

AMENDED Exhibit 13

PLAINTIFFS' OMNIBUS OPPOSITION TO DEFENDANTS' MOTIONS FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT

Case No.: 4:22-md-03047-YGR

MDL No. 3047

In Re: Social Media Adolescent Addiction/Personal Injury Products Liability Litigation

Page 1

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

IN RE: SOCIAL MEDIA ADOLESCENT) MDL No.
ADDICTION/PERSONAL INJURY PRODUCTS) 4:22-md-3047-YGR
LIABILITY LITIGATION)

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
SPRING STREET COURTHOUSE

COORDINATION PROCEEDING)
SPECIAL TITLE [RULE 3.400])
SOCIAL MEDIA CASES) Lead Case No.
For Filing Purposes) 22STCV21355

VIDEO DEPOSITION OF JOSHUA SIMONS MP

April 1, 2025

Reporter: John Arndt, CSR, CCR, RDR, CRR
CSR No. 084-004605
CCR No. 1186

Deposition of Joshua Simons MP, taken pursuant to Notice of Taking Deposition, before John Arndt, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Certified Court Reporter, at Mishcon de Reya, LLP, 70 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6AH, United Kingdom, on April 1, 2025.

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1 interchangeably today, and that we all understand that
2 it represents the same company.

3 Other than that -- we've spoken before, have we
4 not?

5 A. We have.

6 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form.

7 BY MS. CARROLL:

8 Q. Do you -- do you recall when about that
9 was that we spoke?

10 A. It was roughly two to three weeks ago, I
11 think, roughly.

12 Q. Did plaintiffs' counsel ask whether you
13 would be willing to testify on the record?

14 A. They did.

15 Q. Appreciate it. Thank you for your time.

16 Just to orient the jury as to your background,
17 starting with your education, could you give us your --
18 where you attended university and any professional
19 degrees thereafter?

20 A. Yeah. I went to college in Cambridge
21 University in the UK, where I studied social and
22 political sciences for three years. I then worked. I
23 worked for a think tank. I worked for the Labour Party
24 for a while. And I then started a PhD program in
25 Harvard, where I was for -- from 2016 until 2021,

1 studying political science. I then turned my PhD into
2 a book.

3 Q. And you received your PhD from Harvard?

4 A. I did, yeah.

5 Q. And what was that in? Was it governance?

6 A. It was. It was a PhD in political science
7 in the government department. I majored in political
8 theory and political philosophy, and over the course of
9 my PhD, I became interested in machine learning and
10 computer science and data science and statistics, and
11 the connection between those things and democracy, and
12 I wrote a PhD about -- it's called Algorithms and
13 Democracy, which I finished in 2021, and then for a
14 year and a bit afterwards, I turned that PhD into a
15 book which is published by Princeton University Press.

16 Q. So was the -- your dissertation or
17 thesis -- that was the manuscript for what became the
18 book that was published in 2023. Is that correct?

19 A. That's correct, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. And you are currently a member of
21 parliament? You were elected in July? Is that right?

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. And you were in government prior to doing
24 your PhD program at Harvard. Is that also correct?

25 A. My side didn't win an election for quite a

1 long time, so I was in politics but not in government.
2 We were very much in opposition at that point. But
3 yeah, I worked in -- I worked in politics for the
4 Labour Party for about eight months during the year
5 before I went to Harvard.

6 Q. How did you become interested in the
7 technology side of your studies?

8 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form.

9 A. I -- when I was at Harvard, it was
10 actually through my wife, like many good things. She
11 and I -- she was interested in statistics, and I was
12 interested in statistics and central banking, and we
13 got talking and talked about classes that we were both
14 taking.

15 She suggested a class taught by a woman called
16 Finale Doshi-Velez called Introduction to Machine
17 Learning in the engineering department in computer
18 science, which she said was super interesting, so I
19 enrolled, went to the lectures, and through that class
20 became close to and was learning from a woman called
21 Cynthia Dwork, who is a cryptographer and computer
22 scientist.

23 She helped with the cryptography the U.S.
24 census, and she was an expert in fairness in artificial
25 intelligence, trying to work out what it means to have

1 fair AI.

2 And so I with Cynthia Dwork got a reading group
3 together of computer scientists and political
4 scientists and engineers, and Cynthia Dwork then agreed
5 to join my PhD committee, so it had a mix of folks from
6 government, computer science, and law, and then it was
7 through her that I ended up writing the PhD about
8 computer science.

9 Q. Very interesting. I'm going to introduce
10 our first exhibit, which is just a printout of your
11 LinkedIn profile. I will represent to you that this is
12 how it prints when you print from LinkedIn.

13 So I just want you to review that and make sure
14 what is listed on your LinkedIn profile is accurate.

15 THE REPORTER: And is that Exhibit 1?

16 MS. CARROLL: It is.

17 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

18 [Exhibit 1 marked for identification.]

