admin :P I don't do much moderation

but then we don't need much

usually the chat is used to highlight a post that might have been reported

so the main admin will be like, I just locked this thread

Or "I'm keeping an eye on this post"

other times we have used it to discuss booting people from the group

B: Cool Have you noticed that Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups? Has your group enabled the badge functionality?

Frodo: I have used it before to mention that someone reported a post, but I've decided to keep it

Haha yes I have noticed that :P

It is enabled yes

Although I don't know if it was done by choice, or whether it came on automatically

B: What badges you have seen so far? How do you think Facebook decides who to give the badges to?

Frodo: Rising Star

Conversation starter

Visual storyteller

Admins get a badge as well, actually

B: Yeah I think so

Frodo: It's a little shield next to the name with a star on it

AFAIK these badges are assigned based on post frequency

So if someone is a newbie and posts a lot, they will get that rising star badge

B: Do the badges gain your extra attention for your work as a moderator? What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with the badge?

Frodo: Not really?

I guess some people might hover that badge when they see it next to my name and then they'll know who the admins are

B: Do you think giving people badges could be informative for moderators? If so, how?

Frodo: I think it would be more like a reward

The badge system doesn't work in my opinion

As they have it now

Maybe it's my perspective as an admin

But I don't really think they tell me anything about the members. Then again, I look at this group a lot

Maybe if I looked at some other group, it might give me a sense of who's active

B: So if it were you to give the members some badges, how would you do it?

Frodo: probably the ones who are well-behaved :P haha



I'm not sure now

it made me think about this other game I play, it's a mobile game

I am a co-leader of this clan and sometimes we have to promote and demote people, it does take some effort and you have to try to figure out whether or not they are playing actively

and it's not always easy to figure that out

If it was on Facebook and we had to give out these badges, it would probably take some time

So maybe we wouldn't use them

However, it assigns them at the moment automatically

And the people they get assigned to don't make any sense for what the badges say

B: Do you think it would help if mods can be involved in this badge distributing process?

Frodo: I just thought of a better way of doing it. Facebook ought to assign the badges automatically, and then we approve the suggestions manually

There was a guy we had to boot from the group recently, but he got the conversation starter badge

because he kept making these threads that generated a lot of discussion, but the problem was that he was an idiot

so the threads were always drama and we had to keep an eye on him

the main admin also spoke with him in private messages and got personal abuse

He's also sent me some private message before but I ignored the guy

B: Great strategy

Frodo: Anyway I wouldn't give that guy a badge for anything

B: Not even a 'bad-actor' badge?

Frodo: There was also a guy who got that storyteller badge because he kept posting photos of stuff he wanted to sell

and we had to ask him to tone it down

I feel like the people who get the badges are the people we spend most time moderating...

Not convinced a bad actor badge is a good idea

idea

unless it's more like a private tag that only the mods can see

B: Fair enough

Frodo: I think badges like that could be used for bullying

B: So do you have any experiences outside of Facebook Group moderation?

Frodo: moderation outside of FB you mean?

B: Yep

Frodo: Not really

Not that I can think of anyway

I helped out on some forum my friend set up about 18 years ago, haha...

maybe 15

It was nothing major though. Some stupid forum thing for free

B: Fair enough (that's the suggested reply by Skype). Overall, do you like being a mod in fb groups?

Frodo: Yeah I think so

It means I have some control over the group, haha

I have thought about stepping down from it occasionally

Because sometimes it demands attention. Also I am not convinced that I am a great mod

It's hard to "moderate" people who are just wrong...

so I tend to stay out of it

and only lock some threads where people are fighting or if someone is being an idiot

There was a spate of drama posts a few months ago and I remember locking two of them

B: Oh no

Frodo: I think the lead admin contacted one of the guys and asked him to tone it down

I wanted to boot the guy but he's still there

Anyway it doesn't matter now

We locked a thread yesterday for violating one of the rules

B:

Frodo: about the game ending

B: Yeah. So I think that's it about today's interview. At the end of it, would you like to choose a pseudonym for yourself?

Frodo: Nah

B: Or we can generate a random number for it

Frodo: Frodo :P

hahaha

### **PLT-JS**

B: Hi PLT-JS! This is Bingjie! Just to connect you via messenger for the interview tomorrow. Thanks for helping

PLT-JS: I'll be a free minutes later than 3:00.

B: Thank you and no worries . Just ping me when you've got time

PLT-JS: I'm ready now

B: Oh sweet thank you. Just to double check I can do either text chat or voice call. Do you have any preferences?

Either way is fine

B: Thanks that's really kind of you . I'll just do text chat then (it's 22:00 here and I don't really want to bother my landlady and she's probably very depressed about all those Brexit stuff going on here)

PLT-JS: Good enough.

B: So before we start the interview, here is a (long) briefing form for it: <https://goo.gl/forms/thlP3SwY>  
Participant Information Sheet This is the participant information sheet and consent form for participating in Bingjie Yu's (b.yu@bath.ac.uk) study on Facebook Group moderation. Please read carefully before participating in the interview. docs.google.com Please if you can have a read and sign the consent. Feel free to ask me if you have any questions

PLT-JS: finished

B: Cool thanks a lot! So would you like to tell me how long have you been on Facebook and what you are using it for mainly?

PLT-JS: I've been on Facebook since around 2006 and I use it primarily to participate in a couple analog gaming communities. I use it to keep up with real-life friends and acquaintances as well.

B: Oh cool. So are they mail game groups you are in on Facebook for?

No not mail games. Board games/card games mostly. Groups of people who play the same games.

B: Sorry typo... mainly\*

PLT-JS: Probably half for that purpose and half for general social reasons

B: Just curious, what kind of groups other than board game groups are you in?

PLT-JS: I'm in a global piano technicians's group (my line of work), a group for my local church, a historical reenacting group,

B: Cool As you know, this is a study about what it's like to admin or moderate a Facebook group. So how many groups do you currently admin/moderate for?

PLT-JS: 4 groups I think... 3 of those are fairly small and one is larger (2500 members)

B: So maybe focus on one group you think you engage most later will be easier (I guess the 2500 members group? )

PLT-JS: sure

B: Great thank you. Would you like to talk about how's the group like?

PLT-JS: Hmm that's a broad question. It's a group for people who play a Lord of the Rings card game. The game is cooperative and you and can play it by yourself and a high percentage of the players don't have local people to play with so this group (and

other online social media groups) are their main source of a community around this game.

PLT-JS: The group is about 4 years old. I started it and it grew pretty quickly and eventually absorbed another group devoted to the game that wasn't as active.

B: That's interesting. I don't know that happens on facebook

PLT-JS: There's daily interactions on the page.

B: And 2500 members in 4 years is a lot. So I imagine you get a lot of posts everyday? Roughly how often do you check the group?

B: 6.4k posts, comments and reactions, that's a lot Are you able to check them all? I mean all the posts and comments

PLT-JS: I think I see about 80% of them. Sometimes there's a threat that I don't feel I need to read.

B: Oh cool. How do you see it developing in the future?

PLT-JS: Well we have some recurring posts that people enjoy interacting with that I like to switch up now and then. I'll probably keep doing that same style of post for a while then change it up again in a year or so. If we continue to grow I'll probably add another admin (the group has 5 moderators right now). This group is a good place for new players to find the larger community so creating a "welcome to the game and community" note would probably be a good thing. no huge plans to change things

B: Sounds interesting. So between all the 5 moderators, do you share any formal guidelines or rules for moderating this group? Is there any additional ones other than what you told the members?

PLT-JS: No hard and fast rules beyond the 2 or 3 group rules. main purpose for admins is to "enforce" those rules and stop bad situations from getting out of control. I'm the "primary admin" and do most of the work. I've asked the others to check out new members before admitting them. Anything with LOTR on it attracts some extra people that don't really have any interest in this game and they end up posting spam that's annoying for most people so we try to avoid letting them into the group.

B: Oh so do you have any specific ways to relate to other 'staff' members? Or is it just a messenger group chat?

PLT-JS: We have a Messenger group chat I also communicate individually with most of

them fairly regularly.

B: That sounds interesting. Do they engage in the group chat frequently about the group moderation? Or is there also casual chat for the game players

PLT-JS: Sometimes we go for a month without needing the group chat. Sometimes we need it several times a day. The group is pretty peaceful and "well behaved" in general. Things get more involved for us when a person starts making trouble. So our interactions comes and goes. That particular group chat is just for Moderation talk.

B: Oh cool. Do you have any memorable moderation experiences with the 'problematic' post or person?

PLT-JS: There have been several people that have caused us issues for years. One memorable one had to be removed and he subsequently sent me threatening messages and threatened my family. I knew he had a history of this kind of thing...

B: Did the mods shared this "history"?

PLT-JS: Another situation started out similarly with lots of rude and dismissive comments aimed at other people, but I worked with the guy for several months and he's turned out to be a solid member of the community. We didn't share his background with the entire group but we had other members of the community message us several times warning us about him. even when he first joined the group.

B: That's not fun. But still you've given him an opportunity to join first

PLT-JS: We also had people messaging us asking us to remove him... but we felt we had to give him a fair chance and not judge him and exclude him based on his previous history. But we kind of figured it would go down the same course..

B: Is that the same reason that you tried to worked with the guy who turns out to be a solid member? Even he was rude

PLT-JS: Very similar issues. Although the second guy tended to fly off the handle and use the all caps angry mode...

B: lol that's interesting Do you use any tools to help you moderate? What tools does Facebook give you that you find helpful for running the group?

PLT-JS: Just the basic "admin tools" which I can access when I'm on the group page. I do nearly all my Facebook through my iPhone. just that and messenger

B: Cool so mainly read them manually other than the admin tools?

PLT-JS: yep

B: Have you noticed that Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups? Has your group enabled the badge functionality?

PLT-JS: Are there other admin tools? Educate me! lol I didn't "enable it" but I did notice it our group. It must have applied itself automatically

B: Well I think some other communities (not facebook) they flag things up by some machine learning algorithm Or tools like members can flag posts to moderators So what badges you have seen so far?

PLT-JS: People do occasionally report posts and that will show up on my notifications. I can review them and delete and ban or approve etc Admin, Visual Storyteller, Rising Star...

B: What do you think they represent? Or how do you think Facebook decides who to give these badges to

PLT-JS: I thought there was a "frequent poster" sort of badge as well but I don't see that now. Visual is linked to posting pics Rising Star must be someone who is posting more and more frequently

B: Yeah Facebook actually have a blog last November talking about all those badges <https://www.facebook.com/community/education/blog/badges/> Facebook Group Badges — Facebook Community Now it's even easier for group admins to create and communicate group rules

PLT-JS: I haven't seen them all yet. I think the one you mentioned about 'frequent poster' should be conversation starter?

that's it

B: Do the badges gain your extra attention for your work as a moderator? What strategies do you use if you see a post by a member with the badge?

PLT-JS: There's several in that list I haven't seen. I usually see the name before I see the badge. Most people that earn badges earn my attention before they earn the badge. But I will take note if I see they have one

B: Neither do I. I was guessing the algorithm behind the badges hasn't been finished yet. Because initially there was only a few of them I remember. Like the visual storyteller was definitely implemented after conversation starter Is there a way you think these

badges being informative for you as a moderator in the group? For example how could the badge of 'conversation starter' being informative for mods?

PLT-JS: I guess it just tells me that person is very active on the group. I usually notice they're active as well...

B: Do you think it should be like a "reward" for members being active in the group?

PLT-JS: hmm I don't know.

B: Or in another way, do you find yourself conflict with these badges?

PLT-JS: can't imagine a way to do that off the top of my head. But I guess it could be possible Oh I misunderstood Well, sometimes a person can get a badge and look "trustworthy" to other people but posting a lot doesn't mean you're knowledgeable about anything or trustworthy. but I haven't had a real issue with that.

B: So you think the badges represent more quantity rather than quality?

PLT-JS: yes

B: Sweet. Do you still engage with the group outside your moderating role?

PLT-JS: Yes more as a member than in Moderator duty. its a good group of people overall. Don't need much moderating. But I realize that that Moderator badge carries some weight. So I try to be extra well behaved. lol

B: That's really nice to know Right last question, do you have any experiences outside Facebook group moderation? If so how would it compares?

PLT-JS: I have lots of experiences outside of moderating a facebook group. lol. Do you mean moderating a different type of group?

B: Like other communities, forums, blogs Reddit?

PLT-JS: I run a couple blogs but the comments are few and far between so that's not comparable Reddit is too impersonal for me. I've been part of an active Discord server but I haven't moderated. I guess I don't have comparable experiences

B: Oh I use Discord mainly for PokemonGo Thanks for that. That was super helpful

PLT-JS: Sure!

B: So as I promised there will be a \$50 prize draw for all participants. I'll write the name you put in the form (JS I think) in my draw box tomorrow and stream the prize



draw later

PLT-JS: sounds good. I hope that was helpful and not too boring.

B: It is actually very helpful! If you are interested in it I can send you our analysis later Hope that won't be too boring

PLT-JS: sure that would be fun

B: Thanks! Feel free to contact me if you have any future concerns

### **PLT-KC**

B: So could you tell me how long have you been on Facebook please?

PLT-KC: How long I am on Facebook? 11 years.

B: 11 years. Wow. You're the first one that remembers the exact time. So what kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in?

PLT-KC: Right now I have some groups that are for class, there's a family, and a group project, subtle asian treats.

B: So maybe culture and games?

PLT-KC: Culture and games.

B: So as you know this is a study about what Facebook group moderation is like. How many groups are you currently admin or moderate for?

PLT-KC: Only just one.

B: How's the group like? For example how many members and posts?

PLT-KC: We have 202 members. That's a close group within University of Melbourne.

B: So do you have any memorable moderation experience you had with your community?

PLT-KC: Emm I think in my group people were very quiet. It is a surprisingly super quiet group.

B: So do you still engage with the group outside of your moderating role?

PLT-KC: No.

B: So you just moderate them. (Yeah) Have you done any moderation like deleting posts and...

PLT-KC: I checked them and everyone is fine and they don't post things that we don't want.

B: So,

PLT-KC: I think it is because it is a closed group so people only invite people they do know.

B: So when you say you check them and you make sure they don't post things that you don't want. What kind of things you don't want in that group?

PLT-KC: Emm most of the time we didn't want spam.

B: So how would you describe your general approach to moderate the group? Like how often do you check it?

PLT-KC: I check whenever there's a new post.

B: OK so you check everything that was posted?

PLT-KC: Yeah I check everything was post because it is not too active.

B: So do you have any formal guidelines or rules for moderating this group?

PLT-KC: There's a formal guideline that someone else really wrote and I just, most of the time refer it back, and then check if the posts matches the guidelines.

B: What kind of rules you have?

PLT-KC: Hmm (checking the group on phone) there used to be one. It's like we only share some activities on some future events. And also most of the time it is about information about PokemonGo other than that if it is advertisement or anything we don't want.

B: So for example is like posting their friend codes allowed? There's some other PokemonGo groups they have a specific thread for friend code and you can't like create a new post to just post your friend code or sth.

PLT-KC: Emm for us we can do that.

B: How many admin or moderators do you have in that group?

PLT-KC: 5

B: So do you moderate the group collaboratively with others like, do you talk to other staff members?

PLT-KC: Not a lot. But actually they're my friends so.

B: Have you notice that recently that Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups? (Yeah) Has your group enabled that badge functionality?

PLT-KC: No because it's been inactive for a long time.

B: OK so maybe you can talk about it as like a member of other groups? What kind of badges you have seen so far?

PLT-KC: Partner? What do you call that... Because I was also in some of the streaming group. They have badges as well. New member... Yeah I have seen a lot of like the new members badge. Not conversation starter. But I have seen like rising member, visual storyteller. There're too many and I only know that in one day they all come up.

B: What do you think they were representing? Or how do you think Facebook decide who to give these badges to? For example let's say rising star, how do you think Facebook decide who is a rising star?

PLT-KC: I think it's based on their Facebook algorithm and try to see how many likes and comments this person gets from posting in the group.

B: What about visual storyteller? You said you have seen that right?

PLT-KC: Oh yeah visual storyteller I think it's like based on the page. Like most of time they have a Facebook page. And they have a lot of likes there.

B: Do the badges gain you extra attention in the group?

PLT-KC: I think it only tells you that that person is whatever their badge is saying. But it doesn't really change much. For me it is just there when you see it.

B: OK cool. That's interesting to know. Do you have any moderation experience outside Facebook group?

PLT-KC: Forum moderation. I've also done Twitch moderation before but I have done a lot of forums, not reddit, like BBS moderation.

B: Would you like to talk a bit about it? Any memorable moderation experience that.

PLT-KC: The ones on the forum that one is very very busy and it's a huge team and most of the time we have to talk to people and deciding if the post is appropriate or inappropriate. Because it is a huge group like how many thousand, I forgot the number, it has over 300, 000 members. So each person will be in charge of one of the section.

B: Like how do you think moderation in that online community differs from Facebook groups?

PLT-KC: I think in Facebook people wants to post more often than on those forums. Because on Facebook it feels like they're messaging people.

B: Oh so on Facebook, just now you said on Facebook you check the group whenever there's a new post. But in forum can you do that? It is changing every now and then. So what strategy you're using? Like checking everyday at a specific time?

PLT-KC: Everyday at a specific time or a duration.

B: So in that forum have you enable like, do you have any specific process like members can report a problematic post to the moderators?

PLT-KC: Yeah they can report. Most of the time they'll report some spam accounts. Many of them are bot accounts.

B: That's it thank you very much.

## **B.4.2 Post-Questionnaire Interview: Facebook Group Study**

### **P01**

B: So how long have you been on Facebook? If you can remember?

P01: Oh, actually, let me look it up. I will think it was 2011, but let me check. Yeah, I was actually thinking about that yesterday. I realize I had... I don't actually know, so I thought huh that's strange.

B: Yeah, I didn't even know what time it should be.

P01: Should be in the settings. Yeah, OK find it, but I'm pretty sure it was 2011.

B: So you replied that in the questionnaire there that, uh, you're mostly in conference related groups on Facebook groups like [anonymised group (AG) P1-1], [AG P1-2] and also house related groups, right? Like which one you're with them like for either the longes or you use the most.

P01: I would have to say, uh also the question was which one of them do you have used the most?

B: Or you are close closely working with.

P01: I would have to say I guess, um. I think these days currently are the conference related ones.

B: Yeah, OK, so um, uh, so maybe focus on that group later. OK, yeah, so which in the conference related ones? I think there are a few conference related ones right?

P01: Yeah I think is the [AG P1-1] and [AG P1-3]

B: Yeah OK so those two groups you are mostly checking right? Yeah how is that group like? Like, uh, how distinct? For example, let's focus on [AG P1-1] later. That makes it easier if you can open the page of [AG P1-1] on Facebook. That will be easier.

B: OK. So. How how's the group like? How do you think the group is like?

P01: Oh, I think it's pretty well organized for what I know. Yeah, from what I know there are mods, uhm. And I had I had the impression that they actively moderate, so I don't know if you know this, but I think it was [AG P1-1]

Actually not. I'm not so sure people with [AG P1-3] or [AG P1-1] but there was [anonymised member 1] that started posting racists, racism and like sexism related kinds and I happen to see that right before it got moderated. So yeah, so like he was saying, Oh, Sexism and racism really doesn't exist. It's the always the woman, and people blaming, yeah, yeah, So I think it was kind of Yeah. OK, I saw that before we got moderated and then later, I think the moderator disabled it, so um prevented others from seeing it. But the moderator are happens to be actually someone I know. Um, so well, that must be that must be a tough job like and, so she first didn't remove it because I think she. I assume she went back to the committee and ask their opinion about if this should be removed or not and then so she actually did it first was she replied back and said oh thank you for your opinion. Was very professional and then I think later when the committee decided to remove it according to like the rules, then I think it got on. Uhm, yeah, people were prevented from seeing it. So my impression was that it was very quick that. The time span between that, when when the guy commented and when the moderation happened, it was, was very quick. So my impression was, wow there are actually mods really working hard.

B: OK. So, like, um, roughly. How often do you check [AG P1-1]?

P01: Ah, I think. Probably once in two or three days, maybe.

B: OK? Or is it just like whenever there's a new post coming out and then you just check the group?

P01: I think I am close to that. Yeah. I check it whenever there is a notification. IYes, but I think I also tend to visit it um, when I had a notification like one or two days. Yeah.

B: OK yeah, oh, so you said that you know some moderators in [AG P1-1] zancai mentor group, right?

P01: Yes only one.

B: So only one OK. Right, so, um, do you still engage with the moderator outside their moderating role in the group?

P01: Yes, I take a class with her.

B: OK so like how do distinguish like when you are talking to actual the moderator of [AG P1-1] or like just your friend, your classmate?

P01: Hmm that's interesting question to be honest. Yeah, I think I actually never, oh so right after that incident happened. I was actually checked in on her because I thought Oh wow, this must be a tough job, handling racist. So I checked in our via Facebook Messenger and I and I asked, oh you OK? And said ph yeah, I'm doing OK. And that was it. Actually, after that I've never talked to her about her job as a moderator. I just treated her as, as nothing happened, I think.

B: Oh cool. That's interesting. Yeah, so um. When did you join [AG P1-1]?

P01: OK, so 29th Apr 2019.

B: So quite recent. So um, how do you think the group developed since you have become active on that, like since April?

P01: Oh I I'm not so sure because I guess again I'm pretty recent. But I think recently I guess because it was like the [anonymous conference] rebuttal season. There have been a lot of useful information. I think with regarding the rebuttal, and I think people were also, there were some professors talking about oh [anonymous conference] is way too harsh. Um like what should we do about it? So some meta questions, which was pretty interesting. I mean, I, I guess it's not like right? It's not directly useful right now because I'm a PhD student but I thought oh these are really interesting

thoughts to have as an academic. Yeah, so I guess recently a lot of more useful I began to think oh there's more useful content coming up. I think because it's recently it was a [anonymous conference] rebuttal season.

B: OK, so you think that it's useful for like un when it is close to like something is happening at the conference, right?

P01: Yeah that's my impression.

B: Yeah, OK, so, how do you see it developing in the future?

P01: Oh, so how would I want it to be developed in the future? I see. Uhm. I guess one thought that pops up into my mind is I wish there were more discussion about students. Because, I think recently I mean so far my impression is that the [AG P1-1] has always been about conferences, which is totally understandable because it's a conference meta Facebook group. But I mean, a lot of PhD students are in the community so I thought it would be great if we can first like as hear more from students. Actually one interesting thought I. I thought it would be to. I don't know how many of the people that post frequently are students or not. I assume it would be professors. But actually don't know. OK, if I'm assuming that professors are more comfortable to post things, but if that's the case, I wish we can hear more from students. But actually I'm not so sure if I'm correct. I guess second topic wise it would be nice if we can talk more about. I guess the stress of PhD students, maybe.

B: OK right. That's very interesting to know Right so um, do you think that [AG P1-1] has any formal guidelines or rules for the group?

P01: Actually, I am not aware of it. My impression was that, yeah, I'm not aware of any formal guidelines. I haven't seen any so I assume you just have to be, uhm? A very clear and graceful and the content should be appropriate to the community. Those were just uhm, I guess norms that you have to follow, but I haven't. I haven't seen any yet formal guidelines mentioned.

B: Yeah, OK, so uhm another question you just now, you probably already mentioned that. So do you see that moderators in [AG P1-1] working collaboratively in the group?

P01: Huh, I guess the only thing I saw was when the moderator that, she... Oh so someone actually after that comment got moderated another person explained why did the mods removed it. Like I want to see what that person said. And then I think she replied. Well, um, according to... Did she use the word committee? So she used the word we decided that was, um against the standard, so we removed it. So I was. Oh

when I saw that, like, oh so they did this aside as a team. I thought it make sense yeah. But I think that was the only time when I thought oh they're working collaboratively.

B: OK, cool, right? So uhm threat, uh, about the questionnaire. So you have you notice that Facebook has introduced the badges to Facebook groups before?

P01: Yes.

OK, you already noticed it right. So as I know, [AG P1-1] has enabled a badge already, so now I'm just going to go through the ratings you put for the answers in the survey. So the question like was from zero to five. How much do you think you understand what this badges represent and you put "Five - I know exactly what the Badges means" for admin and moderate are an new member, so could you talk a bit about that like? Uhm, yeah, what do you think that admin and moderator and new member badges for?

P01: Right so admin. Uhm, I think I saw it both on [AG P1-1] and the [AG P1-4] page. I thought admin means the people that are can decide what happens on on the page. For example they have the rights to ban people OK or and allow to join the page if it's a private page. so I thought that was the admin's role on deciding what happens to the members or potential members, or the posts?Um moderators... Moderators they have less, I guess control. They have less power, but they still have the right, the power to, I guess delete. Yeah, so yeah, actually I don't know like the exact exact exact extent of the power of the moderators. But I was assuming, oh I assume that they have the right and power to like, I guess delete the post or comments. An admins, admins also have that, but they also, they have more power on, um, the membership level, was what I was thinking, um. And the frequent, the third one was the frequent user, right?

B: Uh, there is like a founding member that you gave a 3. Oh, OK, so that means that says I think I understand this badge just from its name. So like and also a rising star. So what do you think founding member, an rising star are?

P01: Yeah, just founding member. I thought when I saw it. Uh, it means just the people that first started the page. So even if a person did first starts a page, that person might not decide to a administer it. So then she can give that administer badge to someone else. But they will keep that founding member badge because they are the ones that started the page. And the rising star I thought was meant. Um, based on the activity logs, the rising stars are the ones that have most activity recently. Yeah, in terms of comments or posts.

B: OK, right, so the next part of rating is from one to five. How informative do you



think this badges are and you put 4 four very informative for new member. Like could you talk a bit about that?

P01: Yeah, um, so I actually notice the new member a lot in the [AG P01-4] pages, so I think it helped me. To be honest. I guess it does kind of biased me because I I do notice it before I think, looking at the comments. So I think it helps me in cases when the person will say something very unrelated or is not, is something unexpected or unrelated to the norms. But then I I won't since I know that this person is a newbie. Oh, I guess he or she has not know this yet. To be honest, I haven't seen such scenarios yet, but whenever I see that new badge, I thought, oh I think that's pretty helpful like in other. Not just me or, but for other people as well, because they know that this person might, might not yet be familiar with the norms, right?

B: OK. So, uh, for conversations starter, you gave a 1 - not informative at all.

P01: Like conversation starter yeah, oh. To be honest, I think there were two reasons. One, I didn't exactly know what it meant. I assume it so I guess is that it's for people that normally initiate a thread like first, like the first level comment maybe, or or the post. But yeah, I wasn't sure what it meant, so I thought, OK, this, this seems weird. I don't know if I don't know what it means. Uhm, I'm not so sure a lot of people would get it, so I think that was the main reason. Uhm and 2nd like. Assuming that I'm right that, uhm. Yeah, I guess it may be due to personality, but I really don't know how I'll use it, I'll just it will just tell me that this person just posts a lot and I wasn't sure what. But in which situations I could use that a lot compared to the newbie one.

B: So, uhm, what about visual storyteller? Cause that it's not informative at all in the form.

P01: Yeah, actually I think that one was because the first reason again was because I didn't know exactly what it meant. Yeah so.

B: So do you think that you'll get like a better understanding if you know what they are like?

P01: Yes.

B: Right, so again, uh, the next writing is from one to five, how different do you think the post or a common read if it is posted by someone with a badge, you put 5 for extremely different for admin, moderator, and founding member. So, uh, how do you think the post reads differently if it is post by someone who wears an admin, moderator or founding member badge.

P01: Yeah, I think the biggest difference is I would definitely think they have more authority and they know what they're doing. So I think it's the badges would definitely make me trust the post more, or the comment more. So I think it's two things: one, the badge itself kind of biases me, but also they were because I did see the admins or the moderators being helpful. I think those experiences kind of reinforced my thought that the mods the admins and the founding member, they are the ones that are likely to know what they're doing, so I think there is also reinforced that initial thought.

B: Um so um, you put 2 for somewhat difference for new member. Why? Like just now, you said this person is a newbie in your like [AG P1-4] groups like why you rated as somewhat different?

P01: Yeah, right. I think I put 2 instead of a high score because, um, compared to the mods and the admins and the founding member case, I'm likely the one that can make good decisions on whether the comments is irrelevant or unexperienced. I think even without the badge. But that's why I think the badge is still helpful because I like the badge because it kind of filters it for me without having to gaze at the... um, try to study the comment of the post for a long time. So yeah, I think it is still helpful, but. If there wasn't a badge, I would still have figured it out, um, whether a person, that's a newbie commentated or a person that's not a newbie will still ask weird comments. Uhm, uhm, then I would think, oh, that's strange. This is not a good common type.

B: So what you're saying is like the badges gain your extra attention to the member, right? Or or do you think that they don't actually gain much of your extra attention to them?

P01: Oh, they do.

B: So would you like to get a badge at some point?

P01: Ah. That's a good question. I think I I would like it if I can, but I do think I even though I am a social media researcher, I am more about actual worker, so I used to lurking the pages so I don't think I like it too much. Even if I don't end up getting like I think I would feel indifferent unless I really care about. But I don't think I have found it yet.

B: OK, so like what kind of badge you'd like to get. Like, well not limited to those ones they already have.

P01: Ah, interesting question. What kind of badge? Uhm, to be honest. I personally think maybe it's because I also research social media, but I do think there should be

more badges even. So I, the platform does have to restrict because people shouldn't like choose weird badges like porn badges or something, but they should be. I think there are various signals that wants to show to other people.

B: OK is also different in different community like. Would you like a different badge in [AG P1-1] and your housing groups?

P01: Yeah for sure. Yeah, so for I think one nice tag uhm? A nice badge in [AG P1-1] would be something like PhD students. Like even if it's just for humor. I think it might let PhD students bound like one badge. I would like to have is like a struggling baby PhD studnets or something.

B: Or like a ribbon that they have at conferences like paper rejected.

P01: Oh yeah for sure. Right, yeah, I actually think those would be pretty helpful and like strengthening the bound. I person believe it that way. So I think there should be more definitely more diverse and flex, diverse badges that the community members can come up with. Even that Facebook doesn't provide it. But I assume there should be like a procedure that so the admins are the moderators can allow the badges before people can understand. But I think people should have the freedom to come up with their own badges. Yeah.

B: OK, that's very interesting. So um, so go back to [AG P1-1], how do you become aware of like a problematic interaction in the group? Like how do you think that a post is problematic.

P01: Oh, so the question is, when do I know when do I realized that a post is problematic?

B: Or which behaviors in [AG P1-1] do think that they are problematic?

P01: I see. Um, I guess the most problematic one was that guys post um. And I realized it was problematic because actually of the content itself. Yeah, so I think. I think it caught my attention because the moderator that I knew, replied to it, and I thought oh it's her. I wonder who she is replying to. Then I looked at that guys comment? I thought oh this is really weird it's like very, uhm he doesn't believe racism exists. So yeah the other content itself I think caught my eye. Um and. Yeah, and then, after the moderator replied, he replied again and that replying thread also, I guess, reinforced my thought that oh this discussion is problematic. But other than that I don't think I can think of any, yeah.

B: That's very helpful. So um, do you have any experience in online communities

outside Facebook groups?

P01: Yeah Oh yeah, for sure I I think I'm beginning to be active on Twitter yeah. Oh and I still have a Instagram account, but yeah.

B: So they're mostly social media, any online communities?

P01: I am a lurker on the Reddit thread, but I'm not very active.

B: OK, cool alright um yeah that is very interesting and well. So, um, I think that's the end of the of the interview. Do you have any questions to ask me?

P01: Oh yeah, I guess, like do you want to or you thinking of like design insights for new badges or?

B: Um yeah, like so. So what we are thinking is... Because these badges are currently generated by algorithms and what we're actually looking into here is like. Because you have human moderators in the community and like these algorithm generated things, how they can work with human? But currently it's just like a very early stage. I think they only have it for one year. I see one or two year two years actually an it's not working as it supposed to do. Well. I mean, it's not designed as a moderation tool anyway, but we can't. Yeah, it's not designed as a moderation tool, is just designed as like the badges as like trying to encourage people to engage with online communities. But it does come out as like it affect some of the moderation, or like how people participate in there. So that's why we try to take into here. Yeah, that's why.

P01: That actually makes a lot of sense. I actually I think I was naively thinking that, oh, Facebook, she must have included the moderator badges in order to do with the community atmosphere, but then I looked at the other badges and I was like, huh? I wonder why they made these so yeah. That makes much more sense.

B: Yeah that's what I yeah trying to find out.

## **P02**

B: So, uh, again, thank you very much for participating in this a Facebook group study. Uhm, so before we start the interview with your mind, just open your Facebook page just in case that there are some questions you want to check, you can check it quickly.

P02: OK.

B: So you've got your Facebook page opened. Yeah, uh. So um. Would you mind telling me that like how long you have been on Facebook?

P02: Since 2008.

B: Right, that was a long time ago. Uhm so um, you mentioned that, uh, in the survey that you're mostly in hobbies and interests or entertainment, buy-and-sell, humor groups on Facebook, right?

P02: Yes.

B: Um, uh, like do you know that which one you're the most closely working with or most closely checking?

P02: Um, so it's usually like friends organized groups to going to the cinema, [AG P2-1], uhm. And yes the groups in also, ike for, uh, the students in my course. OK, so it's also university related, but also like chatting.

B: OK so um, if you can choose one of the group that you think that you're mostly working with or like you most closely checking and focus on that in the following interview, that might make it easier.

P02: OK just one group?

B: Yeah uh, one or two will be fine.

P02: OK, actually two. Yeah wait. I took this like... The list is longer than I thought. Wait.

B: Now you found that's your exactly in a lot of groups,

P02: Oh yes. Yeah, good, but some of them are just dead ones.

B: Yeah, so that's why I ask you to focus on the active ones.

P02: OK yeah I have like two. Yeah.

B: Uh so uh, could you tell me that's how's the group like, like, how many members or posed per day, or like just how frequent that there is a post?

P02: So one group is, uh, wait, I have to actually check. My Internet is slow. Hum. OK, so it's 58 members. So this is the [AG P2-1] group. And the posts are not very frequent, so I usually get the feed from it. So I I don't actually check every day or mostly when I when I get a notification that someone just posted something which is sometimes like once per month.

B: Cool, right.

P02: The other one. It's like more because this is the the buying selling group. So this is like 3677 members. So there're a few posts per day. So I don't check all of them, but most of them. Sometimes there is something interesting.

B: OK. Yeah, OK, alright, um right. So, um, can you tell me about any memorable experience you have you have had with the communities, like the groups? Do you have any memorable experience?

P02: Memorable experiences. I don't know what it means memorable. Hum.

B: By posting.

P02: I'm sorry, yeah.

B: Well, it's fine if you don't have like. It's just trying to see if there is anything you want to talk about, like memorable experience. If there's not, we can continue.

P02: Huh? Most of my mine is just like getting information. So one group is mostly my friends, but it's not like I'm very emotionally attached to the group. It's mostly like the way of knowing what my friends are up to an maybe join them.

B: OK.

P02: And the second one is just too big. Uh, so if there's like. There's a food pouch in the buy and sell group.

B: So um. So the next question is. Do you actually know who are the moderators of the groups? Like how many moderators? Can you check the group?

P02: Yeah, I can. Wait, uh. OK, for once it looks like 4 administrators and moderators. There is like 2 administrators and moderators so for the big one.

B: OK, so two admins and two moderators for uh, like how many, 1000 people group right?

P02: 3000 something. For the other is just one administrator.

B: OK, uhm, yeah, so do you actually engage with the group moderators for the big group?

P02: No.

B: How has the group develop since you become active on it?

P02: I think it grew. So every year there are people you people coming. I don't remember how like big it was when I started, but it was my first year. So I can't help you in with that. But I can tell that there is... the group evolved.

B: OK, the group evolved. Like how do you see it developing in the future?

P02: Well, it depends like because when people join his group, it means that there are students at the University when they leave University, they probably leave the group, so I guess it should be like the more or less constant size. But sometimes people just stay in old groups. Maybe like people like I'm in so many groups and I didn't even notice that. I mean, so it's probably like that, so it made us grow in time slightly. Because of this, people who stayed in the group, but they're not active members.

B: Does this differ from how you like it developed in the future?

P02: Like what?

B: So currently you said the group is developing like this, right? Does that differ from how you like it to develop.

P02: I mean, I don't care.

B: You don't care. OK fine.

P02: So about the [AG P2-1] group, I think that that the size is more or less constant. Because this is like the the group of friends. The new people come, but yeah, also there are people who do not involved anymore. OK, so it's weird with these groups. You just join groups, but then they forgot that you also should leave groups when you don't need them anymore. I think it's like that with everything on Facebook. Like all the traces. And you don't like or don't think about now.

B: Do you have any formal guidelines or rules for the group? Like do you have any formal guidelines or rules for posting in the [AG P2-1]group?

P02: I think there is something. OK, wait a second. I'm not sure. Wait, where is it? Because there should be something like moderator approved. Something. OK, it's just like. No selling of animals, people, drugs and this is the only guideline (laugh).

B: OK, great, um, right, uh, do you think that there is like three thing the moderators in that group working collaboratively in their group? Do you think the moderators are active in the group?

P02: Well, in the one of those groups, there are general moderators but the group is

fairly small and so people don't post things off-topic. Because there is a clear purpose (for that group). And the other one, I don't know if they know each other. I don't know who actually are the moderators is.

B: You don't actually see them a lot in a group, right?

P02: Oh, actually I know that person. I didn't even know she's a moderator of that group.

B: OK, so that means you don't actually see them a lot in the group?

P02: No.

B: So right, uh, go into the Facebook badges. Uhm, have you notice that, uh, the Facebook has introduced badges for Facebook groups.

P02: Yeah sometime ago.

B: OK sometime ago.

P02: I got a badge from one of page I follow. So I got that.

B: That is a page badge, right? Like I think they have the top fan badge for pages rather than groups.

P02: Yes. So I think I got that one. Then I realize others or something I guess.

B: Yeah, all right. So now what I'm going to go to do is going through the ratings for the answers in the questionnaire and see if there is like any more things you want to talk about your ratings. So the first group of rating is, from zero to five how much do you think you understand what this badges represent? You didn't put down anything for admin and moderator. Is there a particular reason of why?

P02: So I didn't... wait. So I think I put something that I of course I know, well, what they represent because they are self explanatory. So maybe I didn't understood the rating.

B: OK, so, uh, I can see you chose 0: never seen this badge for new member, and conversation starter.

P02: OK I've never seen those badge.

B: But 3: i thinkI understand this badge just from its name for founding member. So, what do you think founding member is?



P02: So this was the the person who started a group.

B: The person who started a group, right? So next one, from one to five, how informative do you think these badges are? You put five: extremely informative for admin, moderator and new member. Why do you think admin and moderate badges are informative?

P02: Because I'm not... Instantly, I know who's in charge of the group and these friends are like common is not only Facebook if you have everywhere in every Internet forums you have the same functions?

B: Right, So what about the new member badge? Why is it extremely informative?

P02: So it's someone who's just started. I could just join the group, so you might expect that. I don't know you might want to help that person is... I don't know if they write something which is not... According to the group rules, but when you see the badges when it's a new member, you might think OK, he or she doesn't know that maybe you would react differently? I don't know.

B: OK. So, next one is Conversation Starter. You chose somewhat informative, which is 2 (from 1 to 5). Why do you think that's somewhat informative, less than medium I think.

P02: I mean I kind of understand what it means. But I don't know what exactly that person does. Because, OK, conversation starter so that person post something and that start conversation, but I don't know like how often you have to do that to earn this badge.

B: OK, that's actually interesting to know. Right, so for Founding Member, you put down a four - very informative on that?

P02: Yeah. Because I thought it was something like that. It can be a person who started a group.

B: So what are the differences between Founding Member an admin and moderator?

P02: Ah. Yeah, now well I know what founding member was. Then, when I was rating it (the survey), I didn't know what exactly it is.

B: So you chose one. Not informative at all for visual storyteller and rising star. Why?

P02: 'Cause I have no idea how that do.

B: You have no idea what Visual Storyteller is and no idea what Rising Star is. Do you think? Do you think you would know what they are or like they will be informative if I tell you what they are? Or could you try to guess where they are? What's Visual Storytellers.

P02: So I can just think of someone who posts memes.

B: Yeah, it's actually someone since who frequently post like, pictures in the group.

P02: Ah OK, so why you should make it different from this posting something like photos?

B: Because like. It might be different in some communities, like in some groups like. I saw that on gaming groups. Because some of them really like to post the screenshots of their games. So then they become visual storyteller. I'm not sure how informative is that. But that depends on groups. Rising Stars are those ones who, I don't know, who pose frequently in the first month they join, I think. So still not sure about.

P02: That is very artificial, like creating badges just so you can get give it to people and people like earning badges so it's only like to keep people in the group and it's not like very functional.

B: Yeah, so right, next one from one to five. How different do think a post or a comment read if it is posted by someone with a badge. So for admin and moderator you chose extremely different, why? Why are like post made by someone who is wearing admin badge or moderator badge extremely different?

P02: Because, again, you know that they are in charge of a group, so they take care about group so what they post is not like random.

B: but like uhm. For examples at the [AG P2-03] group. You have one admin, right?

P02: Yes,

B: And like. Does the posts by the admin read different?

P02: No, but but the group is different. This one, I know everyone in this group, so there are no strangers so...

B: OK so can I say that it doesn't matter if you know the person before you know the badge.

P02: So yeah, it depends on the group, because if you know the person, you don't need badges. Because you know the person. But if there is like the big group when you

don't know people, you are guided by the badges, because you don't have any other way of... knowing people.

B: OK. That's actually very interesting.

P02: But except the administrator and moderator badge, because, again, hat the other badges, like for me, they're totally random.

B: So, uh, so you put down 3 four moderately different for new member and conversation starter, and visual storyteller and rising star. Is 3 for you means that it doesn't matter, because it's like medium?

P02: Yes, and because I I don't know what they actually did. But just now you told me, but then I don't know.

B: So what about founding member before you know, before you know the meaning. You put 2: somewhat different, why? Why is a post by founding member is somewhat different than other people?

P02: Actually, no, I don't remember why I put it, it's alright.

B: Oh, that is alright. An uh, I can see that you put down top fan badge uh, in the section says that you have seen.

P02: Yes, because I earned it.

B: What do you think about the top fan badge?

P02: I mean, I didn't do anything special to earn it and it's like, uh, I got that badge and then I felt somehow like they trying to make me been engaged more of the group. So it's like, OK, you have this badge, but then you have to be as active as previously to keep this badge? This like kind of a black mail for people?

B: Right, so, um, do you think the badges gain you extra attention to people or posts?

P02: I don't know it. Well, I I don't pay more attention to posts of people with badges. It's mostly mostly, I look at the visual part. And it's like the image. I'd like it, and then I see, oh this was posted like that person or that other person, but it's mostly with really matters to me, is the content of the post not who posted it?

B: OK, um, would you like to get the badge at some point?

P02: Not really...

B: OK. If you are going to be given a badge, what kind of badge, like not limited to those, what kind of badge you like? Or you just don't like it.

P02: I do like the idea. I mean. If I want to be involved in the group, so I could be a moderator and admin of the group, but it's not to get a badge. It's like because I wanted to develop the group.

B: OK,uh, right, that's interesting.

P02: So for me it's like a mixing two things earning badges an having functions in groups. But I don't know why moderators and admin is mixed with others, like rising stars.

B: So you don't like the idea of like mixing, mixing there, like functional roles in the group, rather than with the other things like to encourage people to contribute.

P02: Yes. For badges yes.

B: That's interesting. Right another question is, have you seen any problematic interaction in like Facebook groups? Have you seen any problematic posts?.

P02: I think I'd saw like some funny posts like fake ones in the [AG P2-2] groups. Or making fun of someone who posted something. But that

B: OK, how do you become aware of these problematic post?

P02: I mean, I just read he post. You know it means?

B: Do you have like any follow-up steps? After you've seen the problematic post?

P02: I mean. If tjeu are people I don't know, I just don't care.

B: OK, do you have any oh moderation experience outside Facebook groups?

P02: No.

B: OK. Are you in any of the communities outside Facebook Groups?

P02: I am a member of a big forum, 10,000 people were registered.

B: OK, how do you see it different with the Facebook Groups?

P02: Well, it's not Facebook, so people are are anonymous. So you you don't have their real names there all nicknames.

B: Do they have things like badges?

P02: At there are like small icons, so there. According to experience, you have like a progress bar, and there's also like the the admin and the moderator, so it's kind of a badge. It's more like the function, but there are also people, uh. For example, because it's a forum for book lovers. There are also people published something, so they have that. Uh, as their function, and author. OK, but they are also, uh, people collecting XML images, when they take part in competitions. So if you have, if you gain some points in the competitions or if you get the 1st place or second third, you get the the image at the at the bottom of each of your post. So some people just collect lots of them.

B: Ah, um, right. If you don't mind, would you actually tell me what that like? What kind of forum that is so that we can ook into that later?

P02: I'll send you that later.

B: Yes, OK so yeah. Uh, we might look into that later. Right. That's it about the interview. Again thank you very much.

### **P03**

B: Right, so, uh, so uh, if you don't mind me asking, how long have you been on Facebook?

P03: I think it's been 10 years, yeah.

B: Yeah, um, so in the survey you said that you mainly use Facebook groups for academic groups, and local groups of your communities. If you can pick one or two of the groups you are actively working with. And focus on that later in the interview, that will be easier.

P03: Yeah, sure. Does it have to be a group I'm an admin or moderate? Or any group is fine.

B: Like there are some questions about admin and moderators so we can talk about. Basically you can talk about any groups, but if you want to focus on one group that will make the interview easier.

P03: OK, yeah yeah.

B: Right. And it doesn't matter if you mention which group that is an I will make sure our mask the group name out later in the transcript.

P03: OK. Thank you.

B: So, uh, could you tell me that house the group like?

P03: Yeah sure, so I will focus on the group, that's basically a group for [anonymised nationality] people in [anonymise country] or want to come to [anonymous country]. Because basically it's yeah, so it's mostly a group where people would post messages like, getting like flats or getting advice or [nationality] speaking doctors and things like that.

B: Yeah, cool, so how many members or like how active the group is?

P03: so it's 26,000 members right now? Uh, which is likely more than the number of [nationality] people in [country] right now. Uh and it's quite active, I would would save 14-16 new post per day. So that's a few hundreds of comments per day.

B: So roughly, how often do you check a group?

P03: OK, don't tell my boss. Uh, early in the morning, for sure. When I arrive at work, and sometimes here and there during the day. I used to be extremely active on that group. I do tiny bit of moderation, longtime few years back. Uh, yeah, let's say like three to five times today overall.

B: Yeah, so um, like can you tell me about a memorable experience you have had with the group?

P03: On that group is, I think... Well, a very specific one, would be, uh. Very few times when, Oh yeah. So that's one thing that [nationality] people love doing is discussing about politics and quite often doing like election specifically. There used to be a time when they used to to be basically a lot of like flame war, basically between people. So at some point I got a bit involved in that because people have very extreme opinions, specifically one that live overseas on the country. So it's it's a post that started very nicely, and just start posting like, strong political opinions and I got involved in that. And basically, I remember spending most of my day on that post actually, and most of the time must have been forward last elections in country that would have been [20xx year] and at some point you know, like when you start talking about politics, there starts to be some name calling on one side. So at that point of the time, actually I think yeah, it really got into a mess, because basically a few people were banned from the group at the end of the day. And the post was closed, but it wasn't most extreme because it got 100 comments very quickly, and you could tell that most people here were also working, which means during that day many of us were basically only answering on that topic.

B: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah right right, very interesting experience. How are you, a group moderator of that group,

P03: Not anymore. This one. I used to be.

B: Well you are a member, right? So do engage with the group moderators outside of their moderating role.

P03: Yes, I do report some posts once in a while. Actually, maybe once or twice per month. Uh, depending on the content. Sometimes yeah, if it the content is inappropriate or something like that. I've been in touch with moderators in the past. That was also how it became one... I used to be report a lot in the group. There used to be a period maybe in 2015 when a lot of people like start posting inappropriate stuff and I will report because I would spend a bit too much time on on the Facebook group and therefore at some point or moderate all came and say Oh, it's you again. By the way, do you maybe want to be a moderate of that group? Because I mean you've been doing so much reporting that maybe. So that's how I became one of their moderator.

B: So do you distinguish their moderator role with their remember role?

P03: Yes, but uh, there's one thing most of moderators are also very active members, so you would see them post and answer, and would be very active, not only moderating and banning, but would also like post their opinions and something like that. So at some point it's very easy to tell, and back in the days, I think already know some way to identify the moderator, I'm not sure if it was badge or some symbol next to their name. Honestly, I forgot back in the days how it was I I can see now. But I guess it didn't change ever since.

B: So um, about the group development. How has the group develop since you become active in it?

P03: I think this is the this the size of a group like maybe doubled, but I don't feel like the number of posts increase that much, because you know, it's a group where people come. Yeah, maybe they come to [country] for a few years, so when we go back with they don't leave a group. So in terms of activity, I don't feel like there's much more activity than before, it's just being mean, yeah.

B: And what do you think it makes people engage with a group instead of like alternatives like are there any alternatives for like [nationality] people in [country]?

P03: No. This one is definitely the biggest Facebook group. Uh, my guess would be. Uh, so. I know that basically long time ago, for a lot of like people living other

countries, there used to be like BBS. I know very famous one also [nationality] people in [country]. But like before I'm just stop being a thing because everybody's on Facebook basically. And, I would expect most people living in a foreign country, also [nationality] people live in foreign country are also on Facebook, so it's a very convenient thing. You just you just open your browser in the morning. You have your Gmail, you have your Facebook and you just go on Facebook and ask any random question that you have and people will see it.

B: Yeah. How do you see it developing in the future?

P03: For this specific group. I think it will stay very strong because a Facebook is becoming more like an all people being... You can see that basically like there are less young people posting nowadays an more like middle age people posting here. So except for this slight change of demographics, I think we stay strong. At least I would foresee that for next 5 to 10 years, definitely.

B: It's probably a bit off topic, but what do you think about... saying what is a young people think?

P03: It depends where I'm at... I would guess so I mean, I think Facebook has been a very big thing. Because it was like the first big social network and then after MySpace but no one in [country] use MySpace as far as I can tell, I use it because it's the most convenient thing on Earth and most of us are on Facebook. We are still connecting with a lot of like classmates, former classmates and things like that. Whereas for the young population from my understanding, they seem that and they will be using like Snapchat over like social medias.

B: Right, and so, um, you said you were moderating that group, right? So about your moderation experience. Do you have any formal guidelines or rules of the group?

P03: Yeah, so it was basically to try to warn people before, like excluding them from the group. But most most of the work was honestly spam. You know? Like, people with ad profile will start posting about hey do you want to get easy money and things like that? And yeah, that could be it.

B: Do you have any additional rules other than the public rules among the moderators?

P03: No so it, uh, the group was created by an expert lady a long time ago and she doesn't really come on it so much anymore. So it's mostly depends on the admins and moderators. But there's no like, there's no moderation guide, despite the size of the group. Because the size of the group, moderation work was compared to the size not



so huge that being an issue. So there's not a lot of coordination between admins and moderator, for example here. Basically, if you see something wrong most of the time, it's you as a moderator you brought to the group and you identify something that you think is not appropriate, and usually it's you can do it yourself. You don't need to like discuss with others. Unless there is a very specific topic be that you think might be inappropriate, but not for everyone. But no, it was very, very relaxed moderation. It was very easy to do.

B: OK, so just now is that like most of the times you can like, one moderator can do with it by themselves, but generally like do moderators work collaboratively in the group?

P03: No, not I mean not when I was moderating with myself because I I would moderate sometime during my office so my work hours. Which of course, uh, during the day I mean we I would say I am lucky enough and I guess maybe you as well to have a job that allows me to do that, but for many other people will do it outside office hours. So we moderate, like the day moderation team was likely very small and therefore yeah we will not be connected at same time and things like that. So so that's also why my guess would be since I avoid using computers outside office hours. Maybe at night might have been more collaborative because there seems to be a so more people posting and also doing at the end of the day it starts reaching the time when it's a good time for [nationality] people in [country] to connect as well. Like yeah, so for me that that's when I would stop working.

B: OK, cool like, do you have any tools to help your moderate? Or like is that that? Uh, they might be moderating work collaboratively. Do you have, like any group chats or any other tools?

P03: No, in a few cases I started discussion with the admin or the moderator. But it was more like on Facebook Messenger, most of the time. Let me think about it. No, there's not even like even. No, no. Well there was a post that was, we tried to turn into a Google Doc that was about basically the rules and what to do and what to not do. So it turns out that basically we know we don't really use it much in the end. So no.

B: OK. So like when have you noticed Facebook that introduce badges to groups.

P03: So exactly that's, I feel like it's been here forever. Uh, however I'm pretty. . . I'm pretty sure in 2009 when I join, I'm pretty sure it was not here yet, so I didn't notice that.

B: It was actually in 2017. They started like some pilots with the groups.

P03: Yeah. Then I just notice it afterwards and felt like it was. It's been here forever basically.

B: Right so now, uh, what I will do is going through the your answers in survey. Like the ratings in survey, and see if you have more to say about that. So the first question is, how much do you think you understand what these badges represent? Uh, you chose 3 four at Admin, and 4 for moderator uhm, could you tell me why?

P03: Yes, so I mean some moderator understand exactly what we do. We moderate basically. So basically they go here and they remove posts or people from the group or they post warnings and things like that. For me I understand very well, because that's also part of my on my own stuff I do for work. Admin is not always so clear. Uh, it looks like a super moderator in some aspects, but it's not clear what they do except that at some points they created the page or something like that. That's why I gave it a lower rating

B: OK, so you didn't put down any rating for New Member. Could you talk about why?

P03: Oh, for new member I didn't give any rating is it? Oh so this one for me is clear. It's to me someone who just joined the group. I don't know how long you keep it. But yeah this one is pretty clear to me here.

B: OK, right, that's right. So you put down three. I think I understand this badge just from its name for conversation starter. Could you tell me what do you think?

P03: Conversation starter is conversation starter, I would assume is that someone starts a post and therefore they are supposed get conversation starter badge, actually.

B: OK, right? So what about founding member? You gave a four?

P03: So founding member to me it's clearer than admin. So actually I realise that I'm an admin on the Facebook group and I didn't create so founding members to me was like, oh one of these guys that was a person that was here when the group was created.

B: OK right. So about visual storyteller, and rising star you put 2 on that, which means have seen this badge but not sure what it means.

P03: The visual storyteller thing, I might have seen once or twice, but I don't really. . . It didn't really connect me, I'm not even sure what it means. The next one is. . . Rising

Star... I understand the concept of Rising Star is, but I couldn't really guess. Is it someone who's becoming active? Is it someone who's getting a lot of likes on their posts, is it? So yeah, that's why.

B: Yeah, OK. So the next question is from one to five. How informative do you think these badges are? And you put down at admin, moderator, new member as five extremely informative. Why do you think they're informative for you?

P03: For moderator, is it?

B: Yeah, yeah. For admin, moderator and new member.

P03: OK, so for new member I think it is important specifically. Let's say OK if I may just be used examples of that group is, what new members would tend to do is they will join the group and then ask a question that's been asked 1000 times, every time. It's like. Hey guys, I'm going to [country] I 'd like to know how much is it, cost blah blah blah. That kind of thing that you see twice per week at least. Or do I need a visa to come here? So if it's if it's a badge it says new member I usually, moderators and myself tend to be more like patience even as just someone who just talks on that group. I'm like (sigh) that's the 15th time I seen that this month. OK these guys just joins. Well be patient to that. Moderator 1 for me is very clear. I don't know if it matters, but before joining Facebook and and Facebook groups I used to be also on in IRC which is an Internet video chat. That's very old technology, but we also had like moderators and admins, so it was quickly like go. All is very similar. So yeah I understand very well what to do. Uh, Admin, yeah, I mean why invent some, I actually I tend to confuse it with founding members, an moderator, and sometimes it sounds like a mix of both, but, generally speaking, I have the impression that the admin is able to to to administer the groups as it may be doing the same work as a moderator to and maybe will be a bit more than.

B: Um, right about conversation starter. You put a four: very informative on that.

P03: That's providing we understood with this thing carefully, but after thinking about it, I realised that maybe, maybe my understanding of conversation starter is not so good. I thought it would be like a topic that starts and maybe it gets attention or something like that.

B: OK, so basically this badges are all generated by algorithms so. Well, you're not a moderator now, but if you were a moderator during they started these badges, you will see that the moderators doesn't actually have control about what badges to give people. So like they're purely algorithmically generated, so that's why I'm asking that

if they are informative.

P03: I see.

B: Because like, for me I'm more like, I'm more trying to analyze it through what algorithm they're trying to use. But for general members they might just see if this is informative for me. If it's not like do I care about it, yeah. So keep on the question. So founding member, you put down moderately informative on it. Is that the same reason you said before?

P03: So founding member is one of these badges that's. I think it's when I see them. I'm like: So what. I mean, OK, you created that good, but that makes you like, moderator and I understand we have a job here, and admin as well. And new member, I understand at specific stages that we need to be more patient, but what do I do with the founding member?

B: OK, so yeah, it is that the same reason of for why you put down two somewhat informative for visual storyteller and rising star?

P03: Yes, yeah, definitely

B: Yeah, right. So the next question is from one to five. How different do you think the posts reads if it is posted by someone with a badge, Again, you put five extremely different for admin, moderator and new member, so why are they read different for you?