19 BY MS. CARROLL:

20 Q. Mr. Simons, is this an accurate
21 representation of your education and experience?

22 A. It is, yeah.

23 Yeah, I mean, the only thing, just to mention,
24 is that the method of my employment at Facebook changed
25 several times over the course of the period of time I

1 was there. I was initially hired as a contractor, and
2 then I became a full Facebook employee on a part-time
3 basis after a period of being a contractor.

4 Q. Do you recall the time period or
5 approximate time period for that change?

6 A. Yeah, in broad terms, I do. In the summer
7 of 2018, I was a contractor, and then that contracting
8 period came to an end. I was then rehired as a
9 contractor on a rolling basis rather than a fixed-term
10 period, and then after that, I was hired as a Facebook
11 employee, STE part-time full Facebook employee.

12 MR. LEVY: Explain STE.

13 A. STE means short -- I'm actually not sure
14 what STE means. Yeah, I'm not sure what STE means. I
15 actually never quite knew what STE means. But it was
16 a -- I was a full Facebook employee with all the same
17 benefits as employees, but it wasn't a full-time
18 position, because I was also doing my PhD at the same
19 time, which in the team that I was in was a common form
20 of employment.

21 There were a couple of other folks employed on
22 the same basis. And then when I moved to the UK, I
23 became a full Facebook employee on a part-time basis in
24 the same arrangement, but through the UK rather than
25 the U.S.

1 BY MS. CARROLL:

2 Q. If you recall, what was the impetus for
3 the change in the employment status, like -- or from
4 contractor to employee? Was that something that you
5 raised, or was it something that they offered?

6 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form.

7 A. It was something that my manager, [REDACTED]
8 [REDACTED], and her manager, [REDACTED],
9 discussed with me explicitly. They were concerned that
10 given the seniority of executive that I was talking to
11 and engaging with, that my employment as a contractor
12 rather than a full-time employee of Facebook would
13 raise some risks for them.

14 I didn't fully understand what those were. They
15 didn't explain those to me. But they were concerned
16 about risks to them, and so they thought it would be
17 better to hire me as a Facebook employee.

18 BY MS. CARROLL:

19 Q. Okay. Thank you. We can put that aside
20 for now.

21 [Exhibit 2 marked for identification.]

22 BY MS. CARROLL:

23 Q. I'll go ahead and introduce our second
24 exhibit, which is -- we're going to -- the second
25 exhibit will be excerpts from your book. Obviously due

1 to copyright reasons, we're not putting the full
2 publication into evidence. But this is something I
3 think we will reference throughout. But to start, I'd
4 just like to understand what prompted the writing of
5 this book for you.

6 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Which document is this?

7 MS. CARROLL: This is the second one.

8 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Does it have a label?

9 MR. ARNOLD: B.

10 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: B.

11 MR. HALPERIN: We'll object to the
12 preamble.

13 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: I don't see a B in
14 here.

15 MR. ARNOLD: Oh, so there isn't a digital
16 copy of this document.

17 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: There isn't? Okay.

18 MR. ARNOLD: We just have the hard copies.

19 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: No worries.

20 BY MS. CARROLL:

21 Q. Go ahead, Mr. Simons.

22 A. So for me, I'd spent at this point five --
23 four-and-a-half, five years doing a PhD at Harvard
24 studying what machine learning is, what AI is, and why
25 it matters for democracy.

1 I had also spent several years working at the
2 heart of a team at Facebook whose job it is to think
3 about how you build AI with vulnerable people in mind
4 to protect people, and what I learned from both that
5 academic work and then also from being inside Facebook
6 as a company and seeing the journey of that work,
7 seemed really, really important to get out there into
8 the world as a matter of fundamental importance to our
9 society, our democracy, and what it means to be a
10 citizen of a democracy.

11 So I had a conversation -- Princeton actually
12 approached me at a political science conference, and I
13 had a conversation with an editor there who was really
14 interested in helping me to tell the story of those
15 ideas to an audience that was broader than just the
16 narrow audience that you read in an academic PhD.

17 Q. Thank you. Do you -- you mention
18 throughout your book an experience, accountability, and
19 language gaps. Can you explain what those are?

20 MR. HALPERIN: Object to foundation.
21 Assumes facts not in evidence.

22 A. These I think are one of the most
23 fundamental reasons, these gaps, why there's a disjunct
24 between the things that have happened inside technology
25 companies and the debate that all of us as citizens who

1 are subject to their power have.

2 And the heart of it is that AI is complicated.
3 It requires training in statistics and computer science
4 and these disciplines that most of us don't have
5 training in.

6 And what that means is that some of the language
7 that technology companies use to talk about what
8 they're doing doesn't make any sense to or is hard to
9 unpick if you are a citizen, or frankly even experts,
10 lawyers, judges, politicians.

11 And the way I saw it at this point, I had had
12 the privilege of an incredible education in which I had
13 got some training in the basics of statistics and how
14 machine learning works, and had a lot of training in
15 communication and explanation, and therefore part of my
16 job in this book was an explanatory job to bridge the
17 gap as described, so that folks who don't know anything
18 about AI or Google or Facebook can understand the
19 basics of how they work and what it means for the
20 people they impact and the effect they have on
21 individuals and on society.