P03: OK, so I think for the new member I can mention the same. I just told you is like someone comes and ask a question that's been asked 10,000 times, if it's a new member. You're like, you'll be more patient with that. From... I mean, I understand that basically if a member comes and says: OK guys, please stop talking about politics in [country]. Let's say that the topic we should not talk about, if it's normal member. I'm like yeah. Why do I care about this person? I mean, that's an opinion here. If it's an admin posted at it means that likely, it's more than just their personal opinion, specifically if it's an admin, I would assume that it's a rule that's been discussed by the admin team, and then we decided it is important for the group to follow here. So I will be more careful about what an admin posts. For moderator I would assume similarly, except that moderators don't acknowledged as admins? So yeah, but if a moderator says in the topic: OK, you guys may want to stop talking about that particular topic. I would take it more seriously than just. Well, like a normal member that comes in says the same thing, so at least it...

B: Yeah, yeah, do you think that an admin or moderator replies to a new member will be read differently as well,

P03: Yes, let's say I'm a new member. I come here and I ask you the same question to say: oh guys I want to come to [country] do I need a visa? Uh, if it's an admin or moderator that comes OK, this question has been asked 10,000 times because this happens as well. I would expect the new member to take it seriously as in. OK, maybe I should be more careful. One thing that I used to see a lot on that group was exactly that, a question that's been asked a lot and then admin or moderate are would come and say, OK, this has been asked, please use the find feature of a group or as we go is the magnifier. Please use magnifier function an and and look for the answer yourself and I would assume that when posted by a moderate or it it makes more sense when when it's posted by a member only.

B: OK cool right that's interesting. Uh, about conversation starter, you put a two: somewhat different for the question, but uh, may I ask why you think conversation starter is very informative, but it still reads not much difference with normal posts.

P03: Yeah, because my guess would be a conversation starter would just be... So as I mentioned that it's not very clear what conversation starter actually is. I don't remember seeing that very often. UM, so that could be also why. Also, if something is tagged as a conversation starter, maybe a member or post fan. So what? I mean, I'm more interested in the content of a post here when on the somehow subjective statement that this is a conversation starter. Yeah, for me, a successful post is supposed that has a lot of interesting information and a lot of answers. I don't need a badge for that.

B: OK. So actually the conversation starter I found out that they give it to people who started at post quite regularly an and also regularly gets replied. So they get the conversation started, but apart from the number of replies they got, they didn't include like what kind of replies they've got in their algorithm, which makes sometimes if there is someone who is a very problematic people in the community, they start a post. They will still get a lot of reply. And then they frequently start one, they still get. They're still going to get a conversation starter badge . Which is not what is supposed to do I guess.

P03: Yeah, on on a side note as well, maybe for the context it might be important for you is as I told you I spent. I mean I started using the Internet in let's it early 2000s an I was on lot of discussion, forums, IRC and things like that and. I mean, as you said, I know that it's not amount of posts or the amount of answers you get in the conversation that makes the quality of it it we just. I mean it used to be basically

Internet used to be a place when people just come in and and say random things and troll a lot. So yeah. Yeah that's why. Yeah.

B: Right. So in general, do the badges gain your extra attention?

P03: Yes, if I see if I see a very long post an if I see like if I notice a badge that would be for specific user, we usually check it. So because when I see OK, if I see a badge from the original poster, I will assume it's a new member. So usually this catches my eyes because I I just look at it and if it's within the conversation itself, it might suggest that maybe the conversation is going too far and the moderator or I mean just came and said. OK guys, please calm down and things like that. So it will make me focus my attention on that specific maybe subset of a of a discussion as well.

B: OK, so would you like to get the badge at some point? Like not limited to these.

P03: Oh other badges. I am trying to think about it. So usually when I I like to get information on that kind of cool so. There would be more than a badge, but my guess would be it would be nice to have something that identifies people who give helpful answers basically. Like on StackOverflow, and things like that that you know that maybe this person tends to give good advice.

B: Yes, how so? Uh, when you mean like by giving good advice. Do you think that's like? Who should decide like, this is good advice. Like who should decide who these badges to go to?

P03: Huh? Huh I am not sure actually. It's.. It's a very interesting. Very interesting question, uh. If.. OK, I will assume in. I could see that basically, OK, uh, somebody comes in. Ask a question and they get a good answer. If there's any way for them to tag and say this was very helpful, thanks. I think that could be a good system.

B: So it's more like, like a a StackOverflow... Like do they give ratings back o the answers on StackOverflow? I don't actually know.

P03: I think on some platforms you can state this answer was helpful to me or something.

B: I think on Reddit you can upvote and downvote.

P03: But... But I I wouldn't based on upvote and downvote because every online group as communities and therefore you can attack somebody by downvoting them. Or vote your friends even if it doesn't worth that.

B: Yeah that's also true. Right so about your personal strategies on moderating the

group, what is your process like? How do you become aware of a problematic interaction?

P03: So in a few cases, it's been a report basically on the group, but in most cases is more. So I mentioned that there's usually like 20-ish new post per day, so if you go by like 3 times per day, usually you identify post way earlier on and... So there are some topics that you know, OK, this topic will not go anywhere. A nice about a lot of like only bites. Like people debating basically like posting something annoying that only get bad answers. Uh, there's a lot of in most cases, most of the work was really about spam. As I said, like someone gets hacked, an this person start posting random link. Like if you want to borrow money. If you want to buy beers or somethings like that on Facebook. And and this kind of of posts is very easy. You just see it and the pattern is always same you. It's a long post in the middle of a long individual posts in a conversation. You just go, you check it and you delete it. Usually if something is very long, uh, in a discussion it's either somebody's vent or venting, or it's basically being hacked. So in every case that catches my attention, usually. This one either long answers. I know that this may be problematic, but it was really more like me checking the post individually or doing my time, basically. That that was the idea and they are very very few posts. This might be a cultural thing here because [nationality] people don't see reporting misbehavior as a good thing. It's actually seen as very bad, so it's not something we do a lot. So sorry for your study because yeah I'm yeah I'm in different community I would say so yeah.

B: OK, so, uh again you just mentioned that [nationality] people is very different an I assume that like in that group all moderators are [nationality] people. I still like how. How do your strategies differ from other moderators?

P03: Oh Uh. For myself, my guess would be. I've got experience for the Internet, so maybe I will pessimistic, but I also can guess in a few cases, when's the conversation would go wrong. So my strategy is very similar to any other motivators. I only delete a post when it's inappropriate, but I can also identify some conversation and the way they're going and, I expect that beforehand when I might be able to feel like, OK. I think this conversation will go wrong and therefore I can warn the user at least on that one. I would say that that might be more different, maybe because I had time that was in former University, where I have sometimes more time during the day. So I was able to be more proactive on that.

B: Right, the last question is, do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook group moderation?

P03: Yes, I was moderator in like chats in the past. That was way more back in the days and on forums.

B: Would you like to talk about it.

P03: Yeah, sure, I guess that was long time ago and that was a very different payout. Actually, I think your topic on Facebook is interesting because Facebook for me was the exact period when I switch using from a nickname or pseudonym to using my real name. And to be fair, I feel like there might have been a change at that time, because OK, when we were like younger on forums and things like that. Nobody knew like even your first name. Because you would use a nickname basically so you say that again my name is Bob and everybody would call you by your nickname. So because of anonymity, issue that is, people would be we tend to be harsh. I've seen a lot of awful things, people posting and threatening each others' life. Same thing like please kill yourself and things like that. OK, and when Facebook arrives, people started using their real names, so I suspect people are a bit more cautious on Facebook and it's very uncommon to see like basically people like threatening each other. OK, it's less common, it still happens, but yeah, so on that I think the moderation task got a bit easier with time, because of that people are more careful. And now I think those would be like that even if you don't give your full name, if you really do something really bad, you might get in actual trouble. So that's a good aspect as well.

B: Cool right? Thank you very much on that. It's really helpful. I'll stop the recording now.

#### **P04**

B: Right, so, uh, so uh, if you don't mind me asking, how long have you been on Facebook?

P03: I think it's been 10 years, yeah.

B: Yeah, um, so in the survey you said that you mainly use Facebook groups for academic groups, and local groups of your communities. If you can pick one or two of the groups you are actively working with. And focus on that later in the interview, that will be easier.

P03: Yeah, sure. Does it have to be a group I'm an admin or moderate? Or any group is fine.

B: Like there are some questions about admin and moderators so we can talk about.



Basically you can talk about any groups, but if you want to focus on one group that will make the interview easier.

P03: OK, yeah yeah.

B: Right. And it doesn't matter if you mention which group that is an I will make sure our mask the group name out later in the transcript.

P03: OK. Thank you.

B: So, uh, could you tell me that house the group like?

P03: Yeah sure, so I will focus on the group, that's basically a group for [anonymised nationality] people in [anonymise country] or want to come to [anonymous country]. Because basically it's yeah, so it's mostly a group where people would post messages like, getting like flats or getting advice or [nationality] speaking doctors and things like that.

B: Yeah, cool, so how many members or like how active the group is?

P03: so it's 26,000 members right now? Uh, which is likely more than the number of [nationality] people in [country] right now. Uh and it's quite active, I would would save 14-16 new post per day. So that's a few hundreds of comments per day.

B: So roughly, how often do you check a group?

P03: OK, don't tell my boss. Uh, early in the morning, for sure. When I arrive at work, and sometimes here and there during the day. I used to be extremely active on that group. I do tiny bit of moderation, longtime few years back. Uh, yeah, let's say like three to five times today overall.

B: Yeah, so um, like can you tell me about a memorable experience you have had with the group?

P03: On that group is, I think... Well, a very specific one, would be, uh. Very few times when, Oh yeah. So that's one thing that [nationality] people love doing is discussing about politics and quite often doing like election specifically. There used to be a time when they used to to be basically a lot of like flame war, basically between people. So at some point I got a bit involved in that because people have very extreme opinions, specifically one that live overseas on the country. So it's it's a post that started very nicely, and just start posting like, strong political opinions and I got involved in that. And basically, I remember spending most of my day on that post actually, and most of the time must have been forward last elections in country that would have been

[20xx year] and at some point you know, like when you start talking about politics, there starts to be some name calling on one side. So at that point of the time, actually I think yeah, it really got into a mess, because basically a few people were banned from the group at the end of the day. And the post was closed, but it wasn't most extreme because it got 100 comments very quickly, and you could tell that most people here were also working, which means during that day many of us were basically only answering on that topic.

B: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah right right, very interesting experience. How are you, a group moderator of that group,

P03: Not anymore. This one. I used to be.

B: Well you are a member, right? So do engage with the group moderators outside of their moderating role.

P03: Yes, I do report some posts once in a while. Actually, maybe once or twice per month. Uh, depending on the content. Sometimes yeah, if it the content is inappropriate or something like that. I've been in touch with moderators in the past. That was also how it became one... I used to be report a lot in the group. There used to be a period maybe in 2015 when a lot of people like start posting inappropriate stuff and I will report because I would spend a bit too much time on on the Facebook group and therefore at some point or moderate all came and say Oh, it's you again. By the way, do you maybe want to be a moderate of that group? Because I mean you've been doing so much reporting that maybe. So that's how I became one of their moderator.

B: So do you distinguish their moderator role with their remember role?

P03: Yes, but uh, there's one thing most of moderators are also very active members, so you would see them post and answer, and would be very active, not only moderating and banning, but would also like post their opinions and something like that. So at some point it's very easy to tell, and back in the days, I think already know some way to identify the moderator, I'm not sure if it was badge or some symbol next to their name. Honestly, I forgot back in the days how it was I I can see now. But I guess it didn't change ever since.

B: So um, about the group development. How has the group develop since you become active in it?

P03: I think this is the this the size of a group like maybe doubled, but I don't feel like the number of posts increase that much, because you know, it's a group where people

come. Yeah, maybe they come to [country] for a few years, so when we go back with they don't leave a group. So in terms of activity, I don't feel like there's much more activity than before, it's just being mean, yeah.

B: And what do you think it makes people engage with a group instead of like alternatives like are there any alternatives for like [nationality] people in [country]?

P03: No. This one is definitely the biggest Facebook group. Uh, my guess would be. Uh, so. I know that basically long time ago, for a lot of like people living other countries, there used to be like BBS. I know very famous one also [nationality] people in [country]. But like before I'm just stop being a thing because everybody's on Facebook basically. And, I would expect most people living in a foreign country, also [nationality] people live in foreign country are also on Facebook, so it's a very convenient thing. You just you just open your browser in the morning. You have your Gmail, you have your Facebook and you just go on Facebook and ask any random question that you have and people will see it.

B: Yeah. How do you see it developing in the future?

P03: For this specific group. I think it will stay very strong because a Facebook is becoming more like an all people being... You can see that basically like there are less young people posting nowadays an more like middle age people posting here. So except for this slight change of demographics, I think we stay strong. At least I would foresee that for next 5 to 10 years, definitely.

B: It's probably a bit off topic, but what do you think about... saying what is a young people think?

P03: It depends where I'm at... I would guess so I mean, I think Facebook has been a very big thing. Because it was like the first big social network and then after MySpace but no one in [country] use MySpace as far as I can tell, I use it because it's the most convenient thing on Earth and most of us are on Facebook. We are still connecting with a lot of like classmates, former classmates and things like that. Whereas for the young population from my understanding, they seem that and they will be using like Snapchat over like social medias.

B: Right, and so, um, you said you were moderating that group, right? So about your moderation experience. Do you have any formal guidelines or rules of the group?

P03: Yeah, so it was basically to try to warn people before, like excluding them from the group. But most most of the work was honestly spam. You know? Like, people

with ad profile will start posting about hey do you want to get easy money and things like that? And yeah, that could be it.

B: Do you have any additional rules other than the public rules among the moderators?

P03: No so it, uh, the group was created by an expert lady a long time ago and she doesn't really come on it so much anymore. So it's mostly depends on the admins and moderators. But there's no like, there's no moderation guide, despite the size of the group. Because the size of the group, moderation work was compared to the size not so huge that being an issue. So there's not a lot of coordination between admins and moderator, for example here. Basically, if you see something wrong most of the time, it's you as a moderator you brought to the group and you identify something that you think is not appropriate, and usually it's you can do it yourself. You don't need to like discuss with others. Unless there is a very specific topic be that you think might be inappropriate, but not for everyone. But no, it was very, very relaxed moderation. It was very easy to do.

B: OK, so just now is that like most of the times you can like, one moderator can do with it by themselves, but generally like do moderators work collaboratively in the group?

P03: No, not I mean not when I was moderating with myself because I I would moderate sometime during my office so my work hours. Which of course, uh, during the day I mean we I would say I am lucky enough and I guess maybe you as well to have a job that allows me to do that, but for many other people will do it outside office hours. So we moderate, like the day moderation team was likely very small and therefore yeah we will not be connected at same time and things like that. So so that's also why my guess would be since I avoid using computers outside office hours. Maybe at night might have been more collaborative because there seems to be a so more people posting and also doing at the end of the day it starts reaching the time when it's a good time for [nationality] people in [country] to connect as well. Like yeah, so for me that that's when I would stop working.

B: OK, cool like, do you have any tools to help your moderate? Or like is that that? Uh, they might be moderating work collaboratively. Do you have, like any group chats or any other tools?

P03: No, in a few cases I started discussion with the admin or the moderator. But it was more like on Facebook Messenger, most of the time. Let me think about it. No, there's not even like even. No, no. Well there was a post that was, we tried to turn

into a Google Doc that was about basically the rules and what to do and what to not do. So it turns out that basically we know we don't really use it much in the end. So no.

B: OK. So like when have you noticed Facebook that introduce badges to groups.

P03: So exactly that's, I feel like it's been here forever. Uh, however I'm pretty. . . I'm pretty sure in 2009 when I join, I'm pretty sure it was not here yet, so I didn't notice that.

B: It was actually in 2017. They started like some pilots with the groups.

P03: Yeah. Then I just notice it afterwards and felt like it was. It's been here forever basically.

B: Right so now, uh, what I will do is going through the your answers in survey. Like the ratings in survey, and see if you have more to say about that. So the first question is, how much do you think you understand what these badges represent? Uh, you chose 3 four at Admin, and 4 for moderator uhm, could you tell me why?

P03: Yes, so I mean some moderator understand exactly what we do. We moderate basically. So basically they go here and they remove posts or people from the group or they post warnings and things like that. For me I understand very well, because that's also part of my on my own stuff I do for work. Admin is not always so clear. Uh, it looks like a super moderator in some aspects, but it's not clear what they do except that at some points they created the page or something like that. That's why I gave it a lower rating

B: OK, so you didn't put down any rating for New Member. Could you talk about why?

P03: Oh, for new member I didn't give any rating is it? Oh so this one for me is clear. It's to me someone who just joined the group. I don't know how long you keep it. But yeah this one is pretty clear to me here.

B: OK, right, that's right. So you put down three. I think I understand this badge just from its name for conversation starter. Could you tell me what do you think?

P03: Conversation starter is conversation starter, I would assume is that someone starts a post and therefore they are supposed get conversation starter badge, actually.

B: OK, right? So what about founding member? You gave a four?

P03: So founding member to me it's clearer than admin. So actually I I realise that I'm an admin on the Facebook group and I didn't create so founding members to me was like, oh one of these guys that was a person that was here when the group was created.

B: OK right. So about visual storyteller, and rising star you put 2 on that, which means have seen this badge but not sure what it means.

P03: The visual storyteller thing, I might have seen once or twice, but I don't really. . . It didn't really connect me, I'm not even sure what it means. The next one is. . . Rising Star. . . I understand the concept of Rising Star is, but I couldn't really guess. Is it someone who's becoming active? Is it someone who's getting a lot of likes on their posts, is it? So yeah, that's why.

B: Yeah, OK. So the next question is from one to five. How informative do you think these badges are? And you put down at admin, moderator, new member as five extremely informative. Why do you think they're informative for you?

P03: For moderator, is it?

B: Yeah, yeah. For admin, moderator and new member.

P03: OK, so for new member I think it is important specifically. Let's say OK if I may just be used examples of that group is, what new members would tend to do is they will join the group and then ask a question that's been asked 1000 times, every time. It's like. Hey guys, I'm going to [country] I 'd like to know how much is it, cost blah blah blah. That kind of thing that you see twice per week at least. Or do I need a visa to come here? So if it's if it's a badge it says new member I usually, moderators and myself tend to be more like patience even as just someone who just talks on that group. I'm like (sigh) that's the 15th time I seen that this month. OK these guys just joins. Well be patient to that. Moderator 1 for me is very clear. I don't know if it matters, but before joining Facebook and and Facebook groups I used to be also on in IRC which is an Internet video chat. That's very old technology, but we also had like moderators and admins, so it was quickly like go. All is very similar. So yeah I understand very well what to do. Uh, Admin, yeah, I mean why invent some, I actually I tend to confuse it with founding members, an moderator, and sometimes it sounds like a mix of both, but, generally speaking, I have the impression that the admin is able to to to administer the groups as it may be doing the same work as a moderator to and maybe will be a bit more than.

B: Um, right about conversation starter. You put a four: very informative on that.

P03: That's providing we understood with this thing carefully, but after thinking about it, I realised that maybe, maybe my understanding of conversation starter is not so good. I thought it would be like a topic that starts and maybe it gets attention or something like that.

B: OK, so basically this badges are all generated by algorithms so. Well, you're not a moderator now, but if you were a moderator during they started these badges, you will see that the moderators doesn't actually have control about what badges to give people. So like they're purely algorithmically generated, so that's why I'm asking that if they are informative.

P03: I see.

B: Because like, for me I'm more like, I'm more trying to analyze it through what algorithm they're trying to use. But for general members they might just see if this is informative for me. If it's not like do I care about it, yeah. So keep on the question. So founding member, you put down moderately informative on it. Is that the same reason you said before?

P03: So founding member is one of these badges that's. I think it's when I see them. I'm like: So what. I mean, OK, you created that good, but that makes you like, moderator and I understand we have a job here, and admin as well. And new member, I understand at specific stages that we need to be more patient, but what do I do with the founding member?

B: OK, so yeah, it is that the same reason of for why you put down two somewhat informative for visual storyteller and rising star?

P03: Yes, yeah, definitely

B: Yeah, right. So the next question is from one to five. How different do you think the posts reads if it is posted by someone with a badge, Again, you put five extremely different for admin, moderator and new member, so why are they read different for you?

P03: OK, so I think for the new member I can mention the same. I just told you is like someone comes and ask a question that's been asked 10,000 times, if it's a new member. You're like, you'll be more patient with that. From... I mean, I understand that basically if a member comes and says: OK guys, please stop talking about politics in [country]. Let's say that the topic we should not talk about, if it's normal member. I'm like yeah. Why do I care about this person? I mean, that's an opinion here. If

it's an admin posted at it means that likely, it's more than just their personal opinion, specifically if it's an admin, I would assume that it's a rule that's been discussed by the admin team, and then we decided it is important for the group to follow here. So I will be more careful about what an admin posts. For moderator I would assume similarly, except that moderators don't acknowledged as admins? So yeah, but if a moderator says in the topic: OK, you guys may want to stop talking about that particular topic. I would take it more seriously than just. Well, like a normal member that comes in says the same thing, so at least it...

B: Yeah, yeah, do you think that an admin or moderator replies to a new member will be read differently as well,

P03: Yes, let's say I'm a new member. I come here and I ask you the same question to say: oh guys I want to come to [country] do I need a visa? Uh, if it's an admin or moderator that comes OK, this question has been asked 10,000 times because this happens as well. I would expect the new member to take it seriously as in. OK, maybe I should be more careful. One thing that I used to see a lot on that group was exactly that, a question that's been asked a lot and then admin or moderate are would come and say, OK, this has been asked, please use the find feature of a group or as we go is the magnifier. Please use magnifier function an and and look for the answer yourself and I would assume that when posted by a moderate or it it makes more sense when when it's posted by a member only.

B: OK cool right that's interesting. Uh, about conversation starter, you put a two: somewhat different for the question, but uh, may I ask why you think conversation starter is very informative, but it still reads not much difference with normal posts.

P03: Yeah, because my guess would be a conversation starter would just be... So as I mentioned that it's not very clear what conversation starter actually is. I don't remember seeing that very often. UM, so that could be also why. Also, if something is tagged as a conversation starter, maybe a member or post fan. So what? I mean, I'm more interested in the content of a post here when on the somehow subjective statement that this is a conversation starter. Yeah, for me, a successful post is supposed that has a lot of interesting information and a lot of answers. I don't need a badge for that.

B: OK. So actually the conversation starter I found out that they give it to people who started at post quite regularly an and also regularly gets replied. So they get the conversation started, but apart from the number of replies they got, they didn't include like what kind of replies they've got in their algorithm, which makes sometimes if there is someone who is a very problematic people in the community, they start a post. They



will still get a lot of reply. And then they frequently start one, they still get. They're still going to get a conversation starter badge . Which is not what is supposed to do I guess.

P03: Yeah, on on a side note as well, maybe for the context it might be important for you is as I told you I spent. I mean I started using the Internet in let's it early 2000s an I was on lot of discussion, forums, IRC and things like that and. I mean, as you said, I know that it's not amount of posts or the amount of answers you get in the conversation that makes the quality of it it we just. I mean it used to be basically Internet used to be a place when people just come in and and say random things and troll a lot. So yeah. Yeah that's why. Yeah.

B: Right. So in general, do the badges gain your extra attention?

P03: Yes, if I see if I see a very long post an if I see like if I notice a badge that would be for specific user, we usually check it. So because when I see OK, if I see a badge from the original poster, I will assume it's a new member. So usually this catches my eyes because I I just look at it and if it's within the conversation itself, it might suggest that maybe the conversation is going too far and the moderator or I mean just came and said. OK guys, please calm down and things like that. So it will make me focus my attention on that specific maybe subset of a of a discussion as well.

B: OK, so would you like to get the badge at some point? Like not limited to these.

P03: Oh other badges. I am trying to think about it. So usually when I I like to get information on that kind of cool so. There would be more than a badge, but my guess would be it would be nice to have something that identifies people who give helpful answers basically. Like on StackOverflow, and things like that that you know that maybe this person tends to give good advice.

B: Yes, how so? Uh, when you mean like by giving good advice. Do you think that's like? Who should decide like, this is good advice. Like who should decide who these badges to go to?

P03: Huh? Huh I am not sure actually. It's.. It's a very interesting. Very interesting question, uh. If.. OK, I will assume in. I could see that basically, OK, uh, somebody comes in. Ask a question and they get a good answer. If there's any way for them to tag and say this was very helpful, thanks. I think that could be a good system.

B: So it's more like, like a a StackOverflow... Like do they give ratings back o the answers on StackOverflow? I don't actually know.

P03: I think on some platforms you can state this answer was helpful to me or something.

B:I think on Reddit you can upvote and downvote.

P03: But... But I I wouldn't based on upvote and downvote because every online group as communities and therefore you can attack somebody by downvoting them. Or vote your friends even if it doesn't worth that.

B: Yeah that's also true. Right so about your personal strategies on moderating the group, what is your process like? How do you become aware of a problematic interaction?

P03: So in a few cases, it's been a report basically on the group, but in most cases is more. So I mentioned that there's usually like 20-ish new post per day, so if you go by like 3 times per day, usually you identify post way earlier on and... So there are some topics that you know, OK, this topic will not go anywhere. A nice about a lot of like only bites. Like people debating basically like posting something annoying that only get bad answers. Uh, there's a lot of in most cases, most of the work was really about spam. As I said, like someone gets hacked, an this person start posting random link. Like if you want to borrow money. If you want to buy beers or somethings like that on Facebook. And and this kind of of posts is very easy. You just see it and the pattern is always same you. It's a long post in the middle of a long individual posts in a conversation. You just go, you check it and you delete it. Usually if something is very long, uh, in a discussion it's either somebody's vent or venting, or it's basically being hacked. So in every case that catches my attention, usually. This one either long answers. I know that this may be problematic, but it was really more like me checking the post individually or doing my time, basically. That that was the idea and they are very very few posts. This might be a cultural thing here because [nationality] people don't see reporting misbehavior as a good thing. It's actually seen as very bad, so it's not something we do a lot. So sorry for your study because yeah I'm yeah I'm in different community I would say so yeah.

B: OK, so, uh again you just mentioned that [nationality] people is very different an I assume that like in that group all moderators are [nationality] people. I still like how. How do your strategies differ from other moderators?

P03:Oh Uh. For myself, my guess would be. I've got experience for the Internet, so maybe I will pessimistic, but I also can guess in a few cases, when's the conversation would go wrong. So my strategy is very similar to any other motivators. I only delete

a post when it's inappropriate, but I can also identify some conversation and the way they're going and, I expect that beforehand when I might be able to feel like, OK. I think this conversation will go wrong and therefore I can warn the user at least on that one. I would say that that might be more different, maybe because I had time that was in former University, where I have sometimes more time during the day. So I was able to be more proactive on that.

B: Right, the last question is, do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook group moderation?

P03: Yes, I was moderator in like chats in the past. That was way more back in the days and on forums.

B: Would you like to talk about it.

P03: Yeah, sure, I guess that was long time ago and that was a very different payout. Actually, I think your topic on Facebook is interesting because Facebook for me was the exact period when I switch using from a nickname or pseudonym to using my real name. And to be fair, I feel like there might have been a change at that time, because OK, when we were like younger on forums and things like that. Nobody knew like even your first name. Because you would use a nickname basically so you say that again my name is Bob and everybody would call you by your nickname. So because of anonymity, issue that is, people would be we tend to be harsh. I've seen a lot of awful things, people posting and threatening each others' life. Same thing like please kill yourself and things like that. OK, and when Facebook arrives, people started using their real names, so I suspect people are a bit more cautious on Facebook and it's very uncommon to see like basically people like threatening each other. OK, it's less common, it still happens, but yeah, so on that I think the moderation task got a bit easier with time, because of that people are more careful. And now I think those would be like that even if you don't give your full name, if you really do something really bad, you might get in actual trouble. So that's a good aspect as well.

B: Cool right? Thank you very much on that. It's really helpful. I'll stop the recording now.

## **P05**

B: Thank you again for participating in this so do you have actually? Do you have your phone on something that was your Facebook login? It's because it will be useful in this.

P05: Take me to log into Facebook?

B: Yeah Yeah, 'cause there might be some questions that you want to check your Facebook.

P05: Yeah 'cause I don't use it very often.

B: Or if you don't have anything.

P05: There it is. I couldn't even tell you what group in 5 minutes, but

B: Yes it will be useful to have it.

P05: OK so I couldn't even remember how I can get to it. But yes we have it.

B: OK so. Do you know how long, like roughly have you been on Facebook?

P05: No idea probably, probably about 8 years. Something like that.

B: Yeah. What kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in?

P05: I can tell you now. I am in what do you mean by category of type of interest?

B: Yeah.

P05: So um music festivals, art, some sort of spiritual groups, alumni, fitness, photography, pets, and quotes. I was in so many.

B: So. As you know, this is a study about how is it like as a Facebook group member or moderators experience. So do you currently admin or moderating any group?

P05: No.

B: so you're only members of this?

P05: Yeah.

B: OK, so could you pick a specific group that you're interacting mostly with?

P05: Yeah, I'd say them one. Well, it depends what you called interacting, in terms of ones that I might see more kind of posts from than others. I'd call that possibly interacting with versus, last year in the run up to a festival I was working out, I had a huge amount of interaction on it because it was very time specific. So um, most recently I would say it's the one that's about pets, so it's about there's a... I found quite recently a Facebook group specifically about that kind of [pet] that I own. So

I've joined that group. Prior to that, so I've been looking at a lot of their activity, but prior to that it would have been a festival that I worked at last summer.

B: OK, so if we just focusing on like those two groups, and it will make the interview a bit easier.

P05: Yeah yeah that's fine.

B: So how would you think those groups like? How active they are?

P05: How would I what sorry? How active are they? How active are the groups you mean?

B: Yeah like how many members and how many posts per day for example?

P05: Oh I see. So they, the [pet] group is very active. Probably at least one post per day, if not more. The festival group less so now as I said, it was time specific for the festival, but people still post pictures occasionally and now they're looking forward to next year when they might work again. But the [pet] group. There's a lot of activity. In fact, probably a bit too much.

B: So let's focus on that [pet] group. How many members are there in the group?

P05: I don't know. We can have a look. 5000 roughly.

B: Wow that's a lot. How often do you check the group recently?

P05: Well, I... It's a notification thing, so I get notifications when the group has new posts. So depending on how often I go on to Facebook, which can vary, sometimes it might only be twice a week. Sometimes it might be every other day.

B: So, uhm. Can you tell me about any memorable experience you have with like any of these groups?

P05: Uhm... Memorable experience. I wouldn't say it's memorable experience in terms of if you think maybe a memorable post, uhm? I guess things... On the [pet] group that things that I'm interested in, so somebody else asking about creating a pan in the garden that the tortoise might go in. So that was something I'm particularly interested in. On the festival one, it was people putting up photographs from after we'd worked at the festival.

B: Do you still engage with a group like recently, like your engagement with that group. What kind of engagement you have with the group?

P05: It possibly liking a post, reading it. The [pet] one I'm relatively new member, so I haven't actually gone on there and asked any questions yet. But that's the kind of group why I'd probably ask a question. The other one would be more kind of answering... Again, maybe answering a question if somebody like a new volunteer wants to get information about what it's like to work there, so I might do that, but I'm not particularly active. I'm not. There are some people I've noticed, who post questions all the time, which I find a bit irritating.

B: So, so the [pet] group. What do you think it makes people engaged with the group instead of alternatives?

P05: Because it's very specific, I was quite surprised actually when I just Googled, the [pet] Facebook groups, but they were actually lots, but then also by species. So it's actually about a particular type of [pet]. So the information on there is extremely relevant and, yeah, is there something quite nice about being part of that community. For me, I was thinking of actually rehoming my [pet] and this is kind of made me think twice.

B: OK, great so. When did you join the [pet] group?

P05: It was only about 2 weeks ago till three weeks ago, yeah

B: OK so I think this question is more for the festival group. So how has the group developed since you have become active on it?

P05: More just more members, so the more people that signed up to volunteer, so you're getting a kind of... I suppose a new kind of stream of people saying hi, I've just joined the group, or what's it like to work here, but the content can be quite repetitive.

B: So. How do you see it developing in the future?

P05: But it's not my group, so how would I, how? How would I like to see it developing?

B: Yeah.

P05: I think. More content, more sort of content about previous festivals would be good. That's actually put forward by the moderators or the admin people. I think it's nice that you can get individual sharing content, but I think also it would be nice to have more sort of top down stuff as well.

B: Cool, so um. So how would you describe like your general engagement with the groups?

P05: Low.

B: Do you see any formal guidelines or rules for the groups like the [pet] group?

P05: I'm just trying to remember when I joined, whether there was. Um, a message that came up. I don't know if it was on Facebook, I think it was just a case of I joined and then it was. I had access, but in other groups, for example, meet up or free cycle, then Yes much more of a: This is kind of rules, so you don't kind of hassle people you know, much more kind of in your face guidelines. So I don't remember so much of that for Facebook now.

B: Like how many moderators in the group do you know?

P05: Don't know, no idea. So, but like on Meetup by way of contrast, it's very clear who the group owner is and who the hosts are so you can see very clearly by little icon who is actually a kind of group leader, so they have a style by their name. On here, so I'm looking at my group, uh, I don't know where I would go. It doesn't say who is the owner or the moderator. Oh, it's just got a string of pictures along the topic here.

B: If you click on the three dots, it should show you who they are.

P05: Yeah yeah so but you have to kind of to me. I would look at that and think, that just means you're going to see more members, so it's not obvious who actually owns it. There, see this group rules here when you actually click on the title.

B: So yeah, so have you actually read it?

P05: Nope, no, I haven't. But no pictures of [pet] roaming the living room floor sitting on the sofa wearing jumpers or being cuddled. What? Random, random. There you go, there are some rules, however silly they are.

B: It seems like people don't check them really often.

P05: No, I didn't. I think it's common sense, you know how to behave, but I guess it's their, their backup for if people are rude, they've got somewhere to point them to and give them a reason why they can boot them out, the group. I get that.

B: So, have you notice that Facebook has introduced badges for this groups?

P05: No, but I can see one there a little shield, which kind of goes back to us. Just think about meet up doing it with the Red Star, but that's a little shield and it says admin, so I guess that's her badge, but it's not. . . Oh on this one. It's got clapping for a new member. They're very subtle. And actually I wouldn't notice them at all 'cause

I'm looking at the content, not the name. So I think a different color or something more more kind of in your face would be more appropriate.

B: So so next I'll go through, like, uh the question in the survey that you filled in and see if I have additional questions to ask you, so let's start it from... From the question about from zero to five, how much do you think you understand what these badges represent? You haven't rated anything for new member,

P05: I hadn't seen it, I'm just looking at it now. I wouldn't have known, but looking at this I see, where it says new member and it's got the kind of I thought it's clapping, but it's a waving hand. It makes sense, but it's not very visible.

B: OK, So what do you think? Uh, what do you think, how Facebook decide who to give this new member badges to?

P05: New members? People that have recently signed up?

B: OK, yeah, So what about conversation starter?

P05: What do you mean?

B: What do you think about who Facebook decide who is conversation starter in the group?

P05: Well, person rather than a theme or a topic as a conversation starter. So they give a person?

B: Yeah.

P05: Whoo I don't like that. No, I think they give it to somebody who posts a lot of new topics asks questions, has high engagement, on the platform. But I don't like it. I think it's wrong.

B: What about visual storyteller?

P05: Somebody post a lot of video or pictures. Yeah, yeah, and I think I don't understand why they're doing it. It's kind of like why I could understand as a marketer, I work in account and marketing. I can understand why, if I had particular influences that I was using to help me permit to campaign, I might internally say, although great visual storyteller, they're brilliant conversation starter. Let's get them on this campaign, but I think for Facebook to give you a badge, is that? I think it's ridiculous, I think it would alienate a lot of people. It's kind of like well, if they are that and why can't you be both and what am I? I just think it's wrong.



B: Yeah, so how informative do you think the badges are?

P05: I think as I say, looking at that one, the admin, the little wavy hand. Um that illustrated, but I don't think they're informative, and they're small. So. yeah, I don't think they... They kind of do a job. I've only seen two there, the admin and the new starter, but they're illustrative but not informative and not that they have got a huge amount of stand out,

B: So do the Badgers get your extra attention?

P05: No. No they didn't get much attention.

B: So do you think the post read differently if it is post by someone with a badge?

P05: Not necessarily.

B: So, for example, is opposes posted by admin or moderator. Do you think it reads differently with the badges?

P05: Uh. Possibly, I think you would think this is going to have kind of information about the group. Uhm, I don't know whether admin and moderator people have the opportunity to post in a capacity as a group member as well. I don't know if they can, but now I would expect if it was an admin post that it would be about, something official about the organisation of the group. I mean this one. She's an admin and. It's worms and how to deal with them, so I guess it's kind of like you know she'll be posting stuff that's a bit more authoritative and ought to generate discussion so.

B: So what about a post by new member? So do the post read differently?

P05: Not necessarily. I think new member is more of a well, it's just a way of saying this is a new person. The interactions might be different cause people might think. Oh, this is a new member and I'm going to say Hello, but I don't think again I don't think it's some. But again I don't think it is some, it doesn't stand out enough. I wouldn't even have noticed it. I might if I read it. Then go back up to look at her name and think, oh, who wrote that then I might see new member, but I don't know how long that stays on there either. How long are you a new member? Is that a week? Is it a year? I don't know.

B: So what about conversation starter? So if a post is posted by someone...

P05: That would switch me off, I've think either... Well A-I'm not quite sure who actually gives them that badge. I just don't. I don't like that whole idea at all, and I

think if it's something that yourself kind of give, I think that's even worse and I just wouldn't read the content. I think I I don't. I don't understand the concept.

B: OK so how do you think that these badges can be informative for you in some of the... I mean in the context of the music festival volunteer group. If you are going to design the badge, how do you think is going to be informative or what kind of badge do you think is going to be informative for you?

P05: Well, in the case of the music festival group, the admin or moderator badges are useful when somebody has asked a question, for example, when do applications open or I haven't got my email, what's going on and loads of people might be saying, oh, I haven't got mine either. But then an admin person steps into the conversation and says. They're sending them out tomorrow. So you know that that's an official response, I think hat's probably. The single most useful and informative thing.

B: So what about the [pet] group like? How do you think like if any badges are going to be informative for that group.

P05: I supposed you would think that somebody who's set up the group, so an admin or moderator is going to have. You would perhaps maybe you shouldn't assume, but you would perhaps assume that they would have a good level of knowledge. So again, if somebody's asked a specific technical question, you might think actually they're going to have a good level of knowledge. Uhm, don't know.

B: So, if there is a way to if there is a way to tell you that. Is this person has a specific knowledge int the group that will be helpful, right?

P05: Yeah, I think if it was somebody who's an expert and they're a qualified expert and they're qualified expert like, they're a vet, or, so they're not somebody who's got an interest in this. This is somebody who is specialised 'cause they're qualified in... Yeah, yeah, then I think that would be interesting. But again, I think it's about prominence and visibility. They don't stand out. 'Cause there's a lot of people on here. Most of the posts I would say 80% that I've seen: I'm looking for advice; I'm looking for advice. What do I do about this? How do I feed in that? How do I do that? And the people that reply, for example, if one of these people blah blah of . One of these people had a star or something, whatever it is saying, and you thought actually there as an expert, you'd read that first. I would.

B: So do you have any experience outside of Facebook group like in other online communities?

P05: Yeah. Say meet up?

B: Yeah.

P05: And free cycle.

B: so. How do you think the experience compared to Facebook groups in general.

P05: I think it's it's clearer. Although I don't know if that's because the groups are smaller and say, then well, there's a couple actually that they've got a couple of thousands, but in the main the numbers are much smaller so it's easier to identify who are the hosts and who were the members. Plus it is quite a different thing sometimes the and the space and the content spreads out because you've got the group. But then you have events. So it's not one huge long feed.

B: OK, so how do you think the moderation on like meet up differ from Facebook groups?

P05: I... As I said earlier, I think meet up the rules and the rules of engagement are much clearer up front so people actually in the description of the group will often be really explicit about either age range or this isn't a social. This isn't a dating group, they're much more up front in that. And then another experience I've had was a social group on meetup when I was accepted into the group. I then had a message from the organizer which was a standard message he sent out to everyone, setting out lots of advice and tips on how to engage with the group, how to go to your first meet-up so it was much more directive in that way. They're not all like that, but much more so than I've experienced on Facebook.

B: So. How do you choose like, if you are looking for Facebook group or a group or Meet-Up or something else when you first trying to join a group.

P05: How do I choose? Well, they're quite different, but in the Facebook is tend to be tends to be interest led rather than well. It's more kind of in depth interest rather than an interest to lead to a social activity. So on MeetUp, I think when you first register, you put in lots of things you're interested in, so it suggests groups for you or search by time date, so it tends to be something that's it can be an ongoing interest. So for example, outdoors or it will be I want to do something this weekend. Where is with Facebook again with this is [pet] group. You know it's something quite specific.

B: Cool. I think that's pretty much everything.

**P06**

B: Right so so before I ask the questions, do you have like any phones with you that have your Facebook login?

P06: Yeah,

B: so if you can give it login and some of the questions you might want to check your Facebook for the answers, that will be quite handy. So how long have you been on Facebook

P06: since 2008? Hum.

B: So what kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in,

P06: mainly cycling?

B: How long have you been with the group.

P06: Those groups. 2 three years four years.

B: So this is a study about how it's like to be in Facebook groups. How many groups do you currently admin or moderating?

P06: About two? So it's like 3. Well, there's more. There's more that I'm part of, and then there's two that I am managing.

B: Like which groups they are.

P06: So it's associated with the Facebook page that I run with my friend. So it's like [sport] focused as well. And then there's one where it's like a fan page for a famous [athlete]. So one group is associated with the page and other ones just group.

B: OK, cool. Which one do you mostly be engaged with?

P06: the one that's associated with the page, so that has 2000 members, whereas the other one doesn't. Has less than 100.

B: OK, so maybe focus on the bigger group later in the interview to make it easier. How's the grip like? Like how active it is

P06: everyday someone posts something. So like 20 / 30 people.

B: OK, so roughly, how often do you check the group

P06: once a day?

B: Or like do you check it regularly even without the notifications? Or do you check it based on the notification

P06: based on the notifications?

B: So basically whenever there is a notification you check on that?

P06: yeah

B: Right. So can you tell me about a memorable moderation experience you have?

P06: Good or bad?

B: Any of them

P06: So I find it quite interesting not like these groups become like a fixture for peoples lives that there's there's one particular member he posts every single day, constantly and really engages with everyone every single. So it kind of it doesn't become that life, but it becomes like part of part of their digital identity that they feel like proud of being part of a group and a community. And terms are bad experiences you have, you quickly see, like, escalate if there's disagreements and it very quickly becomes personal, which I found really, well, fascinating, but like that you can get so heated over something. With someone you don't know or and you're kind of only getting and then you also have a lot of people who like posts like irrelevant content. Just trying to kind of shoved their own material in peoples faces 'cause they see that there's a small community, so.

B: OK so do you know how many moderators or admins the group currently have

P06: There's two of us.

B: OK so two of you and managing 2000 people group. Like how did you started that group?

P06: So we started it via the Facebook page. So a lot of people that have come a come on the back of Facebook page but a lot of people have joined since as well.

B: Do you two engage with a group outside of your moderator role?

P06: Yeah, yeah. So we post as a page as the page in the group.

B: How do you distinguish between the moderator and normal member?

P06: What do you mean?

B: So you said that use to engage with a group outside of your moderating role.

P06: Yeah, right?

B: How do you distinguish between when you are posting on your moderating role or not? Just like a normal member.

P06: Oh I guess so if I post in the group as a... I guess I just post things I think will be relevant, but like moderation is more looking at each thing is not looking at the funny aspect is looking at if it's appropriate or not and if it's just trash to be honest.

B: What do you think makes people engage with this group instead of alternatives?

P06: Uh. Good question, it's a small tiny group, so I think that they have the page in common. Kind of unites them a bit and then, but it's... I don't really understand it 'cause there's it's not like it's just I'm from [country]. If it's [nationality] people, it's like people from the Philippines from the US from Brazil. It's like there's no coordination so. Yeah, I think the daily interaction or members is the reason people keep coming back, so it's not a quiet group. It keeps its active. That's what I was trying to look for. So you have a lot of groups where nothing happens and then that kind of doesn't incentive by people to actually. They don't feel valued.

B: So that links through the next question like how has the group developed since you become active on it?

P06: How do you mean?

B: So how do you see the group has developed?

P06: Uh. Soon that you started that yeah, we became more engaging with the group. So we try to link more of what we are posting on Facebook page and then posted it in. Not just posting that in the group like as if it was just a copy and paste exercise, but like. Have more tailored post towards like having poles and what do you think and all these kind of things are making people more engaged with what was going on. OK.

B: And how do you see it developing in the future?

P06: Just growing bigger and then trying to engage more with people and make them feel valued. And they're not just a number in some random digital space Facebook,

B: So you mentioned that is currently 2000 members and quite active now already right. Like And you wanted to get bigger in the future, yeah, so how are you going to manage it if it becomes bigger?

P06: Oh, get a third moderator.

B: What is your criteria of choosing the third person?

P06: Someone? I trust someone who has a bit of Experience on Facebook. Kind of knows a bit about [sport] and knows what's inappropriate or it's appropriate.

B: OK, so like, how do you assess that?

P06: Uh, I guess by knowing the person. So like the other moderator, he's my friend, so I know him pretty well.

B: So basically by knowing the person off line.

P06: Yeah, yeah, no, there's no moderator I don't know.

B: OK, cool. Right so. How would you describe your general approach to moderating the group?

P06: Fairly relaxed. I don't obsess over it.

B: OK, so do you have any formal guidelines or rules for moderating the group

P06: in terms of what they can see or what? Probably yeah yeah, we have a set of rules. Be kind and courteous, no hate speech or bullying. No promotional spam. Respect everyone's privacy.

B: So this is public and right?

P06: Yeah, do you have any additional ones among the moderators?

P06: Uh. No, that kind of covers everything

B: OK? Do you moderate the group collaboratively with the other moderator?

P06: No we don't. he does. We kind of. We split the duties of the page so the page on the group on separate days. So when you're managing the page or managing the group as well,

B: OK. So how do you relate to the other moderator?

P06: well he's my friend so I've known him all my life pretty much.

B: Right, so the next part I will go, I will basically go through like you're the question there that you have answered trying to see if there is any extra questions. I want to ask based on. Your answer on this away. The first one is do you? Do you use any tools to have help you moderate?

P06: Well, other than members reporting posts. But I'm not quite useful.

B: What kind of pills that members generating general reporting?

P06: So we had an episode of someone basically posting borderline porn images and they just flagged it up straight away.

B: So like do you have any follow-up like steps after a member reporting that?

P06: yeah, we delete the post and then block the person forever or page or whatever 'cause we have both groups. No people and pages in that group which can get quite annoying sometimes.

B: Right, so in the question there is that you have notice that Facebook has introduced those badges right?

P06: Yeah,

B: has your group enable the badge,

P06: yeah?

B: Do you know what batch in your group is in their old?

P06: What you mean

B: Like what kind of badges? So if we go to the group and go to the. Save settings, there will be a badge section.

P06: Yeah,

B: and you can see like what badges are enabled in it,

P06: storyteller, founding member. Yeah, it's basically there too

B: so What do you think that visual storyteller represent?

P06: Is it just a large block of text with an image or?

B: So how do you think Facebook decide who to give like a visual storyteller badge to?

P06: I guess there's some algorithm based on. The number of words that they're using and then just if there's a number of images with it or.

B: Um and you said founding member, right?

P06: Yeah



B: what do you think founding member represent?

P06: Maybe within the first hundred members of the group? Or something like that?

B: About that so basically I have checked that. Badges explanation by Facebook the official one. So visual storyteller. Yes, it's about someone who pose a lot of pictures or videos and founding member is actually. I think it's actually. Someone who first when you first started at the group, they have joined and they help to add other people to that group.

P06: Oh I see, yeah. that makes more sense yeah.

B: About the question from zero to five, how much do you think you understand what these badges represent. An you chose 5 for rising star which is I know exactly what this badge means, and what to do in order to gain this badge. What do you think rising star represent?

P06: Posting regularly? And liking a lot of other posts so really engaging with the group.

B: Then what about conversation starter you rate it as three I think I understand this badge just from its name,

P06: Yeah?

B: Like could you think about, if you want to, assume that if you want to get the conversation starter badge, what do you need to do?

P06: Post something where people would comment a lot on?

B: OK.

B: Yeah. The next question is. Fro one to five how informative do think these badges are? And for moderato you chose 5 extremely informative? Could you talk a little bit about why do you think more moderators badge should be extremely informative in the group.

P06: So if they have something to report, they know who to contact to control the group,

B: OK. So what about founding member? You also choose 5 extremely informative.

P06: Yeah, just. Kind of shows that they've actually been there a long time and then been there from the beginning.

B: OK, do the badge of founding member gang you extra attention of your work as a moderator.

P06: No, not really.

B: Why it doesn't matter?

P06: Um. Well, I mean. Maybe it doesn't, actually. Maybe it's not really that important. 'cause if its founding member, it was only in the beginning. So now if the group is so much bigger and been so long as well so much further down the life cycle of the group that maybe it's not that important anymore, that having founding members 'cause it's kind of it surpassed that.

B: So do other badges gain your extra attention when people post things?

P06: I think visual storyteller kind of, it gives them some kind of credibility.

B: What strategies do you use if you see opposed by a member with like these badges? How do you feel if you see a post by a member of a badge of something.

P06: Dumb. My just makes it a bit more, it just gives them that thereof, not respect, but like they kind of earned some. Yeah, they've earned something. So like I guess that's what Facebook are trying to show that they are like there's more credibility behind that particular person. Particular person in the group, 'cause they've actually devoted a lot more effort.

B: So. Um, in the ratings you said if the post is made by someone with a new member badge, it reads moderately different for you, could you explain a little more about that? Like why it's moderately different if it is posted by someone with a new member badge.

P06: but you don't have, you don't know, you don't know any. There's no history behind them. There's no could be anyone, there's no

B: OK, So what kind of things do knew members usually post in, like the group that you're moderating?

P06:, So we kind of have a thing where you used to his Facebook have a tool where they show you who's how many people have joined so you could do like a list of people who just joined, so you just click and it comes with all the names and then you can just welcome all the members. So normally the first post like hi my name is blah blah blah. I'm excited to start [sport] or here's my [sport equipment], I'm from [country]. I'm from the [country]. So, so it's more like they introduce themselves, but some, like some new members. If they only that kind of spam, their stuff, they kind of join and

then instantly they. They just have their like post a video or whatever and trying to attract people to whatever website or Facebook page.

B: Oh, right. Like thinking about in the context of your [sport] group, how can those badges be informative for you as a moderator. Like not limited to the current ones.

P06: So more you mean?

B: more informative for you as a moderator

P06: Uh. You could have something. You know, I mean, if you had like a rather have like a scale so they give you a scale like maybe 1 to 5, how engaging they are with the group and that would give you a better perception of. Rather than storytellers like you said, sometimes you might not know what that means. But if you have like their engagement with the group is of three out of five or 1 or 2 or something like that, and then you could quickly spot if someone is just there to like kind of shove their own things in other people's spaces 'cause you would see their engagement is actually one out of five. Or you could be. It could be like their engagement with the group engagement with each post or something like that.

B: So how do you think that we can measure the engagement with the group? Is it by frequency of posting or checking or like? How do you think that we should measure that?

P06: Yeah, I think engagement with the post. So like take the weekly engagement. So if there are, if there's 20 a day, then there's 140 a week. How many of those 140 have they actually engaged with? And then have that like maybe as a percentage or something. I don't know, just so it gives you kind of a number that you can measure.

B: So basically you think that it would be helpful for you as a moderator if there is a more detailed reputation system and if you

P06: Yeah and if they could give that, then you could also recognize them each way. You can say this person is.

B: Yeah, here's the thing that I'm curious about like so if you have like those badges like conversation starter or visual storyteller, things like. do you think that, because you just know you said in your group there is one member that keep posting engaging with that group. Do you think that currently in under this system you actually notice the person before noticing the batch they.

P06: Yeah yeah, we notice the person. Cause you see the name comes up all the time

and you don't notice there's no badge when the notification comes up,

B: OK. Then is about your personal strategies for moderating the group. What is your process for moderating the group like? What is your process for moderating the group? What kind of strategy do you use?

P06: So in overall or? So from they applied to the group too. They do a post or?

B: For example, how do you become aware of a problematic interaction?

P06: Uh, either we spot or it's a member that flags it up. OK, and we have like the so it's not a public group so you can't just join it. There is like you have to get approval and there's like 5 questions and we kind of deduce whether or not to let them in. If 'cause many people just apply and don't fill any question so we just send it back and say you're not coming in until you answer the questions and that's kind of a easy way to keep people out who aren't serious about it. Well, not serious, but like who are just joining a group for joining a group and not really. . .

B: Do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook group?

P06: No.

B: Are you any members outside of Facebook groups?

P06: Isn't there any Reddit or?

B: There's also like discord, or like online forums.

P06: No.

B: Do you like being a moderator in Facebook groups?

P06: Yeah, it's alright. But it can get quite tedious.

B: What do you think your engagement with the group will look like if you weren't a moderator?

P06: Probably how my engagement is with all the other [sport] groups where it's kind of. You don't really take it that serious, but if it comes up on your feed and you see something interesting, you like it, but you're not going specifically into that group, you're just as it comes up your liking it, so it's, very, I don't know. Occasional is not random. Yeah, casual. It wouldn't be like oh Hey guys, anyone?

B: OK, I think that's it. Thank you.

**P07**

B: So before the 1st question, um, could you just, uh, open your Facebook page just in case you need to check when you answer a few questions?

P07: OK. Yeah it's open.

B: OK so um how long, have you been on Facebook?

P07: Um, probably since, let me check it probably says on Facebook somewhere.

B: OK.

P07: Hum. Actually I can't find it along time I think I must have been maybe 14 or 15 years old almost 10 years I think.

B: OK, right? So what kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in on Facebook?

P07: Um? There is a few student groups, some travel groups, some sort of vegan groups are sort of food and inspiration recipes things like that just a bit of lifestyle or interests mainly.

B: OK, so um, are you an admin or moderator for any of those groups?

P07: Uhm, I am an admin for one group which is related to, um, writing and eating disorders.

B: Oh cool. So, um. As you know, this is a study about like what is like an to interact in Facebook groups. If you can like so for the questions after a few can focus on the group that you're currently admin for, that would be great, just make it easier, right. So how long have you been with the group?

P07: I'm since 2007 no wait, I was. 18 years old, so that's about five years now.

B: OK, how did you become an admin or a moderator of the group?

P07: I set up the group myself.

B: Oh cool, so is a group that you created by yourself.

P07: Yeah

B: OK, uhm. So. How's the group like? How many members all posed per day?

P07: It's got, I'll check the members now, but I usually post about once or twice a week. Uhm, and there's 506 followers, apparently.

B: Is this a group or a page?

P07: Oh, this is a page actually. What's the difference exactly?

B: For the pages like it's like a blog that people can follow. A group is like a place that everyone can post a comment.

P07: Yeah, I see I was part of a group two years ago on, I'm still technically uhm a moderator of the group. I don't really use it anymore, it was for a peer mentoring in 2017 2018.

B: Is this still active now?

P07: Well, it's still active, but we haven't posted anything since 2018, so I guess not really

B: OK, so um, do you have any group you mainly used recently like even as a member?

P07: Yeah. As a member, there's a, uh, a [food] group. That sort of post recipe inspirations, things like that. So I may post something sometimes, but especially comment on other peoples's post.

B: OK. So let's focus on that group instead. 'cause like that is more like active, right?

P07: Yeah,

B: OK, so again, uh, how's the group like and like? How many members will post per day?

P07: OK, so there are let me see. Almost 13,000 member. That's a lot. I don't think there's a post every single day or. Actually. I think they're usually is. I think there's usually a few, maybe like 5, six every day, but it's a bit variable.

B: OK, so roughly, how often do you check the group?

P07: I don't really go to check it, but it comes up in my feed. There's quite lot of post so

B: OK so you basically try to read it every time it comes up in your feet.

P07: Yes,

B: OK, right. So, um. Do you have any like memorable experiences with that's [food] group? Either post or about interacting with any members.

P07: Not really, there's just it's not. Uhm, I interact with the group, but it's nothing really that stands out particularly

B: OK so. How do you engage with the group? Like just now, you said you'd put comments on that. What kind of post? Uh, you like to comment on? P07: If there's a recipe that looks really good on my oh that looks that looks nice, like what's the recipe for it was or something like that.

B: OK, have you tried to like follow their recipes before?

P07: Uhm yeah, yeah. So, uhm so.

B: So what do you think it makes people engage with that [food] group instead of other alternatives?

P07: Um? I think it's just quite a welcoming group. People post a lot on it so that posts come up a lot and then you reminded, Oh yeah, that group exists and you're more likely to engage with it yourself. I think.

B: OK, so is there any other place for like [food] communities, other than Facebook is there anywhere online that you will use as a source of that and the alternatives?

P07: Um, in terms of recipes, I guess there's some, uhm, Just recipe blogs and stuff, less interactive, obviously.

B: So what about communities? Are you mainly just using Facebook groups?

P07: Yeah I think so yeah, OK. Uh.

B: How has the group developed since you become active on that?

P07: I don't think has changed much. I think I've been part of the group for maybe half a year or so, but still seems the same to me.

B: OK. Um so again, how do you see it developing in the future? Or how do you want it developing in the future?

P07: Um? I think the post will remain fairly similar, but I think there will be maybe more posts and more people that will like the page and engage with the pages like it's just going to grow.

B: OK. So apart from the growing one, so, uh, you said currently is 13,000 people right?

P07: Yeah

B: So it is already quite large size of community already. if it grows larger in the future, like what do you think?