22 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Excuse me.

23 [Discussion off the record.]

24 BY MS. CARROLL:

25 Q. Could you provide for the jury an

1 off the record for a second?

2 MS. CARROLL: Yeah.

3 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are going off the
4 record at 11:13 AM.

5 [Discussion off the record.]

6 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are back on the
7 record at 11:13 AM.

8 BY MS. CARROLL:

9 Q. Mr. Simons, did you ever raise any
10 concerns with your superiors at Meta about Meta's
11 prioritizing engagement over other considerations?

12 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form.

13 A. Yes, I did. And some of those who I
14 raised that concern with were themselves concerned. I
15 can give some examples if that would be helpful.

16 BY MS. CARROLL:

17 Q. Are there specific individuals that you
18 can name that you spoke with?

19 A. Yes. I had a conversation on several
20 occasions with a senior VP, Margaret Stewart, who was
21 VP of Responsible Innovation, and she and I discussed
22 the fundamental purpose of the team that I had been
23 asked to join and help build, which was to embed
24 principles, consideration of harm and safety of users,
25 early in the AI design progress.

1 And Margaret Stewart's view -- she reported it
2 to me -- was that that was necessary for engineers
3 across the company to think about harm, user harm --
4 before a model was rolled out and deployed. And we
5 discussed on numerous occasions how to get those
6 principles embedded in the AI design process at
7 Facebook, and to my knowledge, while I was there, they
8 never were.

9 Q. What was the source of the emphasis?

10 MR. LEVY: I don't know that he was done
11 with his answer to your question.

12 BY MS. CARROLL:

13 Q. Oh, excuse me. Were you finished?

14 A. There were -- most of the products that I
15 worked with, whether it was in the advertising delivery
16 system, an engineering called [REDACTED], the News
17 Feed system, [REDACTED], Guy Rosen, [REDACTED], or
18 the Instagram product, my whole job was to develop
19 principles that would be embedded in the AI design
20 process at Facebook, and the whole point of doing that
21 was that it would not just invite but require engineers
22 and product leaders to think about harm before a
23 product was designed, not after the fact, and in each
24 of those cases, those senior engineers and product
25 leaders reported the need for something like that to

1 happen, and in the end my team was folded and disbanded
2 and folded into the -- another part of the
3 organization, and so those principles never were
4 deployed in the product design process.

5 And you know, the essence of that meant that
6 engagement was prioritized over those principles that
7 could have been embedded in Facebook's systems.

8 Q. Were there a lot of individuals of
9 differing backgrounds like yourself attempting to
10 promote this user safety work within the organization?

11 A. There were not many, no. In my team when
12 I joined it, I was the only person with a political
13 science or a kind of nonengineering background in the
14 team.

15 I think two others joined over the period that I
16 was an employee at Facebook, and what was important and
17 different about the team that I was working in was that
18 we weren't in the policy or legal or comms bit of
19 Facebook, and those parts of the company were always
20 sort of disrespected by the main product engineering AI
21 side of the company, that that was where the pride was,
22 that was where the promotion opportunities were, the
23 money, and because we were in that, we were embedded
24 within it, that what made my role and the role of the
25 others who got hired with my kind of same background on

1 Responsibility XFN, [REDACTED] in the advertising
2 delivery system, was how do we build the case inside
3 Facebook that we have to do this, that we have to
4 change the way AI is built to consider safety, harm
5 earlier on in the process? And ultimately we would
6 always come back to Mark Zuckerberg had to support it
7 for it to happen.

8 BY MS. CARROLL:

9 Q. Was there an understanding amongst the
10 Responsible AI team at the time when you were working
11 with the company of why it wouldn't be a priority for
12 Mark Zuckerberg?

13 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form and
14 foundation.

15 A. Whether or not Mark Zuckerberg would
16 support the need to embed responsible considerations of
17 safety into AI design at Facebook, whether he would
18 support that, was at the first stage of my period as an
19 employee of Facebook a matter of debate. Different
20 people had different views about where he would land.

21 What I found over the course of my employment
22 was that every time we were involved in a decision that
23 he actually made, that decision tended to be not to
24 support the need for those principles to be embedded.

25 And rarely was an explicit rationale given for

1 that decision, but it always had the effect of
2 prioritizing the existing system, engagement,
3 meaningful social interactions, over the other
4 considerations that we were inviting to be inside the
5 system.

6 So the broad pattern of decisions was that if we
7 were proposing something that would reduce engagement
8 that went up for the executive team, Mark Zuckerberg,
9 to review, the decision that came back would prioritize
10 the existing system of engagement over other safety
11 considerations.

12 BY MS. CARROLL:

13 Q. Thank you. I'm going to introduce Exhibit
14 Number 3. It's F.

15 [Exhibit 3 marked for identification.]

16 MS. CARROLL: Can we put a clean copy on
17 the -- here, I can put it on this and not this one. I
18 don't know why there's highlighting on this one and not
19 that one. It's not my highlighting.

20 MR. REISER: I have a spare.

21 MR. HALPERIN: She's talking about the
22 screen.

23 MS. CARROLL: On the record. Yeah. I
24 don't want to -- I don't want to have -- I'll put it on
25 this thing over here. I don't want to misrepresent

1 this document. I don't know why it has --

2 MR. ARNOLD: Okay. We can --

3 MS. CARROLL: All right.

4 MR. ARNOLD: Let's go off the record.

5 MS. CARROLL: Yeah, let's off the record
6 for one second.

7 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are going off the
8 record at 11:25 AM.

9 [Discussion off the record.]

10 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are back on the
11 record at 11:27 AM.

12 BY MS. CARROLL:

13 Q. Mr. Simons, you have Exhibit 3 in front of
14 you, which is a letter written in response to request
15 for public comment to the Federal Trade Commission.
16 And it is written by representatives from the
17 Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public
18 Policy, submitted by [REDACTED]. Are you familiar
19 with Mr. [REDACTED]?

20 A. I am. We wrote a paper together at one
21 point.

22 Q. He writes on the first page, or they write
23 to the FTC, "Our chief concern" -- and I'll represent
24 that as far as we know, this is how it was produced to
25 us, the highlighting.

1 "Our chief concern is that this is the business
2 model that sits at the core of the major platform
3 companies in and of itself that has caused these harms,
4 and yet we do not have" -- "yet we have yet to see
5 regulatory enforcement at the national level that can
6 treat these side effects."

7 What is your understanding -- strike that.

8 What was your understanding of the business
9 model of Facebook while you were an employee?

10 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form. Vague.
11 Misstates the document.

12 A. The main exposure that I had while I was
13 an employee at Facebook directly to the interaction
14 between the systems -- Facebook's AI systems that I was
15 working on -- and the business model, how revenue was
16 generated and profit was made, was the ad delivery
17 system, which I worked on intensively in the summer of
18 2018 with a senior engineer in that system who
19 explained to me the connection between the way the
20 system is designed and the revenue that it generates
21 for the company.

22 BY MS. CARROLL:

23 Q. Thank you. Is it -- was it your
24 understanding when you worked for Facebook, Meta, that
25 the business goals were prioritized over user safety?

1 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form and
2 foundation.

3 A. The -- the most important way that I
4 observed the relationship between the business goals
5 and choices about the design of the system while I was
6 at Facebook was in specific examples of cases that went
7 up to senior executives, and then the decisions that
8 happened in those rooms.

9 In a few cases I was in the rooms where the
10 discussion happened. In other cases, I was helping to
11 prepare the team to go to review with Mark or the
12 executive team, and then would download the review
13 afterwards.

14 One specific example that I discussed with the
15 advertising executive -- well, sorry, the engineer in
16 the advertising team -- [REDACTED], who I
17 mentioned -- we talked about the ad delivery system,
18 which is where AI design and revenue most directly
19 interact. And we talked in particular about the
20 organic bid component of that system, which basically
21 defines what's of value to someone, to a person using
22 that system.

23 He used an example of a mum who had just had a
24 child, that the system knows that you've just had a
25 child, that you're a new mum because of all the data

1 that it has about you, and it was showing mum -- women
2 who just had children ads for things that would sort of
3 make them feel bad about their body in some way, you
4 know, like body cream or body adjustment surgery or
5 whatever.

6 And the conversation we talked about was
7 whether -- what's of value to a user in the organic bid
8 component -- you could change that. You could redefine
9 it. So instead of making people feel -- click on ads
10 because they feel shame about their body after they've
11 had a baby, maybe there would be some kind of
12 higher-order goal that you could put into that
13 component of the ad delivery system like, how do I
14 breastfeed, or you know, are there any downsides to
15 bottle? Whatever.

16 And [REDACTED] talked about how he'd, you know, worked
17 on some different ways of changing that component of
18 the ad system, but had been unable to get those things
19 rolled out, because ultimately they were less efficient
20 or effective, and what that meant in that context was
21 they would result in fewer ads being clicked on and
22 therefore less revenue generated by the ad delivery
23 system.

24 BY MS. CARROLL:

25 Q. Thank you. On Page 6 of this document,

1 BY MS. CARROLL:

2 Q. Was addiction or addictive properties a
3 part of that discussion with anyone during your time at
4 Facebook?

5 A. Yes. And in some of the documents that I
6 wrote whilst I was at Facebook, addiction was one of
7 the types of harm or the mechanisms by which harm was
8 reproduced that I talked about with senior
9 executives -- Margaret Stewart, [REDACTED], to name two
10 examples -- in those documents themselves.

11 And in particular, the question we talked about
12 was, given that the whole News Feed system is aimed at
13 engagement, that's a set of repeated patterns of
14 behavior -- clicking, liking, sharing, and on so -- the
15 best way to increase engagement is addiction in some
16 way, you know, is to get people doing those forms of
17 engagement.