P07: Um? It will develop into um, do you mean how many people will like? Like yeah. I'm really not sure to be honest. I think it is becoming a bit more trendy right now so. Uh. I think it'll definitely grow, but I'm not quite sure exactly how much.

B: OK. Are you aware of any like problematic posts in the group?

P07: No.

B: OK cool. Do you have any formal guidelines or rules in that group? Can you check on any formal guidelines like in announcements or rules?

P07: Oh yeah, I do think there is. This group is specifically about [food] recipes, so it says you have like if you engage with this group. It is to either comment on other people's posts or to post your own recipes with [ingredient] based foods. And nothing, nothing else.

B: OK, so, uh. Have you been aware that any of the posts against this rules?

P07: I don't think so. I haven't seen any so.

B: OK, so it might be have been moderated before we have seen that.

P07: Yeah.

B: How many more drinkers in that group? If you go to members it should show you like how many at means or moderators there.

P07: I can't see any. Let's press that button and have a look. OK, so there's three admins and moderators.

B: Uh, is is that three in total?

P07: Yeah, three in total.

B: OK, uhm, right. So, uh, in the next section I'm going to go through the survey that you filled in and trying to see if there's any like follow-up chats. So it has your group enabled the badge functionality?

P07: Have I seen any members with badges? I've seen new member pop up before. I probably have seen other ones, but that's the only one that really pops out.



B: OK, cool, uhm, what do you think that Facebook like how Facebook decide who to give new member badges for?

P07: I guess people that have just joined or people that are posting their first post on the page maybe.

B: OK. So in the survey. Uh, the question about from zero to five? How much do you think you understand what these badges represent? You gave four I have read, I have read and confident I understand the description of this badge about conversation starter like can you talk a little bit more about that like why did you rate it as four?

P07: Uh, the conversation starter?

B: Yeah, the conversation started.

P07: I think the name conversation starters sort of implies that it's a person that starts conversation, so like it seems, uhm? Like a good description for someone that might start a thread or something on the page.

B: OK, yeah. Uh, so again from one to five. How informative do you think these badges are? You also put at 4 on conversation starter as very informative. Why do you think a conversation starter badge will be very informative for you in the group?

P07: Um? With that I sort of meant that sort of the name conversation starter implies implies what it is.

B: OK. So, so do you think it is informative as like from a group point of view? For example, do conversation starter badge gaining extra attention when you trying to check on the post.

P07: I'm not sure to be honest because conversation starter just, I, I guess it sort of implies you might be a bit talkative or like quite engaged with the page, but I don't think that would necessarily change the way people looked at you or or how to conversation with you.

B: OK, so um, that leads to the next question because in next question from one to five, how different do you think a post reads if it is posted by someone with a badge, you put one. No difference at all for conversation starter. Is that the same reason of that?

P07: Yeah exactly

B: OK, uhm and also you put two somewhat different for new member, could you talk

a little bit about why do you think a new member Post would read differently?

P07: Well, it seems like their new to the page, so probably you might be more likely to expect that they accidentally violate like one of the rules, for example, or that, uhm they might be vague in their description, whereas people that post more often might give the recipe or are sure to not violate the rules. So you might take that into consideration when you read the post.

B: OK cool. So, uhm. Right, assume that. You are the moderator of the [food] group. How do you think with these badges it will be informative for you as a moderator?

P07: Yeah, especially with the new member thing. If they violate a rule, I think it's easier to say Oh well, you have to follow this rule, but you know what your new members so it's OK. Just know in the future that this is the rule. And. Maybe for conversation starters if there's lots of conflict going on in the page or a lot of debate, then maybe conversation starter could give some kind of indication about that potentially.

B: Oh so it talk about this conversation starter as an indication is that indication for someone. Like in a good way or in a bad way.

P07: I think it could be either. It could be that they are very engaged with the page, but if you look at their comments and they seem to be quite argumentative than potentially it could be negative as well.

B: OK. So do you think it should be like, do you think that these badges work as like an award for members that is engaging a lot with the group or do you think it is just like a tag to give people.

P07: I think for some people it's yeah. I think some people would consider it a reward as well.

B: OK, um do actually want any of this badges.

P07: Uh, personally, I'm not so engaged with the page to want a tag like that, but I do think some people might be very passionate about [food] or uhm, yeah and and and appreciate to have a badge like that.

B: OK so um. Other than Facebook group, is that you're a moderate are for a Facebook page, right?

P07: Yeah,

B: have you notice that they've enabled this top fan badge in the page?

P07: I did see that I think, but I didn't pay much attention to it really.

B: OK, what do you think about the top fan badge?

P07: I think in some pages it can be useful. So for example the [food] page 'cause it can be rewarding if you've got a top fan badge, but especially if it's a page about mental health disorders. In my pages about eating disorders, I don't think it necessarily be rewarding to be fun 'cause you might not want necessarily like family your friends to see that you engage with the page maybe?

B: OK. All right, uhm? So do you have any experience outside Facebook group? And online communities like is that uh like for example, Reddit or discord?

P07: Does YouTube count?

B: Uhm sort of.

P07: Instagram doesn't really have groups, does it?

B: Yeah, it's it's more social media, than online community.

P07: Yeah. I would probably say YouTube to some extent because I have a YouTube. Page so you do have to interact with people that comment on the videos and things like that, so it does feel. Quite attractive in that way.

B: OK, do you do you? Are you aware of any problematic comments like in YouTube?

P07: Oh yeah, definitely. There's some people that sort of purposely try to calm and things are gonna upset other people or trigger argument. And also some people that might comment very advertisement. Kind of post as those things on YouTube?

B: How can you be aware of this on YouTube?

P07: Because I am the owner of the channel, I have, um? Like comment moderation on it so YouTube will. Um show when it suspects spam, but also when any new comment is post, I get notified so I can see it right away.

B: OK, so when there is a problematic post or comment, what is your follow-up steps after that?

P07: If it isn't major, I'll probably leave it not respond to it, just like leave it there. But if I think it might upset other people, or if it's really out of line, then I might delete the comment.

B: OK, what kind of behaviors are dim as problematic for your YouTube page?

P07: Again, because it's about mental health. If there's anything that I think would be hurtful to other people or extremely triggering to other people to read, then I wouldn't want that in the comment section because that could be that could be hurtful. And

B: yeah, OK. So how do you see your strategies about moderating this mental health related pages differ from like other pages.

P07: I mean there's some pages, specially really large ones that probably don't even moderate their comments and just leave them there. But because the size of the channel is still sort of manageable, I decided that I've I found it worth, uhm moderating the comments to some extent.

B: OK, this is interesting. Thank you very much.

### **P08**

B: So how long have you been on Facebook?

P08: Well, I had it when I was in year six I think. So around when I was 11 or 12 and then posted like a few things, like as kids do and then I deleted i because I didn't have any use for it and then I re downloaded it as I came to this uni and so yeah since 2019.

B: OK So what kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in on Facebook?

P08: I'm in my course group and my flatmates group. And then

B: is that Facebook group or Messenger Chat Group?

P08: Oh Facebook group. Yeah, I'm not really.

B: So if you go on Facebook and check groups it should be there.

P08: Oh yeah, I'm in a [sport] group and then a [another sport] group and in accommodation group, like the flat group and [another sports] and then my course group so.

B: Do you know how long have you been with this groups?

P08: Since probably since the first week of uni,

B: OK. Which year are you in?

P08: I'm in fast, yeah

B: so do you know which group you are mainly like? Interact with,

P08: probably the course group,

B: so if you can focus on the course group later, that will make it easier. Right. So how's the group like like? How many members or posts per day?

P08: probably about over 200members and it's very active. There's always messages coming through every single day, but I I don't, but I only message on occasion when I feel like it's necessary.

B: OK so roughly, how often do you check the group?

P08: Um? Probably. Every once a day.

B: Like do you have any memorable experience with that group?

P08: yeah. Memorable experience. On the groups, they sometimes do post. And sometimes they quite interesting to see how people respond. There's nothing else that we particularly classes and memorable.

B: What kind of post do you feel like it will be interesting?

P08: Well. They say like do for example. Do you like? How much do you like this lecture? Or how much do you like this module? And then if. Some some the majority of use of against my own that I'd be like. Then my friends are like as we usually share the same views. We were like what the hell?

B: Oh Right so. And are you moderator of any of these groups?

P08: No.

B: What do you think it makes people more engaged with the group instead of like alternatives?

P08: Um? And what would be the alternatives be?

B: I don't know is there any alternatives for that?

P08: There aren't really that as easy to use. I mean it's very accessible. You could have their limits. The amount of people in particularly. It's easy to do the polls. As I said she could like. When you're applying to someone, you can click on the message that they said and then replied directly to that message, which is quite helpful, I'd say.

B: Yeah so. Is it the group for? The like like all the students in your course or like just one year?

P08: It's just my year. It's

B: So how do you say the group developing in the future

P08: I see. Lots of people muting it because it will look. I feel like it's going to become less useful. I'd be quite a lot of the people already talked to say they've already muted it because they find it really irritating for the messages coming in OK. I mean, they might. They've already made smaller groups for different modules, so I probably see it just splitting up and not being just one big clump, people

B: OK. So. Does it differ from how you would like it to develop further?

P08: No, I think it's good that it would spit up because at the moment you get a lot of junk.

B: Right? So do you have any formal guidelines or rules for that group?

P08: Not that I know of.

B: So would you mind checking about that please? Is there any actual guidelines or rules? Either pinned at the top or in the description.

P08: It says our aim is to provide a welcoming, inclusive and fun environment for all students interested in course. Everyone is welcome and then it just says about. The events, socials, bills, academic speakers and then it says about the Society membership, so I don't think there are any formal rules.

B: How many moderators or admins do you have in that group?

P08: Three admin. So what I can tell

B: are they like just well known members in your community or there from the University? I know one of them only, but there not well known. I wouldn't say,

B: OK. Right? So, so in the next part I will basically go through the survey that you fell in and trying to see if there's any additional questions to follow up in so. Um, in the survey you said that you haven't seen any of the group edges, right?

P08: Yeah,

B: OK. What I'm going to do is I will show you a few examples, an explanation for those badges and and then I will follow up questions. So. So this is an example for someone with an admin batch. Oh yeah, so actually. So if you go in hoover on that issue, show that. Oh sure, yeah, what is the badge mean. This is a new member badge.

So again, if you hover on it, It shows you that this person is a new member. So for example for those things. Now that you know that. They have those badges in it. Think about in the psychology group that you are in. How do you think? How do you think like Facebook decides who to give the new member badge too.

P08: Surely anyone who's... Wait? I would say that they just give them to anyone has joined within the last week or maybe even a month.

B: So. As you said. In the. In the question there is that for new member badge., is a post or a comment posted by someone with a new member badge, it should read very different for you.

P08: Yeah,

B: Could you explain why?

P08: I probably pay more attention to the post. I'd see if they were like. If any doubt about everything and if you probably, if you saw that there were new member, you'd be more willing to respond if they had a question or.

B: What about in the psychology group like?

P08: Yeah, I'd say that applies to that as well. I just say it applies to any group.

B: Do it actually still have new members joining in?

P08: No.

B: So. Right so. There's another badge called conversation starter they implemented. What do you think the conversation starter badge mean?

P08: Uh. Probably. Oh gosh, like I don't understand what that would read, because unless they chose the badge themselves that they wanted to show that they were trying to initiate conversation.

B: So this is purely implemented by algorithm, so it's generated by algorithms so. How do you think Facebook decides who to give this conversation started badges to?

P08: Maybe people who haven't posted in a while. I don't really know to be honest.

B: So do you think this badges will gain your extra attention when it's posted by someone with a badge?

P08: I think if you know that that they would. But to be fair, I've probably seen them by probably typical notice, 'cause they're quite small.

B: Like For example. If you want to get a badge, called. Rising Star, what would you do to be the rising star?

P08: Maybe comment a lot? like post a lot. Like a lot of things, yeah, I wouldn't ever feel like I needed to be the rising star in a Facebook group to be honest. It's not really like I wouldn't see that as something I would aim towards.

B: OK, so for example in the course group. If you. If you want to design a badge for it that you really want what kind of that you want to design?

P08: Maybe like The worst dedicated scientist, but it would be like as a joke, people wouldn't really take these badges. I feel like people wouldn't take these badges seriously. Maybe if it was factual ones like new member new member or admin, they would take it seriously, but if it's like rising star or best scientist then don't go to pay much attention.

B: But again, think about the context of the psychology group. Did you all join in at once?

P08: I'd say pretty watch.

B: So. Based on your explanation about new member, s that like everyone will be new member in October?

P08: Yeah, so everyone joined around the same time, so nobody's going to be like, Oh, your new. So we have to. Maybe pay attention to what you're saying.

B: OK, yeah, so how could it be informative in their group?

P08: I think it is not necessarily informative at this particular group, but say I'm also a member of a [sport] group like why you sell items to do a [sport], and if you're a new member that I feel like people would pay more attention to the new products that you have to offer for sale.

B: Right? So have you become aware of any problematic interaction in the group?

P08: Sometimes people get nto. Some arguments, but it will just petty there, so not really.

B: Is there any like moderation on those problematic interaction?

P08: No no.

B: What kind of behaviors? Are deemed to be problematic in that group.



P08: I feel like. People can be quite blank and they feel like because there all the group that they can. They could get away with saying comments that they obviously always would say in real life. But it's all forgotten about quite quickly 'cause it's just

B: OK. Do you have any experience outside of Facebook group? Like other online communities?

P08: Do you mean like Snapchat group? So like.

B: Like Reddit or like Discord groups.

P08: Oh yeah, I have actually better discord group.

B: OK, what kind of this group is it?

P08: it was very brief. It was OK gaming group OK, but I just quit,

B: OK. How's your experience compared to a Facebook group based on the discord group?

P08: I think discord is more. For me it was more for fun like just chatting with friends, playing games. Whereas the Facebook is just more practical thing for me just to see you. Any notifications or events coming up that I should be aware of.

B: OK. Do you see any difference in the moderation in between Facebook group and discord group,

P08: there was no moderation in either of them For me.

B: Or you haven't noticed that?

P08: Well for the Facebook group. For students, there's no moderation. There might be some in the other groups I mentioned. Yeah, that definitely is some of the other groups I mentioned, but in the discord group there was definitely no moderation.

B: OK, so based on what you see, the course group developing in the future, do you think like some level of moderation will make the group better than no moderation at all now? Or

P08: I feel like people might be more conscious of what they're saying. OK, if I feel like the only moderation that would make any difference if it was by a lecturer or somebody higher up, if it's just by student people, aren't going to take any particular very tough

B: What do you think your engagement with the group will look like if there is any moderation in the course group?

P08: I'd say would stay at the same level. I mean I only ever engage in the group when it's absolutely necessary, so the same would apply if they were working with moderation.

B: What do you mean by absolute necessary?

P08: If I really desperate for answers.

B: What kind of answers? Courseworks?

P08: Yeah, like essays, lab report.

B: So basically the group is more getting general help from the peers.

P08: or maybe if I want to know, If somebody's posted something about a psychology of related event, then I would comment find out specifics about that event, otherwise, I don't really.

B: I think that's pretty much it. Thank you very much.

#### **P09-Chris**

B: If you can, do you have your phone with you with Facebook login? So if you can have it with you. That will be nice when you answer the questions later. So roughly how long have you been on Facebook?

Chris: I think it was around since. Since 2009. So that's a long time

B: So what kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in on Facebook?

Chris: I usually go to like political discussions, social issues and human rights. Sometimes there are funny groups also.

B: Which group is the one that you engage most with?

Chris: Which in the sense like?

B: Which Facebook group do you think that is the group that you get more engaged with the type of group?

Chris: Political discussions.

B: OK, how long have you been with that group?

Chris: here are a number of groups time to time. So the recent one is being like three or four years.

B: So, uh. I've seen that in the survey that you fill in then. You're you're also moderating or administrating groups on Facebook, right? What kind of groups are they?

Chris: Political slash social gathering. Human rights groups. And then different even-rights groups. Secret groups and open groups both.

B: Could you talk a little bit more about that, like which one are you? Are you mainly moderating?

Chris: I actually admin admin.

B: Yeah, which one are you administrating?

Chris: Actually four groups Here that I'm actively administering. All four of them, political and social issues.

B: OK, uhm. Would you like to pick one group that's you have the most work with and focus on it later just to make just to make the interview easier. So how's the group like? How active it is?

Chris: Yeah, it's usually like I think you get five to ten post today.

B: Right. Roughly how many members in the group?

Chris: I think that one is very active has around 350 members.

B: OK, how many admins or moderators?

Chris: There are five or six admins, but there are more moderate is like 10 or 15 moderators.

B: How are these people being chosen?

Chris: And so this is kind of a secret group, so we just. You know, physical meetups and things like that. So once you attended those physical meet-ups you were added to the group. Then we know who's in the group and then when you host or engaged in organizing activities, then you are a moderator.

B: Roughly how often do you check the group?

Chris: Every day, every day.

B: Do you check it on the like daily basis or is is that like if there's a new notification and you just go and check it?

Chris: I am doing kind of both.

B: So do you have any memorable moderation experience with that group?

Chris: Yeah, sometimes you have to take down certain post by members.

B: Would you like to give some examples?

Chris: Yeah, there was. There was another administrator of the group, so we usually practice, anything can be posted as long as it's not to harassment. Even like a very severe criticism against one person can be posted. And then there was an issue. Somebody else made a post, criticizing on something, then it sparked a huge conversation. One of the admins, you know arbitrarily just removed it, took it down, and myself in some others were like, no, you can't do that. It has to be there. With all the conversation and dialogues we sit there and that was one of the them. We seldom remove posts. Quite often everything that people post, people don't post unnecessary thing. OK, yeah.

B: So, did you started the group? So you've been the admin all of the time.

Chris: Yeah,

B: OK, cool. Do you still engage with the group outside of your moderating role? Like as a member, not as a moderator.

Chris: In the group, yeah.

B: Do you engage with the group as a normal member meant normal member without wearing the moderator hat? How do you distinguish between when you're being a moderator or normal member?

Chris: OK, when I come into another people, supposed that's I would feel like I'm just normal. If I have to approve things. If I have to add people. And that's when I play the moderating role. I don't change the contents people post.

B: What do you think it makes people engage with this group instead of other alternatives?

Chris: I think I like the basic rules that he said. So basically, like people like to be less, how do you call? Regulated? But then you have to make sure there is a kind of self regulation. Then everybody feels it's focused.

B: So how has the group developed since you have become active on that?

Chris: I've been members since it was started at the beginning it was like 10 people like us back then. So we started slowly every month there are like 45 new members later. In certain months we add 20 like that. That's how it is now it's just like 350 or 60 members. I like sometimes, yeah. There are other groups for years.

B: OK. Um, how do you see it developing in the future?

Chris: It will keep on going on the same phase. Yeah, and we did. We just replicated same groups to more groups with a different focus, so then you know the it's divided number of new people are being added has to be divided by two other groups, so it might be a little slow, but. Continue to naturally go around. Like I just say, 100 people are here.

B: OK, yeah. Does this differ from how you would like them to develop in the future?

Chris: Can we obviously like to have more members?

B: Yeah, and also you mentioned that you splitting it to different subgroups. Does it differ from how you would like it to be developed in the future? Is this what you want? This group to redevelop?

Chris: No I think... Because we have a sort of, you know, default way of doing it so you would not only have one group when it's increases, you create another smaller group and you define who can be in which one? So specific people can be on the end to the other one.

B: Yeah, cool.

Chris: So it may. They may be there maybe same people in two groups but there may not be same know there may not be same people in two groups... Could have. There are people who are in both groups. There are also people who aren't in both but in only one.

Chris: OK. So how would you describe your general approach to moderate the group? I generally like have a very less intrusive approach,

B: so do you have any formal guidelines or rules for moderating the group?

Chris: Well, usually what we do, as long as there's no nourishment. You have to let the person's opinion trivial. Make sure everybody has a way to engage.

B: Have you got the rules publicly, publicly announced or displayed anywhere in the page?

Chris: We have a WhatsApp group for the moderators. That means, so that's where we discuss. OK, so.

B: How do the members know that?

Chris: So when the members first joined the group, there's no rules for them. No, there is a small description in the group. It says that. The focus of the group expectations. Those are not rules. OK, so basically there's no rules publicly displayed in the page. But then when we add people we tell them this is our practice. And then they just simply abide by that. There had been like people doing violating the practice. Not deliberately. They didn't know that all they weren't serious about it, so we had to remind them. Then it's fine.

B: So just now you mentioned that you have a WhatsApp group for all the moderators, right? So do you actually moderate collaboratively with them using the WhatsApp group?

Chris: Yeah yeah.

B: How do you deal with that? Like what is the process?

Chris: Usually not many matters concerning the Facebook group comes into WhatsApp Group. Because it's pretty much clear the understanding we let everybody, except somebody feels something is not right. So sometimes you know a certain people have been added who shouldn't be in the group. So then the other moderators discussed that in the WhatsApp Group, who is this person at it, by whom approved by whole. And then we'll ask, why did you approve that? They'll bring an explanation, and then we make a decision whether to keep that person or mute the person for some time. OK cool. So basically the decision is made collaboratively by moderators, if there is a doubt on that.

B: Do you use any tools to help you moderate? Like tools that Facebook provides you?

Chris: Like Uh, like the reporting functionality on Facebook to report people. So like if one of the members here post as problematic, they can report it to the moderators or admins.

B: Do you use any of those things?

Chris: Usually the thing is like I haven't got any such complaints. because we're all there before it comes from members. We would just quickly react.

B: So do you take like a staff rotation of the group or just is very casual?

Chris: Yeah, I think it's very casual like whoever is online, whoever is able to digest.

B: So then I will go over the survey that you fill in and see if there's extra questions on the top of that. OK, so about a question which which badge have you seen in Facebook groups? Well, I'm not sure here is like you kind of choose everything. So have this in all of them, including Admin Moderator and new member, conversation starter, founding member, visual storyteller and rising star. That's impressive. Like generally, what do you think about? What do you think about these badges?

Chris: Thing is, it's classified people, so then it makes your life easier if you're if you're making a post, and if you want many people to reach out right, and it makes your life easier, you know whom you want to tag. So if you know if someone is says we should storage teller if you take that person. I mean, you know. It gives an indication it's basically gives a history of particular person, the badge, and if it's a new member, if the person make some mistakes and if I see there's a new member. I mean obviously the approach would be much more gentle or the person did not know.

B: Cool, so uh. How do you think Facebook decide who to give this badges for it? Like for example, how do you think Facebook decide who to give conversations daughter badge for?

Chris: I think like Facebook must have this program in, monitoring based on our activities. So how do you think like what like it's maybe the frequency if I keep on posting particular type of posts that say I put picture and then you know caption this. I guess that must be like something they would count as a visual storytelling. Right and then you know if you use videos and other thing. And if you're I mean if you have had post that have started long conversation, maybe maybe some could be a way, they detected, yo, his person start conversations long conversations.

B: Do these badges gain you extra attention for your work as a moderate are?

Chris: No. It just helps me, that's all.

B: OK. Could could you tell a little bit more about how? Like why it does not getting extra attention but in the other way that it also helps you to give you more explanation.

Chris: I mean it, it tells me in the sense like. Get a sense of who is this person. But I have never follow it up. No, I have never followed it up. Because of there is a batch I wanted to see who is this.

B: So. Right, let me check. So uhm in the ratings you've given, from zero to five, how much do you think you understand what these badges represent? You go for two: have

seen this badge but not sure what it means for rising star. Could you talk a little bit more about it?

Chris: I don't know what does it even mean? Rising star I can see like maybe someone who's posting too many things and you know. Having a lot of like so, subscription subscribers maybe, but I don't know why, but I hope they choose it.

B: OK. So the other question is from one to five. How informative do you think these badges are? And you rated four for admin moderator, and new member which is very informative, very clear cut. Yeah, yeah, so you rated conversation starter 3: moderately informative and storyteller as 3 as well. So what do you think about these badgers are moderately informative for you.

Chris: I put it in a relative sense. I think had been another thing that's clear cut. The other ones might have any grey areas of measurements.

B: The next question is from one to five. How different do you think, a post or a comment reads if this is posted by someone with a badge, you rated it as two: somewhat different for admin, but one: no difference at all for moderator. Could you tell me why there is a difference between admin and moderator badge.

Chris: What is the question again?

B: The question again, so the question was from one to five, how different do you think a post or common reads, if it is posted by someone with a badge.

Chris: No, I don't like admins can actually remove members. And. Proactively, you know they have more authority to, you know, change the settings where as moderate. Just don't. So moderators are basically members with, you know just approval power. That's all.

B: OK so.

Chris: That's why it doesn't make a big difference in compared to members,

B: So what about a new member post? Why is it? Why is it read no difference at all for you? If this is post by someone with a new member badge.

Chris: I don't see the message different to be honest. Yeah it doesn't distinguish in that sense. The only I mean, all these badges I think I don't know whether it has anything to do with that.

B: So what you're thinking what you are saying is like. It seems like they're doing



something but not informative enough, at least for you as an admin for the group?

Chris: Yeah, I mean it, it doesn't make much of a sense in terms of informative, but new member is informative only for the fact that there's a new person to the group. But we don't know how long they are new and other things, right?

B: Another question is as as an admin. Have you found yourself sometimes in conflict with what this badges itself?

Chris: Confusion? Sometimes found it... Sometimes confusing, like sometimes like what is this moderator and admin really mean? An everything is like I don't bother to go and read all these differences in Facebook provides. And visual storyteller and the rising star. I mean, obviously I don't know that these are like little confusing, but they may have differences, but. Yeah. Am I... I don't know this

B: So what are males? So you found someone has, for example, you found someone has a rising star badge. We don't actually know what this is. What this is mean, and you don't actually know why Facebook decided to give this rising star badge to this person. Is that what you're saying?

Chris: No, what was the question again?

B: So I'm just trying to repeat what you say or trying to understand what you said. So did you meant? When you found someone has a rising star badge, you don't actually know why this person has this badge. But you kind of know that what this badge mean?

Chris: Yeah. In the sense like, I mean I know this person must be. And you call getting more hits or lies. Yeah, that's what I felt, OK, cool.

B: Right? So how do you become aware of a problematic interaction in the group?

Chris: When I read the thread.

B: Like what is being defined as problematic in your like politics group.

Chris: So I said, like any harassment.

B: What other follow-up steps, when you found a problematic post?

Chris: Maybe haven't actually found any problematic in the four years of time in terms of harassment. Usually what we do in other cases like first will reach out to the person and tell that person OK, why have you done this? Sometimes there have been situations in other groups. They weren't intentional doing it. Somebody felt it. Another person

felt it off ended and there had been some heated argument which obviously to certain kind of things.

B: So, uhm. Do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook? In other online communities.

Chris: In the sense?

B: Reddit? Discord groups? .

Chris: No.

B: Do you like being a moderator in Facebook?

Chris: Not really, just want to be a member and enjoy it. Sometimes it's OK to moderate so that you OK, but I don't know.

B: Why?

Chris: It is too time consuming.

B: Apart from the time consuming part why would you like to be a normal member instead of a moderator?

Chris: So then I don't have to worry about things. I'll go there only when I'm. When I when I feel like. If you are a moderator, notifications keeps on coming. Somebody won't attend to that. There may be a delay.

B: Cool. Thank you very much. Yeah.

#### **P10**

B: If you can have your Facebook login on your phone that will be helpful. If you don't have your phone with Facebook. So how long roughly have you been on Facebook?

P10: I guess like 8 years, something like that.

B: So. In the question that you submitted. You said that you belong to both public and private Facebook groups. What kind of like what type of Facebook groups are you mainly in?

P10: In what sense type?

B: So OK, I can see category buy and sell, civics and community, vehicles and commute.

P10: Let's see.

B: So like what kind of groups are they?

P10: OK so I can't see that. So what are the options?

B: Well, it doesn't matter, just work what type of Facebook groups.

P10: Well, generally something like. Mostly they are made for a specific purpose. So basically we form a group that wants to, you know, do something like you. Maybe here at universities for watching movies, right? But like that for all you know, maybe other social groups I'm in, and it's mostly mostly as like a very specific purpose. Yeah, but I'm also in groups on these groups that have even thousands of people and maybe public groups. Or even we have in private groups that. That maybe, yeah, bring have lots of people on them. So yeah, for example, I don't know [nationality] in [town]. People put their all kinds of I don't know. Maybe they sell traditional food [nationality] food for things like that, yeah, so. But I'm not very active on those.

B: So you said that you're currently administrating 1-5 groups on Facebook, right?

P10: And they mostly political in nature.

B: Are they still active now?

P10: Yeah, they are still active.

B: Yeah, OK, so if we can pick the most active group that you're currently moderating on the.

P10: It will make them yeah. Also, I'm I'm no longer. I've haven't been a moderate are for like on this group for a week. So because I kind of quit doing that.

B: Yeah, I mean like if you can focus on your experience, that group, that would be great. So how's the group like? How many members will post?

P10: The biggest? Yeah, the biggest would like some like 7000. No the biggest I'm a moderator on? That would be something like 300.

B: How active it is.

P10: Maybe 1 post every few days. So this includes only groups, not chats. For examples, yeah?

B: yeah yeah. What about the biggest? What did you say? 7000 people group that you're a member of. How active is

P10: Oh that's way more active. But yeah I don't. For example that one I don't have notifications on or I don't follow it all the time.

B: About the 7000 people group. Roughly how often do you check it?

P10: Mainly so. Maybe for once every few days, something that.

B: is that like checking in based on like whenever there is a notification or just check it regularly. Or are you doing both well?

P10: Well I used to have like notification from friends but I turned it off because that then it just notifications for ringing off all the time. And that they want that. So that would just maybe for first week when I was in that group or something I had the notification from friends but yeah.

B: OK, so just now you mentioned that you are not the moderator any more for that group that you were moderating on. Could you tell me why you decided you're not going to moderate it?

P10: It's just that I didn't expect to do it forever. It's just yeah, I just yeah, and it took some time, so I said, well, I don't want to deal with this anymore. Let other people do it so.

B: Like, well, what's the process of you resigning from a moderate position.

P10: So we just agreed. Yeah, we just agreed. We had a meeting. Because most people who are active on this group, like we know each other in real life as well. So we had a meeting and we decided OK. Who wants to do that? And several people signed up and I said well out of yeah, out of the 10 people that signed up to be as it. Be anymore. There are still nine people out there who can do it. It's not very hard to I think I think most most difficult is is moderating like chats for example, because that was in. Yeah, that's something we had to do as well, but the group is not. There isn't so much moderation to do so.

B: So so you said that there is like there's a new round of like new moderator recruiting because you ask people to sign up for it.

P10: No. People that. There are more of us who signed up, but there are others besides me as well. Some joined it, some join after a while. Yeah so. Yeah, with the agreement that of us who are moderators at a time. Because yeah again we had. Sorry, maybe this is interesting because this happened because we had some basic agreements over what, but mostly against mostly on the chapter. Not on the actual group, but

disagreements about you know what should happen there and said, well, let's make some set of rules and try to enforce those.

B: So what do you think it makes people engage with this group instead of the other alternatives? If there is it?

P10: Well, there isn't like because this group is for. Again, is for a specific purpose is for. This [country] political party is for the members were in UK so. Yeah, this it's not like they can. They have an alternative groups. This is about the group I was moderating, right?

B: Yeah, so how have developed since you have become active on it? Since I have become active.

P10: It's it grew, but again it close because of external reasons, right? Because yeah, we only accept people who have signed up in an organization, so it's not like, yeah, we had everyone to the group. But I think. Yeah there isn't any formal organization associated with that group. There is a bigger group for like [nationality] abroad or away, like. And that is the main that is much more active group. But this group it's it's there is. Yes, stuff on it. So yeah and most of does not require. Yeah, it's. It's not required. Any moderation or any. It's mostly very, very specific stuff over here.

B: How do you say this group developing in the future?

P10: I yeah, I think yeah it will grow. It will have a I don't know if if it will. People will start yeah again. Because there are discussions inside the organization. About changing its structure, there might be a more formal role for parts of it. So this this group might adopt more formal role as a communication channel, and I think then maybe yeah, maybe this group will. The activity on this group will will increase because people will so try. It will also have more things to discuss on rather than, you know, very specific things like so for now was discussed is. When are we meeting or when? So yeah, things that are not very, very. They did don't bring a lot of discussion.

B: Does this differ from how you like it to develop in the in the future?

P10: No.

B: How would you describe your general approach to moderate this group?

P10: There hasn't been any like. I think the only moderate the only debatable moderating decisions that we have is accepting people in the group. I think that's the hardest thing that we had to do. Because yeah, we need to check that they are actually part

of the organization. And that they will. We assume that if they want to be part of the group, they're living in the UK, but we need to check that they are part of the organization. And that's we need to check with the. Without our sources. In order to admit them to the group.

B: So do you have any formal guidelines or rules for moderating the group?

P10: Yes, yeah. We have very short document which the group and was in it and when for what we can kick people out of the group. Basically what is not acceptable and what is acceptable for it.

B: Do you have any additional rules within moderators?

P10: No, but we have a short chat where we talk about so there were ten of us and we have a short chat and if someone is unsure. Then yeah, they will put it there and say OK, do you think this is this is OK?

B: About the new member joining the group, but you mentioned just now. Do you have like a formal guideline or process like official process within the moderators? Well, how to do that?

P10: Yeah, so we generally. So we either check with so we first check with the main group for the organization, the one that said is more active that I'm not moderating. And if they're a member of that, then they can be added there as well. Then, uh, we check with we we we contact the person in order to for us to tell to tell them if it's eligible to be a member of the group. Thinking this way. yeah, that's that's about it.

B: So how do you decide like which moderator is going to check the identity of new member?

P10: Well, we don't. We don't have process for that like to ever whoever sees it first. Or yeah, sometimes that I've ever seen it first. Like it often happened that I admitted someone without talking to someone because it was so maybe I knew them and I knew, yeah, and this this skip. This is logged so if someone doesn't like it, they may ask, you know, did you make sure that that person is eligible? And so yeah, yeah I know or something.

B: Right so now I'm going to go through the. Questionnaire that you have answered and trying to see if you have more questions to ask. So right. So in the question about what badge have you seen in Facebook groups? Is that you have seen visual storyteller and rising star badge, right? Could you tell me like how do you feel about them general?

P10: I don't think I pay much attention, especially As for example. In some other groups, let's say that are again quite specific, and maybe there formed for. Uh. I mean, I don't know exactly about these badges, how they are, but anyway, any for example, we form another group. For a very specific thing. So for example, there is an event or something, and we know the people organizing that event. I put there or there is some kind of I don't know. It it varies, but generally the group that had this very specific. The thing and then you form new group is formed and maybe the old members were still a members of a of a bigger different group. And then everyone's a rising star, but everyone no one is actually new, yeah. Yeah, yeah, that's that's something I notice

B: about the question. Which badge do you own in Facebook groups? Is that you have on? New member group. You have conversation starter. You have founding member. OK, so do you know how you become a conversation starter?

P10: I guess by posting a lot.

B: How do you feel about owning a badge for conversation starter?

P10: I yeah I I don't mind, I don't care.

B: What about founding member.

P10: Again, it's not yeah, because for example sometimes. You just you designate, so we want to discuss about something you designate someone OK. You form this group, but. But then it would just grow a bit like maybe three members of fundamental, but there not not different to anyone else in this group. So yeah, I don't think it's telling us too much so.

B: So about the question from zero to five, how much do you think you understand what these badges represents? You chose to have seen this badge, but not sure what it means for visual storyteller and writing star. So could you tell me about like how you understand what visual storyteller is?

P10: Well, I guess someone posts lots of pictures, but yeah. I really don't know how you get it or. Does it apply to videos as well? I don't know.

B: What about rising star? How do you think like? How do you think Facebook decide who to give this rising star badges too?

P10: Well I guess this is someone was new and has posted lots of things. But again, I'm not sure how do you need to be or how many things you need to to post so. Yeah, again, it seems. Because I've seen the Rising Stars who are definitely. Definitely not,

not. Supposed to be rising or other other times. I'm not sure if this is actually true, but other times you have people who leave the group and then come back and there. I think when they come back there rising stars, but they have been in that group for two years. Yeah, or something like that. So it's I'm not sure. I'm not sure this is actually. The case anymore?

B: Yeah, so about the question from one to five. How informative do you think this badges are? You chose 5 extremely informative for admin moderator and new member. and chose. Three moderate to moderately informative founding member. 1: not informative at all for conversation starter and visual storyteller rising star. Could you talk a little bit about like? Why do you think conversation starter is not informative at all?

P10: Hum. Again, because you you might have, I don't know. You might have like a big post, so maybe you're you're not your post once a month. But you you write an essay. Or did you compose everyday with? Hi, how are you and I don't think the other person is more of a I don't know. Yeah conversation starter. Yeah, I haven't even thought about this, but again, there are lots of ways to be posted anything there. The content of or sometimes you know might propose something that is just information. And that's 'cause makes the conversation starter. But you might. You might not even want to have a conversation. You just say, OK, I. You know? This was the result of the. Something like that, which is like just simply informative, right? Rather than one thing to discuss something with someone. Yeah.

B: So the next question is from one to five help different. Do think a post or a common reads. If this is if it is posted by someone with a badge and you chose. One, no difference at all for a post by conversation starter, founding member. Visual storyteller and rising star. Could you talk a little bit about that, like? Why do you think it's not different at all? Uh, for example, is a founding member is posting something?

P10: Oh OK, now I think I think will make a difference. If they were talking exactly about. The history of the group. But given if it's a talk about, you know. Some some random if it's talk about. Phones other thinking, you know, being a founding member gives you any any advantage of every says OK. Do you know that this person has said that's in the group? Are year ago when it was founded it then. But that makes sense, but I don't know why their opinion should matter more than some. I don't know some person who joined.

B: So what about someone wearing a badge called visual storyteller. Why is like their posts reads no difference at all the members



P10: just because, just because you post lots of pictures that doesn't mean they mean anything or that yeah or yeah or comment, yeah.

B: So if someone who has a visual storyteller badge. Posting another picture does it reads different?

P10: I mean I don't think so because you might again you might. You might be like a lurker who just just just read stuff another post anything. But when is? This may be important thing that needs to be discussed. You can add OK funny picture or something that is better than the one that was all the time pictures. So I don't know. I don't feel it's. Yeah I don't feel it's very relevant.

B: So, uh, do this badges can you extra attention for your work as a moderator.

P10: OK. No.

B: Could you talk a bit about why?

P10: Alright, so yeah, obviously when the Admin Moderator badge that tells you. About this is running the group that that's important. But then yeah, you don't like if if. If if someone who has one of the other badges insult someone else or talks off topic. It's it's just as just as bad as it. But again, we didn't really have these situations about off topic. Yeah, I had a very few, but they didn't have any assaults or anything. That is a bit. Yeah, it's a bit young and.

B: So how can this badges be informative for you as a moderator? How do you think that they can improve?

P10: And maybe if there were numerical like you say, OK this person posted so much. Yeah, then it would say tell you something about not about the content or something, but about the activity of that person. Maybe so you can look like in the past and then see whatever they posted right? Or something like that. But yeah, don't see there's any point of differentiating between text and pictures be is, but I'm... probably most pictures are memes anyway. Or like memes or things like that. They have a bit text component, right? I don't think I don't think the visual storyteller is actually very visual anyway. And also people who I think I think I'm not sure again, but I think. I'm not sure about this, but maybe people who post like live videos you also get this badge, which is a different thing. So another thing that can be improved is rising star.

B: Or if you think like there should be any other new badges for your community, because for example, like visual storyteller that badge is. Let's see, it's it might not be useful for your community, but if there is another group like a photo sharing group for

moms sharing group, that might be helpful. So talking about your own group, what kind of things that? You think will be informative.

P10: OK, so regarding previous question there or something so the new member badge that might be good for for for administrating the group, because if I tell you that someone is maybe not very familiar with the rules, so you might want to show that should show it to them. Then you said, OK well which badge is specific for, for example, for the groups I'm administrating.

B: If you're designing a batch for your community, yeah, I was thinking maybe badges that are custom made so, for example if I'm an admin of a group that does something, maybe there is some group that it wants to discuss about some specific topic. If I don't know someone is in an expert on the topic, I can just put OK, but this this person is I don't know. PhD at the University of Bath he can. Yeah no no no. I mean, if the discussion is about I don't know. I'm just trying to give an example if it. If the discussion is about computer science like this person is a has a PhD in computer science, so he's more experienced. Or if we discuss about. Sports, you can say OK, well this this person has is an experienced. Follow, you know it's a fan of that, that thing, or I think you get my point right? Yeah? So if their custom made as my phone, yeah. Cool.

B: So. What is your process when you become aware of problematic interaction? So how do you become aware over problematic inform interaction in the group or problematic most post?

P10: Well, for the groups I'm moderating is quite easy because they're not that active. So if I go, if we're ten of us and we are each check it once in awhile. Yeah, we were going to support anything. Again, there wasn't any problematic interaction. The only problem we had was with things that were off-topic and that was also more much more prevalent on the chat where we have to we have to like stop a conversation saying, OK, you're just clogging persons, people's inboxes peoples notifications with this stuff that doesn't have anything to do with the purpose of this chat. But then seldom there were an existent or inappropriate behavior in that way.

B: So now that you resign from your moderating role to that group, are you still a member of that group?

P10: Actually, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not. I'm not even a member, so yeah. That group and some other groups. Yeah,

B: OK, So what do you think your engagement with the group will look like if you

weren't a moderator but a normal member?

P10: It will be roughly the same I guess. Yeah it's yeah I'm I'm probably gonna rejoin us November in in a few months. I just yeah.

B: And get a new member badge (laugh)

P10: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. Yeah, there there are in the last period or lots of lots of discussion at that really could. Yeah, good and keep keep up mostly with. I get annoyed by them not because they were. Yeah, because they were annoying.

B: Yeah thank you very much about it that's pretty much it.

### **P11**

B: Right? It is recording now. So may I ask how long roughly have you been on Facebook?

P11: Maybe 11 years? Say 2009?

B: So. OK, so in the survey that you filled in, you said that you are mostly. In groups about animals and support group on Facebook right? What kind of groups are they?

P11: One for guide dogs and the other is for other people, so like my condition.

B: So how long have you been with these groups?

P11: Maybe two years? three years? maybe?

B: So. You are a member of this group, right, and, do you know, like, how big are the groups?

P11: Guide dogs is 5000. And then. The RP one with 14,000.

B: So. How's the group like? Like how active are they?

P11: Very. They post every day.

B: Roughly, how often do you check the group?

P11: I get notifications. When I click and then maybe 3 times a week?

B: OK. Cool. So. Do you have any memorable experience with those groups?

P11: Some of my posts there, one of them I feel very supported.

B: Why do you feel very supported in the group? Like could you talk a bit about that?

P11: The RP group. Posted a picture of me with blood. Saying that I bumped into something there. And people will like oh it happens to me as well. Or some days are like something I'm sad about about RP and they say this it will be OK or. They experience the same thing as well so I don't feel alone.

B: What do you think it makes people engage with the group?

P11: We have something in common.

B: So you said you've been there for two years already, right? How has the group developed after you been active on it?

P11: Uh. It's been more stricter. When I first signed in, people could. write anything. But now. These groups only allow saying positive things for the guide dogs can't say anything bad about the stuff of the guide dogs. So we have to be sensitive,

B: OK? So. Does this differ from what you want it to be?

P11: No. Before I could see people fighting, sometimes now it's seems much more peaceful.

B: So do you know who are the moderators or admins for the groups?

P11: I see the icons but I can't remember the names. Do you want me to check?

B: So I'm just trying to see if they are social workers working to help you or if they are people that have the same problem that wanted to support each other.

P11: I don't know about that.

B: OK, it's fine.

P11: For RP group the lady who opened she has puppy herself. And. she said that she wants to keep the group open with no restrictions because she wants sighted people. Do you understand what you feel like? It's not just. Talking to each other but open to the public.

B: So. How do you see the moderation of the groups you are in?

P11: So RP group, you can't ask for donations. And then for guide dogs, you can't say negative things. You have to be more considered.

B: So now I will go through the survey that you filled in and trying to see if there's any question I can ask. As you say in the survey that you have seen admin, moderator,

new member, and conversation starter badge right? How do you think Facebook decide who to give the badges to?

P11: I think maybe you open the group you get the admin badge. I don't know. For new member who just got into the group. And then I am not sure conversation starter. Sometimes they post a long post and they don't get it and sometimes they do get that. So not sure.

B: Sure. In the survey you also said that, you have a conversation starter badge in one of the groups you are in, right? How did you? How do you think that? How did you get it?

P11: I think because I posted a long post. But I don't know. Other times I post a long post as well and then don't get it so.

B: Do you feel like this badges is kind of a reward for you for posting a long post.

P11: No. Not really just something like a sticker. I don't know.

B: Do you like the badge that you have?

P11: It doesn't make any difference.

B: In the questions saying how informative do you think this badges are, you said the admin and moderator badges are extremely informative for you. Could you talk a little bit about that?

P11: It shows me who's in control of the group and in case I wanted to ask something I can message them, to change something or, I don't know.

B: Have you messaged them before? Have you used that?

P11: No I don't think so. But I think I've seen other people saying that oh I will message the admin.

B: You said that the new member badge is also very informative for you. So could you talk a bit more about that? Why is it informative?

P11: I don't remember why but I guess uh, it ss helpful to know if they are new in case they wrote something inappropriate or be against the rules so be patient. I can't remember why.

B: So. You said that the conversation starter, and founding member badge, they are moderately informative for you. Why did you think that they are moderately

informative?

P11: Conversations starter an and founding member? Anyone can be, I think a conversation starter. So but I don't see the usefulness

B: What do you think founding member badge represent?

P11: Is that someone who is raising money for charity? I don't know.

B: OK, so it's so the Facebook explanation for founding member is this member has started the group and help sharing the group for other people to join. So this is their actual explanation.

P11: Yeah, I don't see why it's important to know. I remember seeing one person saying oh, I open this group and they invites that was interesting.

B: OK. Do you think it is helpful for you to see people having badges in the groups that you are in?

P11: No. Except the badges on people who are in control. I don't mind having what badges as well

B: How do you think this badges can be informative if you can design a badge or your group?

P11: I can report something to the people who are in control. That is the only reason I can think of now. Maybe new member, conversation starter will be helpful, in case they post about the same thing

B: So do you mean that you wanted some kinds of badge to show that if there are a lot of posts about the same thing.

P11: It's not something I want very obvious. I am just trying to think why it is useful for the new conversation starter.

B: OK. Are you in other online communities other than Facebook groups?

P11: No.

B: OK, so. Are those badges currently accessible enough for you?

P11: For me yeah. But I don't know about people who are completely applying. I can see OK.

B: If there is a chance. Would you like being a moderator for Facebook groups?

P11: No no.

B: Why?

P11: So for guide dogs group it reminds me something that I don't know so. It might be best to leave it to someone who is more expert. In RP everyone is different as well so I don't feel like I know everything. B: So do you feel like the moderators for the groups for the support groups that you are in need to be someone who is more experienced or more expert in this field?

P11: Yeah, I think so. Or someone who has time to check Facebook Group. And I wouldn't have that time. I don't do much Facebook. I use Instagram instead.

B: So how do you think your engagement with these Facebook Groups can be improved?

P11: Nothing I think. On guide dog's group I once posts something of me being upset. And there were mixed responses. And now the guide dog's group makes that limitation to only say positive things. I see multiple people doing things so I did one. It so I didn't include.

B: Could you talk a little bit more about that?

P11: So I once I said I was upset a puppy worker because they patted my guide dog. But they know they are not supposed to do that when the guide dogs are working. So I said no don't touch it but the puppy assistant touched it. So I posted that on Facebook. And then the people says, oh, we are puppy workers, and they said that, you should be grateful for what I did to them. Other people have guide dogs also said we experienced the same thing. That is not right. We shouldn't feel obligated to have that like a pet, because of the puppy workers.

B: What does this post ended up with?

P11: It reached 100 comments of mix. And I post another one and they deleted it. Then I see other people with similar posts, when they get lots of comments with mix feedback, they get deleted it. That was upset.

B: So I think that so I think that's that's pretty much it. Thank you very much.

## **P12**

B: So. How long have you been on Facebook?

P12: I think it may be from 2012 years, maybe 11 years.

B: What kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in?

P12: One is to do with sport for organizing sports or music ones music events in this kind of thing.

B: I've sent in the question there that you filled in that you haven't been more moderating, or administrating for groups, so you are just members for those groups. OK, so if you can pick one of the groups that you like, engage with the most and focus on that one on the questions later. That will make it easier. So could you tell me how is the group like?

P12: The group that you engage with more. When I engage with most is is the University [sport] club so typically it's information to do with training or matches.

B: How many members or are they?

P12: A couple hundreds, I think 133.

B: How active is it?

P12: There are probably between 5 and 10 posts a week. I think are there mostly to do with the organizing activities.

B: Uh, could you check how many admins or moderators that group has?

P12: Yes. It has three admins.

B: Are they mostly the like society leaders or?

P12: Yes so one of the is the chair, one of them is the club captain and the other one, I think is the old chair.

B: So. Could you tell me generally, like what kind, what kind of interaction you have with the Facebook group?

P12: So I'm one of the captains of one of the teams, so I, actually I need to post it to the team today, but I post. The team each week for one of the. One of the teams and then also also I record when I'm going to be coming to training in this kind of thing. OK.

B: Um? Could you remember, like any moderation in a group, have you seen any moderation in the group moderation in the sense that posts shifted rotation about taking down?

P12: Think so. Don't know. I'm not sure.



B: OK cool. What do you think it makes people engage with this group instead of other alternatives?

P12: Well is the main place for getting the information about the squash squash squads? So.

B: How long have you been with this group?

P12: Probably 3 years like.

B: How has the group developed since you have become active on it?

P12: Um well it's got bigger. Definitely more members than when I started. It's got probably more active because it's more things going on now that they spread information about.

B: Um, how do you see it developing in the future?

P12: Um probably. It would be pretty similar to it is now. I guess yeah.

B: Right so. Do you have any formal guidelines or rules for that group?

P12: Uh, I think. Something in the description. I think it's maybe just. Yes, yeah, it's basically the the main guidelines are just is anything to do with team related matters. So team sheets and queries and training schedules in this kind of thing. Team selections. So nothing like nothing else other than those things.

B: OK. How often do you check the group?

P12: A few times a week, probably. At least at least once, 'cause I did see usually do a team team sheet. And then often quite a few times after that.

B: So are you checking in mostly based on like whenever you need to do your timesheet and whenever there's a notification?

P12: Yeah if there's a notification I'll probably check it.

B: Right, so next I will go through the survey that you feel in and trying to say if you have more to say about that. And the question about what badge have you seen in Facebook groups you have seen admin new member and rising star? Could you talk a little bit about how you understand these badges?

P12: Well so admin it's obviously the admin? I think rising stars, someone is it looked. It seems like if someone is new but posting a lot more. New member is the new member. I think that's that's why I think they're.

B: So has the group the group enabled the badge functionality?

P12: Yeah yeah

B: OK so. How do you think Facebook well, how do you think these badges affect your understanding when trying to read the post.

P12: Uhm

B: For example, like uhm. How, like with uh, with a post by people with this badges read differently?

P12: Uhm I think 'cause I'm quite senior member of the [sports] club. I know all of the people like personally so I don't. I kind of don't really see the badge done an influence how I think about the post because I I know them, mostly.

B: OK,

P12: I suppose the new member one that's that's obviously one, typically, I won't know them and then, so I'm not so. That's when there is more useful.

B: In the question about from one to five, how informative do you think this badges are you that knew member patches extremely informative for you? Could you tell me why?

P12: I think. Because this. Because I think typically if. If it's an unknown name that comes up. It's handy to know if someone is new or just someone who didn't know before already. So I think it's yeah that's probably one of the most useful I think.

B: Have the experience like this in the group?

P12: Yeah I've seen people with that in the group with badges like that

B: Have you have you seen people who you don't know the name, but without the new member badge?

P12: Yeah, I'm probably more likely to click on them and try and workout who they are and see if I recognize them as opposed to the new member. I probably don't know them yet.

B: So. The same question for the rising star you said is it is very informative for you to know people wearing this badge.

P12: I suppose cause to me if someone who's got like the rising star one 'cause I think that's like, let's see they're posting a lot, but then you, like although, I think it's kind

of. It's handy to know a keen member here,

B: OK. So the other question is from one to five how different you think a post or a common read. If it is post posted by someone with the badge. For most of the Badgers, including admin moderator, new member. Founding member, an writing style. You chose 3 which is in the middle, so, uh. Was that be cause what you just said that you know most of the people in the group?

P12: Yeah I think so yeah I think so. It's kind of it doesn't kind of sway how I think about the post.

B: OK well you gave no difference at all. For conversation starter an visual storyteller. Could you talk a little bit more about why you gave one instead of three for this two? Specifically for this too.

P12: So I wasn't really sure what I will meant. I assume it means that they post things and then get lots of responses I guess. Or that kind of thing. Uh. And then. The visual storyteller. One person posted lots of pictures I assume, which despite it also doesn't really affect how I feel about the post.

B: So. What do you think about the conversation starter badge like? How can it be informative for you?

P12: Um? Would you mean the I mean?

B: In this context, like in the [sports] group, it might not mean it might not be informative for you, but is there any other context that you think conversations starter might be useful?

P12: As far as it be exposed in the group, that's more to do with. Like shared interest to that kind of thing. I supposed to be. Quite interesting there. Because I've seen it. Someone is. Kind of. Makes posts there. Clearly. So I suppose in a different in a different context. Yeah, I think it would be more interesting

B : What about the visual storyteller badge. Like you said, you've been involved in some of the music groups as well. Yeah, would that be informative in groups like music instead of sports?

P12: : So the ones I think the people that I know who've got visual storyteller badges in some of the group ones, people who post ads for music evenings in this kind of thing. I don't know. Yeah I didn't. Yeah having visual stories center is a badge, that doesn't really tell me much about what they're doing, or it just means they post post pictures.

B: OK, I think yeah. So you said like people are mostly posting well the one you know. Who got who has got a visual storyteller is someone who mainly post ads.

P12: yeah. Well, as in like. Which could like Posts Flyers for music evenings at pubs or bars or this kind of thing.

B: So do you think like the visual storyteller is more an for you like it's more like someone is posting ads. If you see it in that group rather than.

P12: Because also usually it's on a post of theirs that it's a picture. It doesn't. It doesn't really add much more information than than the fact that posting something with a picture anyway.

B: Um. Have you experienced any problematic posts in any of the groups urine?

P12: Um? I don't think so.

B: Right? Have you got any other experiences outside of Facebook in other online communities?

P12: Um, what like what kind of thing

B: Like Reddit? Discord?

P12: No, not really, no.

B: Do you like Facebook groups?

P12: Do I like them? Yeah, yeah. I think they're quite useful.

B: OK. Why do you like it is that of other alternatives?

P12: Uhm, I think it's useful in the fact that pretty much everyone has Facebook. That's quite useful. It's quite handy, kind of range of tools that it has as you got kind of the Messenger bit of it and you can do everything from inside of Facebook groups

B: OK.thank you.

P12: Cool.

### **P13**

B: Right, it's recording. OK cool. So um, right?

P13: Didn't know you could do that in Skype anyway, sorry. I think you can only do that on Skype. OK, which is super handy because of like audio issue.

B: Yeah yeah right? So how long have you been on Facebook?

P13: Uhm, I think about 10 years.

B: OK, so. Oh so looking at your question there. Hum. You said that you're like for Facebook groups. You're mostly using it for hobbies and interests, size and tack and education and cultural. Is that right?

P13: Yeah

B: If you can, try to think about one group at you, engage with the most and those groups. What kind of group is that?

P13: Um cultural and musical?

B: OK, uhm. If you can pick that group and focus on that group later, it will be. It will make the interview easier, OK?

P13: OK,

B: So um, how's the group like?

P13: In what sense?

B: In like, what is that kind of group and how many members, posts per day, how active?

P13: It's more of a notice board I guess, for a group of people were all musicians. One of the society, one of the music societies that I conduct an and moderated 'cause I set up years and years ago. OK, uhm an. I suppose at the very most as one. Sometimes we don't post in it at all, like in a week, but it most likely to be like a weekly update like this is what's gonna happen tonight. 'cause I weekly rehearsals during semester. But there might also be, uhm. Events shared through it, yeah. So it's more updates about time changes or room changes, or me just encouraging people to come or saying thank you for concerts and that kind of thing. Information sharing.

B: OK. Roughly, how often do you check the group?

P13: Whenever I get notification, OK, cool. Or if I need to, if I know that post has been made and I forgot the content of it, then I would go and look.

B: OK, cool uhm. So just now you said your uh, you created that group, right?

P13: Yeah, originally. Um, now it's meant to be managed by the committee for that group, because I've just historically own it. I've not been kicked out.

B: OK, cool, uhm. So how long have you been with this group?

P13: On and off for the past eight years I've been a member of the group for eight years, but I haven't been participating in it in person every year because I've not been in the country, for example.

B: Um so. When did you stop moderating that group? Or like admin that group?

P13: Start or stop?

B: stop.

P13: I'm still an admin and because um. Because I was the original owner, I don't know if I can be kicked out unless other admins, once that added, can remove other admins. I don't know, but I'm.

B: OK, when did you start when you start moderating that group?

P13: It would be even when it was created by 8 years ago. OK,

B: cool, yes, uh, so um. So what do you think it makes people engage with this group instead of alternatives?

P13: Uhm, I think it's kind of opt in. Uh, it's specific to the ensemble, so you're only going to get information about the ensemble on board in it or. Maybe some related thing, but that would have been vetted by the admins, uhm? And I mean there are also emails that go out. But this is a bit more. Kind of yeah, no everybody. I think it's people members of the group just kind of look at the post. They don't always interact with them, so this is more of a notice board then. An active flourishing group?