18 And so the type of content that the News Feed
19 system made viral was the kind of content that would
20 make you feel, make users feel whatever they needed to
21 feel to produce that type of behavior. And so I talked
22 with News Feed executives as well as Margaret and
23 [REDACTED] about that feedback loop, essentially, of a
24 system designed to promote engagement that produced
25 content that kept people on the platform, coming back

1 to the platform, and what to do about that system.

2 Q. Is "feedback loop" an industry term?

3 MR. HALPERIN: Object to foundation.

4 A. We talked a lot about loops in particular,
5 and feedback loops as a kind of loop. Loops is a
6 machine learning term, and the way that machine
7 learning can -- it's almost performative by
8 producing -- by predicting something, it can make that
9 thing come true, especially in a closed system like
10 Facebook.

11 So if you predict a particular form of
12 engagement, the system is likely to display more of
13 that form of engagement over time, and therefore it is
14 so important, what you choose to train and build a
15 system to do, creates the future on that platform.

16 And so for example, [REDACTED], who had worked
17 really deeply in the advertising delivery system before
18 he led Responsible AI -- we talked a lot about how AI
19 really raised the stakes of the impact and choices
20 about the impact in all of Facebook's systems.

21 BY MS. CARROLL:

22 Q. Did Mr. [REDACTED] also work for Facebook?

23 MR. HALPERIN: Object to foundation.

24 A. I believe when I started working with him
25 he had had some role at the company. I don't recall

1 Actually, no. Strike that. We're going to
2 do -- let's do G.

3 [Exhibit 5 marked for identification.]

4 MR. ARNOLD: I'll --

5 MS. CARROLL: Yes.

6 BY MS. CARROLL:

7 Q. While Mr. Arnold is passing that around --
8 what is a WIP? What does WIP stand for?

9 A. That was an internal Facebook term for a
10 work-in-progress document.

11 Q. Work in progress.

12 A. Thank you.

13 Q. Was this document here, "Ethics at
14 Facebook: Principles and Processes," created and shared
15 on an internal platform within Meta?

16 MR. LEVY: Take a minute to look through
17 it.

18 A. Okay.

19 MR. HALPERIN: Object to foundation.

20 A. Yes, as I remember it, it was created on
21 Quip.

22 BY MS. CARROLL:

23 Q. What is Quip?

24 A. Quip -- I don't know if Quip's an acronym
25 or what, but it was the internal kind of Microsoft Word

1 of Facebook. It was Facebook's own internally built
2 document system that we were instructed at this point
3 only to use Facebook's internal document system, and
4 not any others.

5 Q. And as you've reviewed this document,
6 you'll notice there are lots of others individuals
7 making comments on this Quip document. Is that a
8 normal -- strike that.

9 Was that, during your time with the company, a
10 normal way of communicating progress on a project with
11 team members in the normal course of business?

12 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form.

13 A. Yes, commenting in a Quip with each other
14 was a -- was a normal way to make progress on a project
15 at Facebook when I was there.

16 BY MS. CARROLL:

17 Q. Did you -- were you the author of this
18 Quip?

19 A. I was. Others edited sections of it, and
20 as you can see from the comments, fed into it. But I
21 was the author of it.

22 Q. How did this come about? Why did you
23 start this document or write what was here?

24 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form.

25 MR. LEVY: Objection. If you could

1 clarify the question.

2 MS. CARROLL: Sure.

3 BY MS. CARROLL:

4 Q. When you started this Quip, if I'm
5 referring to that correctly, what was the purpose of
6 doing so?

7 A. So at this point in my time at Facebook,
8 this was the sort of end of 2018 to the best of my
9 recollection, and I had spent nearly half a year at the
10 company talking to senior engineers, data scientists,
11 product designers, folks from policy, law -- a very
12 wide range of different parts of Facebook and its
13 systems.

14 And [REDACTED], who was the
15 leader of Responsible AI, and [REDACTED], who
16 reported to him and who was my manager, asked me to
17 essentially round up the work I'd done and produce
18 suggestions and proposals which would then go to senior
19 executives inside the AI part of the organization and
20 then in other bits of the organization that followed
21 from that work, and so the purpose of this document was
22 to be sent to senior executives to summarize what work
23 I had done so far.

24 Q. Thank you. Turning to the very last page
25 of this document -- and I apologize that this is not

1 Q. In it, you discuss what machine learning
2 is. Is that correct?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. And "Three Substantive Challenge" --
5 "Challenges." The third one is where I'd like to
6 focus. And I'll represent that the third one is,
7 "Filter Bubbles and Autonomy."

8 Can you explain what that meant at this time of
9 writing this while you were with the company, and why
10 it was a challenge?

11 MR. HALPERIN: Objection. Compound.

12 A. So I could take each bit, what I was
13 writing about and why I thought that was a challenge.

14 This section in the document was based on my
15 conversations with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in
16 ads, because in both of those systems, there's a
17 section of the system, a part of the system. In News
18 Feed it's called user value, and in ads it's called the
19 organic bids. And those bits of the system are
20 supposed to define what's good for users.