B: OK, uhm how many members are there?

P13: Uhm, I say between 20 and 40 so it changes as students come and go there taken out and put back into a group.

B: OK, uh, how many admins or moderators in the group in total?

P13: Think three or four, but I can check if you want to. I remember. So let me have a look. This is where I find out. I'm not an admin any more actually. Uhm, I think I am, and that's important thing right? How do I find out proving the admins?

B: If you go to members?

P13: Yeah, 12345 there are five admins, 5 at Mens. Just be cause you are there.

B: How many members are there

P13: 47

B: 47 people

P13: But there aren't that 47 people come to the group. So some of these people are people that are no longer part of the like physical group, but they just haven't been taken out.

B: OK, so, uh, what you mean is, uh, there are like admins or moderators. Actively keep adding or removing people from that group, right?

P13: I think that's how it works. Yeah, I don't do that because I'm not on the committee, but I think that's how it works.

B: Cool and. How has the group developed since you created it?

P13: And it's grown. Oh, it was originally just, you know, full between five or ten of us. And then as the group became more subscribe so, we did the Facebook group. Interestingly, the about section is pretty much as it was seven eight years ago. And so we should update that, but um. Yeah, it's interesting. The admins have changed frequently because it as the committee changes every year the admins change as well. Apart from me there're a few photos. That are in there, so sometimes there have been kind of, you know, it's uh, people posting funny things. Which depends on the makeup of the physical group as well. For me, as kind of probably the only person in the group that has been in that since the start. Um, I've kind of seen my friends come get the end of their degree and leave, and now it's kind of becoming more of a less of a social thing and more of a practical thing. I think. OK, that's probably the biggest changes happened. It was a lot more. It's always been for practical reasons, but the relationships between the people that that part of the group outside of the group have been stronger at different times.

B: OK. Cool. Yeah, so does this differ from how you would like it to develop?

P13: Uhm, no. I think it's fit for purpose. Uhm, I think because it's that just as a parallel with the actual physical group. It is what it is like, I don't. But it's quite organic in that sense, I think. I mean, I didn't have a ground plan for it or anything like that. You know, it wasn't meant to develop a sense of community, it was pretty much just for information and so.

B: So could you tell me in general, how were you moderating in that group?

P13: Um? I think just by well accepting members if they chose to join. I think it's a private group so people can find it and asked to join, but admin has to approve it. Making posts. Oh answering questions that people ask or if people post anything. That's probably the biggest thing.

B: Cool, do you have any formal guidelines or rules for the group?

P13: The society does, although I don't think they're very strict, so I think one of the rules is that you have to be a current member of the society to be in the group, but, there's some people that are still in the Facebook group that are no longer at the University, so they shouldn't be in there really, but they are. I think that's because of personal relationships as well, or just the. It's a lot of hassle, I think for the committee to always have to take people out for people in an it's no harm than being there so OK.

B: Oh yeah. Cool. Do you think the moderators moderate the group collaboratively?

P13: Yeah, I think so. I think. Uhm, for example, accepting new members. It's probably just the first person that gets there that would say yes or no. And usually it's yes, to be honest. And in terms of keeping the Facebook page up to date. That is done collaboratively. Uhm, not by me, so I'm not very good. But uhm the other people in the group. But it's their role is to keep up to date. So yeah, I'd say so.

B: Um, do you remember what tools does Facebook give you to help moderating the group?

P13: No

B: OK. Right, So what I'll do next is I'll go through the question you fill in and see if there is more thing you would like to say.

P13: Yes, OK.

B: So right. OK, so about the question. Which badge do you own in Facebook groups? Your answer is you don't know or care. Could you tell me why you don't care about like what badge you have on for these groups?

P13: I don't think I use Facebook very much anymore for anything other than information or. Kind of arranging things outside of Facebook, although interestingly I did see the other day that I was kind of eligible for or had earned a badge like being most active in a group that I was is a Facebook page I think, and I was.

B: Is that a top fan page?



P13: I have been recognized as one of top fans. Yeah top fan top fan yeah. So I. I thought of you when I saw that uhm. And that did speak to me, 'cause that was for [charity], which is the charity. I obviously share and like a lot of of their posts. And then I seen that, but I will. It also came across my mind that it maybe doesn't take a lot to become a top fan if you just like a few things and share a few things, but I don't know the algorithm, so I suppose I did care about that. I felt in the question now I didn't. I don't think I interacted enough with any groups to have been awarded anything. Also like my participation in the group probably won't change, even though I've been given that badge.

B: OK. Cool. How do you feel like being given a top fan badge for a page?

P13: I'm well, I feel like it's been spamming it alot like some things, but um, no. I mean, I suppose it did feel nice. And that's it. Kind of reflected to me how much I had interacted with that group make. Maybe if I followed other pages and like those enough then I would feel the same way. But yeah.

B: OK um. Would you like to be a top fan? Like will there be specific pages that you followed, but you wouldn't like to be top fan.

P13: Um? I don't know. I guess I might not want to be top fan of an educational, um, Christmas, something that you know, like teachers, pet kind of but uhm. I don't know why, just try to probably just come up with an answer for you, but I I I I don't see why not. Maybe a political page, but then by being on a political page already showing your political views. So yeah, you, why would you not want to be a top fan of political group you support, you know? So yeah, I don't know. I think so.

B: Um? Right? So, uhm. The question about from one to five, how informative do you think these badges are? Um? Mentioned that knew members are moderately informative for you. Could you tell me a little bit about why?

P13: Uhm, I suppose if it were a group where people were interacting with each other more often then knowing which members of that group were active could be good if you wanted to identify someone to ask a question too about the group. Uhm, but. I think it's very easy to get these badges. My intuition could be wrong, but then you know the. Basically. Segregating the people that just like the page and look at the posts with the people that interact with the build posts. And suppose that would be useful for any person 'cause you if these people over here, the people that just look at the page don't interact with it, then why would you ask them a question? Whereas if you see someone that is a top fan it is more likely that they will know about that

group.

B: OK. Uh, so. About about conversation starter, and visual storyteller and rising star you rated as one: not informative at all for you, so could you talk a little bit about Why?

P13: Uhm, I don't think I know what those things are and I I don't think that the names of the badges are clear enough to to if I just saw that someone had a rising star badge, I don't know. I wouldn't know what that means, so it wouldn't be very informative and less you know if you hovered over it told you. I'm guessing it's like they post a lot to the group, give a lot to the group, what were the other two?

B: A conversation starter and visual storyteller.

P13: So conversation starter is easier for me to kind of has a guess. I guess they just talk a lot to other people. But then I wasn't clear if they talk a lot to other people and then continue talking or just start the conversation so there's a bit of ambiguity there and then the other one. I don't know how you are a visual storyteller unless you only post pictures or photos or videos. Maybe I just answered that question, but uhm, yeah, for me the names aren't clear enough. And yeah, OK.

B: Um? So the next question is from one to five, how different do you think a post? Uh, how different do you think a post read, iff it is posted by someone with a badge. And you chose: One, no difference at all for conversation. starter, founding member, visual storyteller and rising star could you could you talk a little bit about why they have there are no difference at the whole for you.

P13: That's interesting 'cause after talking about it, I think. That at least a few of those, or at least a couple of them, probably would make a difference. Maybe I meant for me, I wouldn't really care or be looking for that. But I guess yeah, if someone was a conversation starter. And they had a badge next to their name. Maybe I was ask them first. But the other ones, yeah, I guess it. I think the badges just kind of feel like awards or gamifying being a member of this group. and I don't really know. What that brings to the group maybe?

B: OK. Right, so, uh, thinking about the context in your music group. How can the badges be informative for you? As a member or moderator.

P13: Uh. Yeah, I think it's difficult. 'cause as I said, the group is mainly for information. And sometimes we might have a poll like you know, do you want to go here, here, here, OK? Um again, it's just information, um. I I just don't. I don't really see

a benefit that because it's posting and asking questions and share and stuff.

B: Cool, right so what kind of strategy do you use in Facebook groups when you were still managing that group?

P13: What strategies do I use? I don't know if I use any particular strategies other than using the group to share information.

B: Yeah, cool, um.

P13: Because the other moderators take care of the membership.

B: So do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook groups?

P13: Yes.

B: Um, how would you compare this to?

P13: That was a forum full LGBT youth and it was a kind of old-fashioned form with I I I don't use a lot of forums but it was it was all text based and it was just you know topics and then subtopics and then posts underneath that. And I feel like badges would be more useful there because people were going there and wanted to ask questions and wanted responses and wanted to feel like part of a community. I suppose a Facebook group that did that. Yeah, it be similar and the group no longer exists. I should say because there wasn't enough from a resource for it to continue the the group that I was mentioning. Uhm, how does it compare? It was a lot older I think. Maybe Facebook probably had a part in its demise in a in a not intentionally, but just know. Facebook said big platform. Although I would say probably felt safer. Because, it was moderated by LGBT people for LGBT people. I'm only for that purpose. You know there were there wasn't, uh, it wasn't a part of a bigger brand, that was it.

B: OK . Thank you.

#### **P14**

B: So how long roughly have you been on Facebook? P14: About since 2008, so maybe like actually 2009. So maybe like 11 year olds.

B: So in the survey that you fill in you said. You were mainly in meme groups animal lover groups housemate finding groups right?

P14: Yeah

B: And you have been in one to five groups? Which which groups do you think you're closely interacting with?

P14: Hum. Out of all three, actually don't interact with all of them likely, but I'd say interact most like the meme group.

B: OK, cool, so if we can focus on the meme n groups later, that will make the interview easier so. Right, so you said you're you're currently not moderating or admin in any of these groups right? Just to double check with? How's the meme group like? Like how many members?

P14: Oh, it has a thousands of members. 662K.

B: How many posts per day like how active they are like? Hum.

P14: It's very active, I think. Yeah, at least at least four posts today.

B: Roughly, how often do you check this group?

P14: Whenever 'cause I'm subscriber to it just like whenever it shows up in my timeline, I'll check it, but I don't really like go and search for it.

B: Do you have any memorable experience about the group?

P14: No, not really.

B: What are you mainly? Use them in groups for?

P14: Just like checking means and like just like entertainment, essentially like whenever I'm free. Hum.

B: What do you think makes people engage with this group instead of alternatives?

P14: I think yeah, I think one factor is the size of the group is so massive. There's so many people like people like submit posts to think like everyone like unanimously finds things really funny. Yeah.

B: How long have you been with this group?

P14: This group. Is there a way to check more actually sure. If I had to estimate, I'd say about two years or one and a half years.

B: So. How is the group developed since you become active only or since you joined it.

P14: On I think, the groups actually become like less active since I've joined like over the years.

B: Why do you think it become less active?

P14: I am not sure actually.

B: How do you say it developing in the future?

P14: I think I see a lot of a lot more people like submitting recent memes, . essentially 'cause I new memes just keep coming out every day. So yeah, just keeping up to date with that.

B: Cool. Does it differ from how you would like to develop in the future?

P14: No, pretty much not really happy with where it's at and how I see it developing in the future.

B: How would you describe your general interaction with the group?

P14: If if I find like a meme funny, I'll generally like like the post so maybe tag my friends, but I've never submitted anything. I don't want it to be moderator or anything like that.

B: Do you have any formal guidelines? Or rules for this group?

P14: No.

B: Is there any like in the group description or anywhere publicly announced at.

P14: So I notice usually like just based on general poster reputation for being for like moderators being like reluctant to publish posts, which I think that's mostly 'cause they get a lot of submissions or not. 'cause like submissions, offensive or anything. Yeah, I think. They just like don't want anything like overly offensive like hopefully controversial, and that's just a general rule.

B: Is this written down somewhere in the group,

P14: no, it isn't. It's just like when group members like get approved like they both get approved, they'll edit the post later on. And like mentioned, just like jokingly, that says it's like a miracle that they were approved 'cause it' so difficult.

B: How many episodes or moderates are there In the group?

P14: Oh 15.

B: Do you think the moderators moderated group collaboratively?

P14: Oh, I have no idea.

B: Cool, so in the next phase what I will do is I will go through the survey that you fill in and trying to see if you have more to say about it. So you have you sat in the survey is that you haven't noticed any Facebook badges in the groups? OK, but you you have actually seen the new member badge in the groups?

P14: Yes,

B: Like are the badges. Are they like? Have they enable the functionality of badges in the meme group?

P14: I think they have the OK so.

B: So only the admin moderator and new member badges.

P14: I think so, thank you.

B: You have you have also own the new member badge.

P14: Yes,

B: is that in another group rather than that?

P14: Yeah, yeah, I think that was in the housemate group rather than that.

B: What do think about like having a new member badge in the housemate finding group?

P14: I don't really like having opinion strongly about it. I think it's just. Yeah, click signify like someone's new i the group and then. Potentially, maybe like make them feel more included in the group, like to signify it, or older members that like you can go out of your way to make them feel more included.

B: And what do you think about the new member badge in the meme group?

P14: I'm still relatively new true, I don't,

B: Are there any differences about having a new member badge in different groups of yours.

P14: I don't think so. No, I don't think it's very influential. The new member badge.

B: What do you think the new member badge represent?

P14: Hum. I think it represents the this person, maybe like taken in new interest in this particular group. Maybe like encourage them to like. participate more things like that.

B: So in the ratings about from zero to five, how much do you think you understand what this badges represent and you gave 5 founding member: I know exactly what this badge means, like how? How do you understand what founding member badge mean?

P14: So like if someone like creates a group, I think they get like the founding member badge essentially.

B: What about? What about conversation starter badge? You said you rate it as three: I think I understand this badge just from its name, so like from its name, how do you understand this badge? I think if someone initiates a new topic of conversation within that group, they essentially have that badge, but I'm not so the mechanism like how Facebook identifies it as being a conversation starter.

B: So what about rising star?

P14: If someone's like slowly becoming more popular is like if maybe they've made a comment and like someone likes it a lot.

B: So the next rating is from one to five. How informative do you think this badges are? And you gave admin and moderator 5 extremely informative. So why do you think admin and moderated badges are extremely informative?

P14: So I think they are like the description of the person's role within the group really clearly so you know there the admin and the model it and they like handle although daily affairs of the group and everything essentially

B: So the next question in the next question from one to five how different if you think a post reads if it is posted by someone with a badge. And you write it as two somewhat different for the admin and moderator badge. So why do you think it is somewhat different? For us, the post written by someone with an admin or moderator badge?

P14: again 'cause like they are in charge they have. I think this is. ust perception of like a little bit of authority because they're in charge of the entire group. So like when you read the comments as just like. Sense of experience?

B: OK, what, uh, what about if you think about in the meme group? If you have seen a post written by someone wearing an admin or a moderated badge, how do you think it will be different than the other ones?

P14: I think I take it more seriously, like I pay more attention to the cause of the Admin and Moderator badge. So.

B: Do they, like to do the admins or moderate are still engaged with that group outside of their moderating role?

P14: I'm not sure. I don't think I don't think so, no.

B: So is there any like general post like post about memes from admin to moderator?

P14: No, it's I think it's in this group specifically. It's mostly like they don't really engage with the group as such beyond moderating. It's mostly like people submissions, and they just approve, approve, or deny.

B: About the founding member badge. In the rating. You said the founding member badge is extremely informative. And it read somewhat different if a post is made by a family member. Could you talk a little bit about that?

P14: Yeah, so like if 'cause I guess the founding member would have had more insight into what they intended to group for when they actually like created the group and sort of invited people. And like. Hum. Oversee its content. But yeah, I think founding members like the most descriptive badge for because it actually tells you what the person date. 'cause I even with admin and moderator doesn't necessarily tell you like what their role involves actually doing. But founding member, you know, for a fact you actually like. Founded the group.

B: So, uh another one is the conversation starter badge. You said the conversation starter badge is very informative. An appeals made by conversation starter rates somewhat different than other posts. Could you talk a little bit about that please.

P14: Yeah, the things I haven't actually seen. Many conversations starter badges, but like just from general context I imagine. Hum. Yeah, it's again like whoever starts up a new conversation and gets a lot of light reactions to that, and it's like a lot of. Lot of traffic going in that sense. Hum.

B: Will the post get you extra attention if it is made by someone wearing a conversation starter badge.

P14: I think so yeah, but I think that's just 'cause like they have A badge in the 1st place and not necessarily the fact that it's a conversation starter badge. So like even if they had some other badges. Yeah exactly yeah.

B: What about visual storyteller? What do you think visual storyteller is?

P14: I have no idea. I guess visual storyteller needs a lot of images maybe.



B: So in your meme groups, are people posting a lot of images?

P14: so like in the reacts yeah in the sense that something really funny that both like. GIF of someone laughing or something in that sense.

B: But no one has visual storyteller badge in it.

P14: I don't think so.

B: So. So if we show storyteller. Well, not if visual storyteller from Facebook's explanation is someone post a lot of images or videos in the group. So think about in your meme groups. Like If opposes made by visual storyteller, would it read different than other posts?

P14: I imagine it would because it captures more tension and adjust text. Yeah, so like if someone submitted like images or videos, especially if they're like we like colorful or like panda to certain audience. I think it catch a lot, lot more tension and someone just wrote something on in terms of text.

B: So. In general, how do you think the badges can be informative in the groups that you're in? Like not limited to those badges with that just now. Just generally how? How do you think it can be informative?

P14: I don't know if this is a comprehensive like guide. For like what patches exactly mean on Facebook? But maybe that's like every group. I mean, it might be that maybe I'm just not aware of it.

B: What kind of badge do you think is most involved will be most informative for the meme group?

P14: I think founding member.

B: Why do think founding member is informative for a meme group?

P14: 'cause it tells you who started it and I may be a little bit about like why they actually like started it. Yeah,

B: OK. Have you experienced any problematic interaction in the groups?

P14: No, not really.

B: Do you have any experience outside Facebook group in other online communities?

P14: Yes, but I'm already inactive member. Like on Reddit. They have, like Subreddits and part of.

B: How do you compare the experience between like this up rather than Facebook group?

P14: I think. Oh, that's a good one, that's a good question. I'm a lot more interested in the Subreddit, Just 'cause it's specifically tailored to what I want, like I found that, like subreddits in general, they can be so specific, but also like so wide in general, like the comments are sort of like easier to read 'cause it's like Nested and everything. Um? But like, I don't necessarily prefer one over the other. They both, like equal in terms of preference.

B: So. So if if you say If you've been given the job as a moderator, would you prefer it to be in subreddit or Facebook groups?

P14: I think Facebook groups actually.

B: why do you prefer that?

P14: you know like Subreddit people are, they tend to be more like controversial in a really like edgy manner. and I don't want to like face the moral dilemma of determining whether something's ever find civil a controversial or not. Whereas on Facebook 'cause it's I think it has more for reputation for being like family platform. Yeah, I think people are just generally be more like grounded in mindful of what the post states will be easier to moderate.

B: Do you think the badges like this can help you? As a moderator in Facebook groups?

P14: So look at that more data and I can see other peoples badges, yeah? Yeah, I think they gone. Yeah, if I know who's the new member and I won't let go out of my way to make them feel welcome. I think that would help.

B: OK. I think that's pretty much it.

### **P15-Charlotte**

B: Yeah. So, do you have your phone with you with Facebook login?

Charlotte: I do yes.

B: If you have it with you, that will be helpful.

Charlotte: Gosh, you're saying emergency calls only say this would be fun. It looks OK.

B: Just have it with you. 'cause when I asked some question if you're not sure about it, feel free to check it. OK, so roughly how long have you been on Facebook?

Charlotte: That's a really good question. I don't actually know. You can see when you join, can't you? I think no idea where to check that. I joined really, really late though. Actually, because everyone else. I've only been on it for about 10 years maybe, but all my friends have been on it for a really, really long time before.

B: OK. So, uh, what kind of Facebook groups are you in the Facebook mainly?

Charlotte: One is to do with running and one is to do with animals, really. The one that I'm in the admin off is sort of more of a work study type group.

B: OK, cool. So, uh, how active is the the group that you're moderating or administrating

Charlotte: It goes in waves? It's usually like someone will ask a question and then there'll be some conversation around the question and then not a lot happened for quite a while. OK, cool.

B: How many members are there in the group? That one probably.

Charlotte: We can check that maybe 20 I would just say.

B: Thank you.

Charlotte: It was kind of. I did a project where we went away for a residential and then everyone kind of wanted to keep in touch after the residential finished so I just did a group.

B: Do you have like so? How is the moderation load on that group?

Charlotte: That one's quite like the most that I've really had to do was when everyone was joining 'cause they wanted it to be a closed group so. That was request kind of thing and then after that not too much

B: so. What about the other groups you're in and like? How active are they?

Charlotte: That are a lot more active, than the ones that I'm not admin of. One of the running groups they seem to have an event every weekend, so after that or in the run up to, they'll be quite a lot going on. The animal ones. They vary 'cause some of the are charity ones so they have a lot of postings when there will be a whole litter of kittens. Maybe that need to behaving or something, otherwise it might just be odd bits and pieces.

B: : OK cool, so if you can try to focus. Let's say if we can focus on the running group later, that will make the interview easier.

Charlotte: OK,

B: cool so. What do you think it makes people engaged with that group instead of the alternatives?

Charlotte: I think it is because there's something going on every weekend so people were asked questions like oh. Is this going to be there? What time do I need to get there? What's the fitting like after the latter rain has been mostly what it's been lately actually like more the course conditions like.

B: So how long have you been with that group? Charlotte: The running one, maybe a year.

B: OK, how has the group develop since you become active on?

Charlotte: Hum. I think it's just got even bigger. There's people posting in there that I go. I've never seen. That person before. And then. If I suppose it depends what group like what run is coming up, and then there will be people who would just posted in there all the time. But yeah, it seems to have gotten bigger, I think.

B: Then how, roughly like how many members are there in the group?

Charlotte: Oh, that one hundreds.

B: Is it sort of like a local group, more for running events.

Charlotte: Yeah. Yeah, definitely is everything about running in that area.

B: Um? Then how do you see a developing in the future?

Charlotte: I think it will probably get bigger again 'cause I think the. The people who organized the runs have started organizing even more events like they didn't used to have one every weekend, but it seems like now there is one every weekend, so I think it'll probably just. Keep going and being like more constant. I think that one definitely.

B: Does this differ from how you would like it to develop further?

Charlotte: Oh For that one, I don't really mind how that worked, develops'. cause. I think if I wanted to I could just easily leave that one and not have it on my feet anymore. Yeah

B: OK, cool. About the group that you are moderating on, how would you describe your general approach to moderating the group?

Charlotte: That one is quite laid back. I don't really need to. You don't really need to monitor it because I don't think anyone there would say anything, that you would need to remove or be worried about. OK, so yeah, quite laid back

B: OK. Do you have any formal guidelines or rules for the group that you're moderating?

Charlotte: No, there's not formal ones.

B: Do you have any formal guidelines or rules for the running group?

Charlotte: I think they have a sort of general kind of like being nice, and I think if anyone did post anything offensive, it would be taken down really, really quickly, but. I haven't noticed anything.

B: So, uh, are you the only admin for the group that you created?

Charlotte: Yeah, I think I am yeah.

B: Then, the next bit I will go through the questionnaire that you fill in and see if there is there more questions to ask about it. So, uhm. Is that you haven't seen any of those badges, right?

Charlotte: Yeah,

B: OK. Hum.

Charlotte: Oh, I was that I have noticed since then some people have a little kind of diamond like thing with top remember or top top something on yeah top fan. I have seen that since. I don't think I had before then.

B: Yeah, that one is specifically for Facebook pages and groups, so if you're a top fan of the page. Like it means something.

Charlotte: Yeah, yeah, I presumed like you contribute a lot or something but yeah.

B: So. Uh, there's a question saying from one to five, how informative do you think these badges are? An you rate it as five for admin an moderator: extremely informative. Could you talk a little bit about that?

Charlotte: I think they would be useful. Kind of to give you not like a warning, but maybe you know, sort of like a warning. I yeah, I think they would be useful. I would quite like to see.

B: So like if you if you think about like put it in the context. If you think about admin and moderator, have a badge and your running group. Why do you think they're informative for you?

Charlotte: I'm just so you would know who if you wanted to direct a question specifically to someone you would know who to go. You might not want to post something to the whole group, but you might want to just ask any other person in charge of the person who kind of is most likely to know the answer to your question.

B: So what about the new member badge in the questionnaire? You said it is very informative for people to have a new member badge.

Charlotte: And just because of the kind of questions they might be asking might seem really, really obvious to someone who was already like a longtime member. So it will be kind of nice to just go. Oh OK, yeah, they don't know because you know they they are new kind of thing.

B: So for conversation starter, and founding member you gave a three, which is the median like moderately informative. May I ask like how do you understand the badge of conversation starter? Because you haven't seen it right?

Charlotte: I presume they'll be kind of person who poses the question or maybe. If there was a picture, would put the first comment on it, maybe or something like the most. Not necessarily controversial, but like the most likely to get a response kind of common it in how useful that would be, but that's kind of why I went in the middle. Is kind of how I presumed it would.

B: So how do you think Facebook decides who to give this conversation starter badge for?

Charlotte: Hum. I presumed it was just some kind of statistical type thing. I don't know to be honest.

B: So what about founding member? How do you understand founding member?

Charlotte: I just presumed the person to be that person who made the group really.

B: Uh. So. Right, So what about visual storyteller and rising star? You rated as one not informative at all.

Charlotte: Partly because I didn't really know what that would mean. I guess somebody who had joined the group recently. Not quite new enough to be a new member,

but it was kind of maybe starting to contribute a bit and but maybe it wasn't contributed on everything, OK? But I didn't really know for that one, so that's why it's got a lower score.

B: So the next question is from one to five, how different do you think a post or a common read? If it is posted by someone with a badge, so you chose four for admin moderator, and new member saying a post by admin and or a new member, reads very different.

Charlotte: Yeah, I'm 'cause admin. From what I've seen, don't always comment on everything. They will kind of come in when there's lots of questions and clear up, maybe posted definitive, kind of like yeah, this is it. Everyone needs to be here by 9:00 o'clock and this is this kind of. So that's why I thought maybe quite definitely the admin quite important and quite quite useful thing for everybody as well.

B: So for conversation starter, you said it reads moderately different than other post. Why do you think like a post by a conversation starter would read a bit different?

Charlotte: I guess the content would be quite. It would make you want to respond the way they drain it, I guess would kind of be. It may be a question or something a little bit, maybe a joke or something that people would respond to.

B: OK. What about founding member like? Why is a post by founding member? It's different. Like 3 moderately different.

Charlotte: That one I don't know I just thought maybe that would be. Possibly similar to the admin post, they would sort of be. Somebody who would definitely be in the know, sort of in the group of people who were maybe doing the organizing behind the scenes and things like that, especially for the running group.

B: So you said. Rising stars post reads somewhat different than other posts. Could you talk about why do you think?

Charlotte: I wondered if maybe when you first joined a group. You join 'cause you want to know what's going on and everything, so you're kind of excited to read the posts and maybe you are kind of trying to get your head around everything that's on the group. So probably be quite. So if maybe wouldn't even post things. Maybe we just like things or react to them kind of thing rather than necessarily. Like following on conversation or something, just maybe kind of acknowledging or like agreeing rather than anything else.

B: OK so. Not limited to those badges listed in the question there. How can like things

like these badges be informative for you?

Charlotte: I don't really know what else other than the badges would be useful. I know sometimes they have sort of like a verified account kind of thing. People have like status, so maybe that's kind of useful. But I don't really know about anything else. Shuffle.

B: So think about so maybe what about the top fan badge like do you think that would be informative for you when you follow a page to see who is the top fan?

Charlotte: Sometimes, yeah, if it's someone that I know. If if it's come up because like someone else commented on it and then I go OK, they're interested in that and they obviously comment on that quite a lot. But when it's just something that I see and it's not someone that I know that's got the top fan, but it doesn't really make that much words to me personally.

B: OK, what about getting a top fan badge for yourself?

Charlotte: I'm pretty sure I haven't gotten any. I wouldn't be concerned about getting one. I would rather not have one actually 'cause I don't post a lot on Facebook so. When I do, I kind of don't post for everyone to see if I comment on something I usually I will say Oh well done or happy birthday kind of thing. It will be more like to that person rather than everyone.

B: So what about in the group that you are managing? Would you like an admin badge or moderator badge next to your name?

Charlotte: So that one I don't mind because it's quite small group and I know everybody there. And obviously they know that I made the group. And the only reason I made it was because nobody else wanted to and I worked in IT. So you must use social media all the time. You can make it. Main to make it kind of thing so that one it wouldn't bother me as much as like something like the top fan badge thing 'cause I don't know that anyone else would be particularly. I don't think it would give anything extra other than. Like if someone wanted to join with a different account or I think if people want to leave they can just leave so I don't think it would be that useful to anybody else. And that that will be fine.

B: OK, cool, so do you have any moderation experience outside of Facebook group like in other online community. And I don't think I do anywhere else.