21 And the words "user value" or "organic bids" --
22 you have to really get into it and speak to the people
23 who build it to understand, what does that actually
24 mean? And in both cases, what they really do is define
25 what's of value in terms of proxy. And a proxy means

1 what's really of value to me is my happiness and the
2 well-being of my family.

3 The way Facebook measures that is how many posts
4 do I share from my wife, for example. Now, that's not
5 really what I care about. I don't really care about
6 how many posts I share from my wife. I care about her
7 happiness. But they can't measure that, so they
8 measure shares.

9 And the problem with optimizing for proxies is
10 that because they're not really what we care about,
11 they reinforce the proxy, and not the thing we really
12 care about. So for example, in resharing posts,
13 optimizing for resharing might be -- might mean that
14 I'm full of love for my wife and that's why I share
15 posts, or it might mean that I'm full of hate or fear
16 or anxiety, and that's why I share loads of things.

17 And what consistently across News Feed in the
18 user value component and the ad system in the organic
19 bids component -- what the engineers building them
20 reported to me is that by defining value in terms of
21 those proxies -- clicks, likes, shares, plays -- you
22 ended up incentivizing repeated patterns of behavior on
23 the tool that were in the end undesirable, and
24 sometimes actively harmful for the users of the tool
25 themselves. In both cases they had a problem with that

1 and wanted to figure out what to do about it.

2 BY MS. CARROLL:

3 Q. Can you remind for the jury what [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED]'s role was in the organization when you -- at
5 this time in 2018?

6 A. [REDACTED] was a very experienced
7 engineer within the News Feed ranking system.

8 Q. And this phenomenon that you've described
9 of filter bubbles was understood by [REDACTED] at
10 this time in 2018. Is that correct?

11 MR. HALPERIN: Objection. Calls for
12 speculation. Foundation.

13 A. [REDACTED] told me that he was working
14 on understanding filter bubbles and the connected
15 concept of polarization, which was also something that
16 [REDACTED], who comments in this document, and who I
17 worked with, was also looking into at Facebook AI
18 research.

19 BY MS. CARROLL:

20 Q. Thank you. Let's turn to 8035. Top of
21 the page, second comment. You mentioned previously
22 [REDACTED]. What was [REDACTED] role within the
23 company in 2018?

24 A. [REDACTED] at this time that I was
25 working with him was a senior member of the marketing

1 sense?

2 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are going off -- we
3 are going off the record at 12:32 PM.

4 [A recess was taken.]

5 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are back on the
6 record at 12:48 PM.

7 BY MS. CARROLL:

8 Q. I think we are going to move to Exhibit 9,
9 which is K. "A Vision for Responsible AI."

10 [Exhibit 9 marked for identification.]

11 BY MS. CARROLL:

12 Q. Do you have the document, Mr. Simons?

13 A. I do. Sorry. Yeah.

14 Q. Is this another example of a Quip?

15 A. This is another Quip.

16 Q. Are you familiar with this Quip titled, "A
17 Vision for Responsible AI (Was 'SAIL 2020')"?

18 A. I am.

19 Q. If you recall, who was the author of this
20 document, or the original creator of this Quip?

21 A. The primary author of the document was
22 [REDACTED], who was the leader of
23 Responsible AI.

24 Q. What did you understand at the time was
25 the purpose for this document or Quip?

1 A. The purpose of this document was to set
2 out the mission and the strategy and the need for the
3 Responsible AI team using all the work it had done to
4 date to get senior exec buy-in for the team for its
5 objectives and to increase its headcount.

6 Q. And did this include work that you had
7 contributed to?

8 MR. HALPERIN: Objection. Leading.

9 A. I was one of the key people contributing
10 to this document as [REDACTED] wrote it. He and I had
11 several meetings to discuss it, and he directly drew
12 from some of the earlier memos that I had written that
13 we have talked about today.

14 BY MS. CARROLL:

15 Q. On the third page ending in 3672. Last
16 paragraph, starting with, "Engineering excellence
17 should also apply to AI."

18 The last sentence in bold says, "Explicitly
19 reward ML engineering excellence." And let me read
20 that in full in this sentence.

21 "It will be essential to explicitly reward ML
22 engineering excellence and to give ML practitioners
23 space and permission to adopt best practices."

24 Did Mr. [REDACTED] write that?

25 A. I don't recall if he specifically wrote

1 systems?

2 MR. HALPERIN: Object to foundation.

3 A. Yes. When I was working in the
4 Responsible AI team, we worked with senior engineers in
5 many systems, in the News Feed system, the integrity
6 system, the ad system. And it came up repeatedly the
7 theme that engineers were incentivized to build systems
8 that maximized the objectives.

9 Those systems were set by executives, so in the
10 News Feed case, that was meaningful social
11 interactions. And if the systems they were building
12 boosted those metrics, they were rewarded and promoted
13 and given headcount, and if it had a deleterious effect
14 on meaningful social interactions -- for example, in
15 News Feed -- they were not.

16 And that was, in most of the conversations that
17 I had, a really significant obstacle for embedding
18 responsibility considerations in AI design in
19 Facebook's products, because that was bound to have the
20 effect of reducing engagement, and therefore there
21 would be resistance to it, given the performance
22 rewards that existed at Facebook.