Charlotte: I don't think I do anywhere else.



B: Are you a member of any other online communities? Reddit or Discord?

Charlotte: I don't use Reddit or Discord. I use Twitter. That's not quite the same. I don't think I really have any other forms of, other than at work. We use Microsoft Teams a bit. I can't think of anything else I use not much other than Facebook.

B: Do you like being a moderator in Facebook groups?

Charlotte: The one I am. I don't necessarily mind but I don't have to do that much. I don't know that I'd want to manage a much bigger group.

B: What do you think your engagement will be like if you weren't the moderator.

Charlotte: I think it be exactly the same.

B: I think that's pretty much it. Thank you very much.

### **P16-Frigg**

B: So, uhm, do you have Facebook open?

Frigg: Not sure, but I can check. Uh, I do now. Now it's Open.

B: So how long roughly have you been on Facebook?

Frigg: Pretty sure it's 10 years, yeah?

B: OK, what kind of Facebook groups are you mainly in?

Frigg: Uh or correction 10 or 12 years. I'm not I might have some time during high school is when I joined yeah. What kind of Facebook groups? Well, there was this time you know back back when it started, at least here when everyone joined that a lot of groups were not really groups, it was just something that you kind of just. You can also like pages, both pages and groups were kind of just like for people who like cats and then you join. And if there's someone who shares cute pictures of cats and nothing really happens. So those were more like I actually liked having that tag on my page. So there's a bunch of those but but the ones I actually the ones actually uses. Groups are more like often education like my. My class would have a group at University or the entire year would have a group to share information and stuff, but that's mostly that

B: OK. Cool so. So looking at the questionnaire that you filled it says that you're currently moderating some groups, right?

Frigg: Yeah.

B: What kind of groups are you moderating?

Frigg: So they are, well one is A the oldest. One is probably the The [sports] club that I'm a member of where. Well, I I am a moderator in the group. It's not really necessary to moderate 'cause it's pretty yeah calm what goes on but I do sometimes respond to messages from people who need information and stuff. So there's a [sports] Club. There is also there's a movie club at the University that I'm actually not part of any more, but I was part of founding it, so I'm still. I think they recently made a new one. But yeah, I've been moderating that for a long time and there is a women's network that we recently started, which were a lot of moderation is going on, but that might actually be. Maybe that's a page. I'm not sure the women's network might be a page. But the other ones are groups.

B: OK, um so uh which which? Which group are you mostly working with?

Frigg: That would, well until recently was the movie club. That was a lot, but now it's more. Well, if it is a group, then it's the women's network. And I just remembered there's one more which is. Or two. Actually, there's a family get-together planning group and there is also this sort of food get together which is not family but it's friends like my my families friends. So still the same, but they're actually a moderating those as well because nobody else knows how to use Facebook.

B: OK cool yeah. So again, which one are you mostly working with us?

Frigg: If the women's network is a page that one otherwise the [sports] club one.

B: OK, could you check if the women's network is a page actually?

Frigg: OK, let's find it out is. Uh, no. It says that's a page. OK sorry yeah. So then it's the [sports] Club.

B: OK, so if you can focus on the [sports] club later that will make it easier.

Frigg: Yeah sorry

B: it's alright.

Frigg: You never talk about this, so right now when I'm actually talking about it, I'm sending like wait. Yeah, yeah definitely that one is a group. B: Yeah cool. So how's the group like? The [sports] group, it's well,

Frigg: so it's a closed group because we have a public page which is for people like we're interested in the club, or like it's sort of to advertise, but the the group is there for people who are actually signed up in our members, so it's not. I think you can see that it exists, but we only let people in if their members and it's often it's stuff like oh sorry, I'm sick and someone 'cause I'm also I'm a trainer in the club so it's like if I'm sick I need someone to take over or. Practice has been cancelled or there's some joint event. We recently had an event that was on the public page, but we then advertised it there to make it clear to members that we wanted them to come and support the event for practical information.

B: Yeah, like a roughly how many members or how active it is.

Frigg: I think members 300 or something, but I can check OK, no 216 members. Uhm it's pretty active like there's almost every week. There's some kind of post that I can't make it to practice today or remember to get to this great practice where someone is visiting.

B: OK, cool, so um. Roughly, how often do you check the group?

Frigg: Ooh, recently more, but you know, normally it's actually not a lot 'cause it. I find the kind of distracting because I I don't. I really. I kind of see the [sports] stuff as work, so I prefer to get it in my emails sometimes every time there's a notification I'll quickly check it, but I don't really read it unless I can see it's for me. So I will probably look at it like every second day or so, but I won't actively sort of actually go into it and participate like that will be less than once a week.

B: OK, cool uhm so. How many moderators or admins are they?

Frigg: I think I saw three or three admins. I'm checking something while you're doing this, 'cause I. Yeah, 'cause I'm confused 'cause I know I have been moderating this group, but I don't so I can see three elements that are not me, but I can't do anything happening outside. OK, should I be able to see an admin tag on my name as well 'cause? Yeah, sure I don't I don't think I'm an admin anymore. I don't know what happened. Oh, so that's interesting hum. Maybe I confused it with something else but. You know this is weird because someone else who's an admin like one of them does all the administration 'cause I know that I don't think the other people know they have access there just there because they used to be trainers in the club. Oh, this is really weird. Yeah, so OK. Sorry this is this is so strange because I'm not an admin of this group. I thought I was think I was at some point so I can also try and find out which one. I'm actually a moderator, admin want. Yeah, I hope you can use this for

something as well then I don't know what's going on. But I mean, I think the one that I've 'cause, it's not really moderation in the family one. So honestly, I feel I think the movie club one would be the one that it makes the most sense for me to talk about because I created that one another sort of been really actively doing stuff in that one.

B: OK, we can talk about that movie club.

Frigg: I think that makes more sense because that would have definitely done moderation stuff as well, and sort of change permissions and things.

B: Yeah, yeah, sure. So go back to the questions, how's the movie group like?

Frigg: So yeah, the movie club then is very much like it's mostly us like the admins sharing here is the next event. A and sort of all the most of the interaction that happens in those events. Like we create events for the group's a few times, there's been information like recruiting more admins, for example, recruiting more people to help with the group, or like sort of information about how to get into the group because it had to be a closed group because there's some permissions with showing movies. So then. Sort of. That was a lot of help where people needed help and sort of asked for well into face to face. They would ask my friend can't get into the group. What should he do? And then we said we have this public post. Go look at that in the group. So we sort of. There was a lot of one way communication from us in the group. Yeah, and and then in the events themselves there were more sort of interaction and people would ask questions and stuff. OK, cool.

B: How many members or how many posts per?

Frigg: 442

B: OK and like how active.

Frigg: Well, it's the events are. Let's see how this debate I guess it's called. Yeah well, there's no. They were used to be an event like five times a year, so approximately. That's how often we would make a post.

B: Good.

Frigg: And then in the events themselves, leading up to them, they were sort of regular posts in the weeks before another. Otherwise it's pretty quiet.

B: OK, so um, when you were moderating it, how often do you check the group?

Frigg: That would be like I wouldn't actively go in and look at it, but I always check

for notifications and if there was some notification I'd go in there and respond or in whatever needed.

B: Cool. So can you tell me about a memorable moderation experience you have with the group?

Frigg: Uh, I guess the most memorable. I do have one that's really memorable, but OK I I guess it's moderate. I don't know what counts is moderation. I think it was that we had, so it's it's part of the University. So back when we started already we got already a group set up things, we got the group set up under the University. So there was this one where it meant that you if you could only get in if you had used your University email to register. So that worked really well to make sure not at the right people got in and not other people. And then. That system stopped working because they change the way students email addresses look. So the domain, like the new domain that they got, didn't work with this system. And apparently the person who started the University like the Super Group they they deleted their Facebook so there was no admin of the Super group. So we couldn't get anything changed and because they weren't there they couldn't make anyone new into an admin. We couldn't get a hold of that. We didn't know where this time. We just tried writing them. So basically we had to make a whole new group where we could change the way people. Became members, so we made this whole new group. We had to rename the group so that was called. So the group is called [movie group name]. So we had this. The old group was then called NOT-[movie group name]. And then in the group the description was changed with a description of how to get to the NEW-[movie group name] group and this whole thing with notifying people if they were writing in the wrong group and people are really confused and someone for fun made this sort of "keep the old-[movie group name] group" group. Sort of for fun post. Though that took a lot of effort like there I had to constantly keep up and see if people had actually understood that they had to move and there was so much trouble getting. We have to figure out what do we need to ask them and we ended up having to ask them for their student ID is when they you know you can get a group to ask automatically. Ask for some information. Yeah, and people kept on not understanding that they had to supply the information and then we tried to get ahold of them and I actually tried to get peoples email addresses from 'cause you can get. You can use the student ID to get that and then I would write them in an email saying you can't get into the group because you didn't do something right. Or can you please tell 'cause I know you know this person and they didn't give us their student ID. Can you get them to give to sort of? It was such a huge effort. It took so such a long time. It's not funny memorable.

B: Yeah yeah, it seems like. There is some like a misunderstanding of or like there is. You need to work something out between the Facebook Group and your own university system.

Frigg: Yeah, yeah, and that was definitely not working. We even talk to University administration and they didn't know what that you're like. Who created the old University Group. They also thought it was an official one, but nobody knew where the person was, so maybe it was never an official group. Nobody ever found out anyway.

B: Cool and so do you like did you engage with the group outside of your moderating role back then?

Frigg: so. Back then it was very sort of. There's a lot of stuff outside. We had physical meetings where we would meet up and the events and there were obviously physical events as well, where people showed up and then we would also take photos that we would then sometimes sharing the group just just a few sort of showing there was an event. Also, 'cause we had a sponsor so we had to take photos anyway to document to the sponsor that people actually showed up and saw their ads and but yeah, so there was. There were physical event there still are. I just have been on a stay abroad and haven't been able to be part of it, so that's why I. I'm sort of out of it now, but they're continuing it and I think they may actually have started trying to create a new Facebook group again, and I don't really know about that.

B: OK. What do you think it makes people engage with the group instead of other alternatives?

Frigg: Well. In this case, I just, I mean 'cause. I know there is another sort of movie get-together club, but so I think it's actually we really tried to brand it within the University because the other one is, well, it's not. It's specifically for people studying in this Department and the other one is as well, but the other one is more like sort of by word of mouth that the people who know this guy then get invited. If you know someone you can invite, it's not exclusive. Anyone is welcome, but you only if you don't know them you can get the feeling that it's exclusive and it's for. The popular people or whatever, and we made an effort to branded and to talk to the tutors who meet the new students and ask if we can come and present ourselves and and we have an exclusive event just for new students. So we really try and actually reach out and tell people that they're welcome.

B: OK, cool, so um. How has the group developed since you have become active on it?

Frigg: So it's actually started, so there's this sort of an attached admin group only for

the admins and it started as that one because it was only my class. There might be in my classmate starting it, and then we made that bigger one 'cause we started inviting everyone in our year and then everyone in the Department and it's just. I think the, I mean it's no different in the sense it doesn't feel like there's more activity. I can just see the member number going up, but they also know that I'm more visible, so people. Maybe not anymore since I've been away. I don't know, but people used to, I think, recognize my name is that person from the [movie club], sort of that that became what people associated my Facebook picture with sort of so I I don't know what it. Yeah, I didn't feel a big change as the sort of ethnic group changed or people, more people came practically just that people I didn't know might actually recognize my name.

B: So how do you see it developing in the future?

Frigg: I'm not sure. I mean, I'm I've been kind of concerned at first 'cause I tried to actually give away some responsibility saying I'm sorry I don't have as much time and then they're all like nobody wanted to take over my responsibility. So I kind of had to keep going. And then I ended up just having to leave 'cause I was. I was away so I could and then they just. They just took over like suddenly all my tasks were being handled and they didn't ask me. They just knew exactly what to do, so I was really concerned that it would die. Sort of 'cause it's kind of my baby, but I don't think it's dying and I could actually now. Now we start something new where now all the admins have a group chat and they were nice and they added me even though I'm not I haven't been part of it for awhile and I haven't gone into it 'cause it's kind of been stressing me out a little. Actually, 'cause I feel like maybe I have to quit 'cause I don't really have time and they seem to be OK without me, but I could see recently that someone's writing something but, the new logo isn't quite done. So apparently they're they're changing everything, which kind of hurts 'cause I made the old logo and it was sort of. Yeah, like I said, it's my baby, but it also means that they care about it enough to make a new logo. So I really feel like someone else is taking over. They're sort of maintaining this thing like this movie club for the students, so I think it's just going to remain the same, sort of. OK, maybe maybe with their twist on whatever they want it to be.

B: Uh, that kind of answer my neck my next question. So does this differ from how you will like it to be developed further.

Frigg: I think. I don't know if I was in it, I might. There might be things I don't like. I don't know because I know I disagree with them on some things, but. I'm trying to sort of be a grown up about it and think well, since I'm not participating, it's OK that

they're actually taking over, so it's probably going to be good as long as it doesn't die.

B: So how would you describe your general approach to moderate the group?

Frigg: Hum. We tried to set some very clear rules, not for behavior because that hasn't been an issue, but still like this is what the group is for and this is also very structured about. Well, when we are, whenever we watching a movie, we don't just pick one. We always vote and there's a very sort of systematic way of 1st as a vote where everyone can suggest and then there's a vote where we pick the top 10 and then they can vote on those and and I was mostly aware that I know that there are big groups of people who sort of. So that's sort of a click in one of the years, for example.

B: That's nice.

Frigg: Sort of three people who are sort of very much the admired by a lot of people. And then they have a click around them. and I don't want it to only be for them, so it was very conscious about. Um? Sort of the way I would write whenever people have been suggesting and I would pick the topmost suggested of those, I would flip the order so that the one that was on the bottom was the one that had the most votes in the beginning. Just, I mean, Facebook changes that when you vote. Yes, because I didn't want. I didn't want them to get all the attention I wanted, sort of underdogs and stuff to also be able to get their voice in and sort of. So I tried to check that it wasn't all like what suggestions or whatever. There was also other people then, 'cause sometimes you could also feel everyone going like someone had a stupid idea and then everyone would go for that because it was funny to vote for, not because they wanted to actually watch it. And we had one of those cases where we just said we are not watching this because we know that this is not you don't mean this, this is just because you think it's funny. Yeah, like kind of elementary school teaching. I don't know, but.

B: Yeah cool, um, do you have any formal guidelines or rules for that group?

Frigg: I mean we have about who can be members is very explicitly students from these departments and which is hard to manage because we can only check that their students in the University not there in the Department. So that's about membership. There are rules about how these. Sort of how these votes take place, but Facebook helps a lot because they made you and at one point it was really hard 'cause we couldn't change as much about votes. But now you can make votes so that you can vote for multiple things, so you can't, but we don't have rules set up about. Behavior and stuff. and I don't think we have about advertisement and stuff either. 'cause it hasn't been relevant 'cause nobody really wants to pollute it. I think they like it.



B: So are these rules like public like public displays on your group page?

Frigg: Yeah so there I think I don't know if people can. I think they can even see them if they're not members. Probably I'll go have a look if we actually still have. This one just explains like how the the procedure of get becoming a member and that we need their student ID and stuff that's described sort of in the description. And no, nobody reads since. Probably nobody knows, but it's described there and also says you can only be a member if you have the student ID and you also all you have to do is sign up and come to the events. Sort of that explains ow to participate in a movie event and then the thing about how votes take place is described somewhere in a pinned post or it was at least at some point. Can't find it. I think we past it into every event actually OK. Something like that. But it's also it seems to be kind of that older students would teach younger students how it works out. Just every time I made a post, I would explain this is the first one where we do like this. Yeah, that's why we have increased in the event description, but I would just reuse sort of the same kind of phrasing and stuff for every vote. This is the first one here. We do like this. This is the second vote. This works like this and sort of. So because I don't expect people to actually read descriptions and rules, so it's better to just throw it in their face when when it's necessary, yeah.

B: So do you have like any additional ones among moderators? Do you have any additional guidelines of rules among moderators?

Frigg: Yeah, OK, so there was this one thing we discussed back when we started where. About half of us thought that say so say there is. Yeah, there's two, so it's all about the movie selection. But one of them would be more related to which movies we watch, and we ended up deciding that. Because we had experiences where some people didn't want to come because they didn't like horror movies so they didn't like sci-fi movies or whatever. And we thought there was a shame 'cause it's really mostly for us about getting people together. So we made sort of an unofficial rule that if two movies are too similar we will select the 3rd place instead just to accommodate more different people. And there we would, we would make the decision public if we did it, but we wouldn't put it up as a rule because. OK, try to sort of game the system and make fun of it and someone would add 10 sci-fi movies so all of the top 10 would be sci-fi or something. We kind of expect people to troll us a little bit, so that would be in there was an unofficial guideline but where we were going to be honest if we used it and another one was we disagreed back in the beginning. We were six admins. Three of us thought. That if you, if there's a vote and you don't like one of the movies, that one you can overrule it because you're an admin, you put in this effort and three of

us didn't want to do that like I was very much a proponent of. No, I don't want this kind of. I felt like it was kind of corruption 'cause I feel like we're not doing this for us. We're doing it for every one I want people to know. I don't want people in. Basically, I didn't want people to join us admins because they wanted power over others. I think that's what I was afraid of. And then we we ended up going for the thing where you can't. We don't post it anywhere, but we just there's a rule that you don't get to overrule these majority decisions. You don't have any extra power. But then that also means that you are allowed to vote as an admin where the other suggestion was you can overrule, but also you can't vote for things that was sort of at all. This is, yeah, that's how our unofficial guidelines. And then we have a role distribution that sort of that's written down. But it doesn't matter. It's just like this person makes. You know the cover photos for events and this person is in charge of getting it on the info screens and University, so we also have this really long list of the different roles that people have practically. I think that's it, yeah? Yeah also, we were so many admins that we eeded to. Make a role that was the guy who holds all the threads together, sort of so someone just has the role of poking people. If they didn't do things on time and checking in the groups what people said yes to doing so, that's one person doing that. 'cause we became, it became too complex. I'm I'm not sure if that's what you asked, but

B: Oh that's well answered my next question. Do you moderate a group collaboratively with other staffs? And how do you relate to the other staff members?

Frigg: Well it used to be very close. 'cause we were all from my class. And then because people started graduating stuff, we realized we need to get more people and then. It was a bit awkward at first 'cause new people would get in and we would in the beginning. No, actually was very easy at first three four people saying this is how we do things and then two people those new two new people. But then it now I'm the only like organisers left like the only original person and then. I have these sort of. I have again it's my baby so that's been kind of awkward getting all these new people in. It's actually some of them. Most of them know each other and it's the other people getting other thing. But I'm so old now that I don't know all of them or some of them are actually I taught as a teaching assistant and now suddenly we're sitting here, which I do really like because it means that I'm something else. Then this teacher who might have been treating them badly or something. So in a way I like it 'cause it gets me to know people across the years and I kind of find it cozy. But also sometimes wonder if they think I'm just really old person who sort of who's grumpy about changing things so I don't, but I do it does become kind of a friendship and you say hi to people in the

hallways and it's 'cause you meet physically, right?

B: OK, yeah. So, uhm, like just now, you mentioned that you use votes, uh, from Facebook. To help you organize events right so um do use any tools to help you moderate like like just now you said vote is one of them. What else do you use?

Frigg: I mean it. No, I don't think so. I don't know what counts as moderation really? But. I mean it is a tool. I guess that the thing where when you want to join a group and it it automatically ask them for something and it also tells me that this person requested to join and I can see if they answered all the questions. So that feature we would use a lot and we would then also trying right people say I'm sorry you have to give us this information.

B: Yeah, yeah, so um, I'm now going to go through like the questionnaire that you filled in and then see if you have extra things to say because it's been a few months, right?

Frigg: Yeah,

B: So um. When have you notice that Facebook introduced this badges? Could you remember?

Frigg: So the first when I saw that question, I was like I don't know what, what the hell. I've never seen that. And then I realized I think some of the questions maybe realize that I have seen it, but I didn't understand what it was? And I recently again notice that. And I noticed in the actually in one of the main University group or maybe the computer science group. I'm not sure that if I made a comment it would say like top fan about me and I thought that was really weird. 'cause I'm not a fan of the University. I did apparently and I don't comment a lot. It's just that not a lot of people comment so. Yeah, so I notice there because I felt weird about being called a fan because I don't think you understand what's going on here. That was maybe a year ago. I'm not sure.

B: Yeah, so top fan is the badge they have for pages.

Frigg: OK yeah, yeah, so that's The one I've noticed. Maybe the admin badge, but I think I didn't. I didn't see that as anything like. I think I didn't. I didn't pay attention 'cause I knew who the admins were, so it was ignoring.

B: Yeah, so all. So in the question there you said you saw one that means frequent poster.

Frigg: That might have been the top fan one I'm not, maybe I've seen the frequent. Is that like?

B: There's also another one called conversation starter to?

Frigg: Did you show the the icons or just the text in the questionnaire 'cause? I think both of them.

B: Yeah both.

Frigg: 'cause then it might have been that it rang a bell when I saw it. 'cause The thing is, it's not if I haven't paid attention until those questions in your questionnaire.

B: OK,

Frigg: except for the top fan one 'cause I was wondering about it so past two years.

B: OK so after filling the questionnaire have you notice any of them?

Frigg: Yeah, I don't remember. I've been sort of paying a little bit attention. 'cause, Uh? Again, I'm not not because I needed it, but I recently there was something again. In a page where what did it say? I think that might have been in the family. One word again, it was showing that me and my dad are admins and it I don't know or moderators or whatever it says. But yeah, I've also noticed that. I've also noticed it on like public pages like the but again pages. But like the popular transportation system in the city that then I notice it because it was weird that someone was apparently maybe a conversation starter. I don't know. I thought it was weird 'cause I was wondering if people really want that kind of information. Do I want other people to see that I'm a fan of the public transportation system like that? That looks kind of lame. But honestly as you can hear maybe I can't remember which ones, but I remember sometimes seeing, Oh yeah, that's a badge. Apparently that's what it's called. 'cause now I know,

B: In the question about. From one to five, how informative do you think these badges are? So, uh, you rate it as one: somewhat informative for new member, so could you tell me about it a little bit more about it?

Frigg: So I'm thinking again, it's been awhile but yeah, so. Well, obviously it's nice to know when someone comments if there an admin, for example, 'cause if there's a big discussion, it's nice to see that it's the admin saying This is how we do things. Stop and notice some random person with an opinion it. Um? I'm I remember, I think I said somewhat 'cause it can be useful in some of those scenarios, but other things like

I don't know why I would care that someone is a conversation starter or something like that.

B: Yeah. So, uhm, do these badges gain you extra attention for your work as a moderator?

Frigg: I think. I mean, I think people sort of would. And then I think it could. So the thing is, I'm I was in charge of Facebook so I was the most active of all the admins in the moderate like I would be the one making the events and posting them and writing the messages and sort of so. I was already very visible so for me I think it did not make a difference at all. But it might have like some of the others who were not very popular at all and who mostly took care of. Maybe shopping for soda or whatever they did, maybe for them, but it's nice that actually when they posted something that it said you know can be less an admin or to be echoed as an admin, so I think in that case it's kind of nice that 'cause I also don't like taking credit for everything, right? I so I think it could do something, but I can't say for sure.

B: OK yeah. So um, what do you like? What strategy do you use? If you see about by post by a member with, for example, new member badge?

Frigg: So in the well, we had the admin group, the separate small one and there would already always be there with someone new joined. The person who added them would say hey everyone say hi to this person, so we kind of didn't need it because they would all sort of posted OK, but I think if I had somehow missed that post and I then saw this new badge then I would probably go look for them so I could find the hello post and actually say hi 'cause I would feel bad for not having said hi. The other one, we didn't use it for anything. I think it could have been useful if someone asked the question and I would be like why? Why are they asking? This is not how we do things and I could then see that oh they've never been here before. I think it could be useful, but it's not something I've noticed.

B: OK, so right. Um so. Right, the next question is, what kind of strategy do you use in the Facebook group moderation? Like how do you become aware of a problematic interaction in your groups?

Frigg: Thing just by keeping a close eye on what's happening in the world, a lot of discussions, but often we would like I would try and make sure, and if it seemed like there was like I don't really remember the people who are here could sometimes maybe make sure that go too far or something. And I've never removed anything, but I might watch it. Or like I might tell, people, OK, I might. I might go in and comment and say something like just say, Hey, maybe relax here.

B: OK, so uh, what kind of what kind of behaviors are didn't as problematic in your group?

Frigg: Well, not really any 'cause we don't have it. It's not like a lot of other groups I know could be for like discussing breastfeeding or something sensitive. And this is just movie selection so I think it will mostly be like if someone. Again, try to start a big trolling thing with selecting a stupid movie that nobody wants to watch in someone I forgot. Someone tried to suggest watching the whole of some series that would take 24 hours, something like that where? I mean, I don't mind that trolling 'cause it's nice that people are having fun, but it does. I would also just go in honestly and just. Deal with it and like it just. I think most mostly the strategy would be talked to people like tell them. This is why we're not doing what you're asking, or just be very open and explain things.

B: Cool, so um. How do you think your strategies differ from other moderators?

Frigg: Because I think it's it's. It's well, it's different 'cause we can usually explain things, both because it's a, It's a, It's a specific community, right? So we all study the same thing and that means first of all to some extent. I know how people think and I know what arguments work and which ones don't work. My dad, for example, moderates this language discussion group where anyone can join, but... I tried to get him to take your questionnaire but I never knew if he did I kind of hope he did but. But you know he in that one it's anyone right? So some of them are highly educated, some of them maybe don't have any form of Education. Some of them are there because they're dyslexic and are kind of curious, and he had to do a lot of stuff. Then people would be mean to someone who made a post that wasn't where they weren't spelling probably, and then the person would be like: I am dyslexic, could you be like, relax and sort of there. One thing was kind of mediate and go in and not as much as not as personal as me, but more generally saying in this group we don't do this or in this group we do it like this and I know that he has sometimes kick people out or or muted them just because there was no sort of mediating 'cause people were so different or or you just couldn't tell what this person wanted, where with me. I think I've always been able to figure out what people's intentions were, 'cause I know them. OK, if it makes sense, yeah,

B: So do you have any other moderation experience outside Facebook group?

Frigg: Can you clarify what you mean like in other online communities

B: like uh, like Reddits or Discord?

Frigg: So the only I think the only place would be back when I don't even know if it you could make these forums on Geocities. And I joined first so I joined this Ninja Turtles forum where we sort of were. I don't know how many members there were, but we were probably like 10 or 15 that were always there and then at some point. There were two things. One was that me and one person started our own forum and I don't remember why. Probably we wanted to do other stuff. It was a lot of sort of online text based role playing and I think we just. Oh yeah, we were the only ones in Europe, so we started our own to sort of then we could. Then we knew if we were doing it in that separate forum we could do it sort of synchronously and we didn't have to wait in the other one. You kind of had to be polite and not do too much until the other people logged on and stuff. So there we I guess we were moderating it, but we never got more people, so it was just us. So it was kind of weird. And but then there was. But I did go in and change stuff like I didn't want censoring like a lot of. The other forum was created by someone. I think she lived in [US city] and she had a lot of words banned and was very sort of no curse words. Which I didn't mind. It was nice because then it's nice there was a forum, but we just felt weird in there as [nationality] person. Both felt kind of like this is a bit much so we kind of removed all the banning of words so we could curse if we wanted. But that's it, I think. And then there was someone else who created one and she she made me. She created another forum where the idea was that people would pose as some of these characters, and the only reason I became a moderator was so that I could post as one of the characters. So I wasn't supposed to moderate. I was just. It was just the way to give me the role to play. One of the Ninja Turtles so I could talk to other people. This sounds kind of ridiculous, but yeah, yeah.

B: So um, how does that compare to moderating on Facebook groups?

Frigg: It well. I think the big difference was something I do think about this whole thing with having to be. Because I didn't play with the settings, even though there is this thing with being able to like you know what you call censor certain words? That's very different. 'cause that's not the point of Facebook is such like that this was more old school I guess that was. I guess kind of a nice thing because you can leave things out that you just. Don't want in there so 'cause I know that people are being super what, racist or homophobic and stuff on Facebook and you could make it that a bit harder if it would say flower. Every time someone would say a nasty word about gay people. For example, I kind of like that we had that in that group, but it's not something I've needed in my own moderation. People are superb in the group I'm moderating, but I think that's that's something I've thought about. It would be nice if you could do that.

B: OK, cool, so if you use a metaphor to describe your moderators role, what would you describe it as?

Frigg: A mix of sort of a student representative and then the teacher put into one because the teacher, because I am trying to make sure that everyone gets their voice heard and the dominating people don't get to take up all the space but also the student representative because it's very much I. I'm just there as a student is not about me and it's not, it's just someone has to make these events that I'm doing it, but it's just supposed to be. Everyone agree I'm just facilitating a discussion so maybe maybe facilitator.

B: OK, cool so uh, that's the end of the interview so. Thank you.