23 BY MS. CARROLL:

24 Q. Did you have an understanding at this time
25 of whether there was a monetary incentive in the

1 performance structure of engineers?

2 MR. HALPERIN: Object to foundation and
3 form.

4 A. Yes. One of the things I discussed with
5 senior engineers in News Feed and ads was bonuses, for
6 instance, that were awarded to those teams who
7 significantly boosted engagement as defined in
8 different ways in different systems, and fundamentally,
9 by boosting engagement, what these systems were aiming
10 to do is boost the amount that a user interacts on the
11 platform, the time they spend on it, the frequency
12 they -- with which they visit the platform, and that
13 produces more ad revenue.

14 And in an example, for instance, of the
15 principles that Margaret Stewart and I and the
16 Responsible AI team were seeking to embed in the
17 product, if those principles would reduce engagement,
18 and therefore reduce revenue, it was expected that we
19 would encounter senior opposition to embedding them in
20 the system, and part of the context for this document
21 that we're discussing was to make the case that doing
22 this is the right thing to do, even though it might
23 reduce engagement and therefore reduce profit.

24 BY MS. CARROLL:

25 Q. Thank you. And to remind the jury, who

1 about them was used to make inferences, about either
2 other demographic features or how it was used to train
3 models that were then integrated in the system.

4 And the success state was describing a state of
5 affairs in which there was a really simple, clear
6 explanation by Facebook to users about how their data
7 was used across the Facebook product.

8 Q. And then if we'll turn to Bates ending in
9 3677. Middle of the page. Mr. [REDACTED] writes in a
10 bullet, "Sophisticated reinforcement learning might
11 increase the problem of tech addiction in Stories, News
12 Feed, or Instagram."

13 What did you understand that to refer to in this
14 document?

15 A. So that comment was based on a
16 conversation that [REDACTED], Margaret Stewart, and I had
17 had in which we discussed whether AI was the primary
18 driver of addiction in users of the product.

19 And when [REDACTED] writes about sophisticated
20 reinforcement learning, what he means is one of the
21 most advanced forms of AI that Facebook were using at
22 that point to optimize for engagement, and the risk
23 that that might supercharge problems of addiction
24 across those products.

25 Q. If you turn to Bates ending in 3685.

1 Q. Do the decisions -- strike that.

2 Did your understanding of the decisions made by
3 engineers building these machine learning models ever
4 involve specific substance or context of a particular
5 piece of content?

6 A. Could you explain what you mean by the
7 context of a piece of content?

8 Q. Let me see. It might be easier to point
9 you to a document and not try to act like I understand
10 all of this.

11 Let's go back to Exhibit 2 in your book. Let's
12 go to Page 137.

13 [Discussion off the record.]

14 MR. ARNOLD: You don't -- you don't have a
15 digital copy of this?

16 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Not of the book.

17 MR. ARNOLD: No?

18 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: But I was saying she
19 could use the ELMO so people on Zoom can see.

20 MR. ARNOLD: Oh, I see.

21 MS. CARROLL: Thank you.

22 [Discussion off the record.]

23 BY MS. CARROLL:

24 Q. Mr. Simons, in your book you discuss an
25 analogy using a public square. And I'm going to direct

1 rank that high on their News Feed.

2 And so using the analogy in the book, when
3 someone's entering a public square, it's a bit like the
4 people who are handing out leaflets or literature or
5 information thinking, "Okay, we want that person to go
6 and do jumping jacks in the middle of the square while
7 shouting loudly about something. We know from
8 everything we've observed in the past that this kind of
9 leaflet is most likely to get this person coming into
10 the square to do jumping jacks and shout loudly, so
11 we're going to give them that leaflet first."

12 And that's the basic way that the ranking system
13 determines how to order the thousands of things it
14 could show to anyone, and therefore determine what you
15 open when you open Facebook on your phone.

16 BY MS. CARROLL:

17 Q. So going back to Page 137. Towards the
18 bottom of the page here, where it says -- it starts
19 with, "Although." "Although the corporation."

20 Do you see where I am?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. It says, "Although the corporation cannot
23 determine which pamphlet each individual receives as
24 they enter the square, the corporation doesn't much
25 care about each individual. What it cares about are

1 aggregate effects, how the collective mood responds to
2 different ways of ranking information and ideas.
3 Similarly, Facebook designs News Feed by considering
4 how best to maximize its topline metric, not the
5 particular content to show individuals."

6 Did I read that correctly?

7 A. You did.

8 Q. And is that a fair representation of your
9 understanding of how Meta ranked information during
10 your time with the company?

11 A. It is. And it stems specifically from my
12 conversations with News Feed and integrity product
13 leaders, VPs, and engineers in the wake of -- the
14 aftermath of the meaningful social interaction rollout
15 in 2018.

16 Q. Thank you. Is there anything else or any
17 other specific examples from your time with the company
18 that you think -- scratch that.

19 Are there any other examples that you personally
20 encountered during your time with the company where
21 Meta chose profits over user safety?

22 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form.
23 Foundation. And misstates testimony.

24 A. Yes, there are -- there are several which
25 I can mention. I guess the first and in some ways most

1 important is that the team that I was hired to help
2 build, the Responsible AI team -- it was responsible --
3 its job was to require Facebook teams to care about and
4 think about harm and user harm and safety before they
5 rolled out products.

6 That Responsible AI team was not kept in the AI
7 organization where it could do that. It was folded
8 into a part of the company where it could not do that.
9 So the failure of that team to be given the mandate to
10 do what it was asked to do demonstrated to me that the
11 business model was prioritized over the safety of
12 users.

13 A specific part of that, where it was really
14 brought home to me and others like Margaret Stewart in
15 the company, as she said to me, was the embedding of
16 principles. We pushed repeatedly to embed principles
17 in the early stages of AI design so that senior product
18 executives would have to explain how they were
19 embedding principles of safety in AI design, and to my
20 knowledge, those principles were never integrated into
21 the AI design process.

22 The -- the examples from News Feed I think are
23 most -- were most striking to me at the time, and to
24 those I spoke to in News Feed like [REDACTED] or Guy
25 Rosen, the meaningful social interactions shift was

1 widely understood to increase the sharing of content
2 that provoked feelings of shame or disgust or fear or
3 pride -- social emotions where I compare myself to you
4 and you compare yourself to others in your community.

5 And that meant more interaction in the Facebook
6 system, and that meant more user engagement on the
7 system, and that generated more revenue for the
8 company, but it was -- you know, there were multiple
9 research projects that I was part of understanding the
10 harm that that caused users in provoking those social
11 emotions. To my knowledge, meaningful social
12 interactions is still the primary driving thing that
13 motivates Facebook's News Feed.

14 And then the toxicity model that I talked about
15 a few times was a striking example to me, because it
16 was a clear case of when a model had been trained and
17 built by a team who wanted to reduce the prevalence of
18 a harmful type of content. Saying that people with big
19 noses are bad is harmful to Jewish people, and they
20 trained a model to detect that kind of content. It
21 could have reduced it.

22 It went all the way up to Mark Zuckerberg for
23 review, and then for whatever reason, didn't get rolled
24 out. And that was a repeated pattern of -- that I
25 observed in which models that could have done good,

1 could have been rolled out, it went up to senior
2 leadership, and then they were not rolled out.

3 And the final example I would give is the one
4 where product design and revenue most closely
5 intersect, which is the ad delivery system. That is
6 the system that generates revenue for Facebook. That
7 is the heart of its business model.

8 The component of that system that I worked
9 really hard to understand with senior engineers who
10 built that system called organic bids that defines
11 what's of value to a user. Instead of saying to a new
12 mum -- you know, offering her things that would be of
13 real benefit to her as she learned how to be a mom, the
14 ad system was, as the engineer explained it to me at
15 that point, showing ads that would, again, provoke
16 those social emotions of shame or like body cream or
17 body alteration surgery.

18 That ad delivery system could have been changed
19 to redefine what actually is of value to a user, but
20 that would have reduced the revenue that that ad
21 delivery system generated, and again, to my knowledge,
22 those changes were never rolled out.

23 So again, to me, that seemed, you know, to the
24 engineers that I was talking to like [REDACTED] as a
25 decision to prioritize the revenue that that system

1 generated over the safety of the users that it
2 impacted.

3 BY MS. CARROLL:

4 Q. Thank you. I think this will -- this is
5 my last question.

6 Did -- strike that.

7 During your time at Meta, did the company to
8 your knowledge ever warn users of the potential risks
9 posed by decisions made in their ranking in content
10 moderation systems?

11 MR. LEVY: To his knowledge?

12 MS. CARROLL: Yes, to his knowledge.

13 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form and
14 foundation.

15 MS. CARROLL: I can ask it again. Let me
16 state it again more clearly, now that I've got --

17 BY MS. CARROLL:

18 Q. While you were employed by Meta, to your
19 knowledge, did the company ever warn users about the
20 potential risks posed by the decisions the company was
21 making in the design of their ranking and content
22 moderation systems?

23 MR. HALPERIN: Object to form and
24 foundation.

25 A. I was not aware of any efforts by Facebook

1 to warn users of the potential impact on them of
2 Facebook's ranking model design. This was something
3 that I explicitly talked about with, for example,
4 Margaret Stewart in the context of Facebook's
5 responsibility to vulnerable users in particular, to
6 warn them about different risks on the site, and that
7 was one of the motivating forces behind the work on
8 principles that Margaret and I did together, and to my
9 knowledge, that work was not embedded in the product
10 design process at Facebook.

11 MS. CARROLL: Thank you, Mr. Simons.
12 That's all from plaintiffs. We can go off the record.

13 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are going off the
14 record at 1:36 PM.

15 [A recess was taken.]

16 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: We are back on the
17 record 2:06 PM.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY MR. HALPERIN:

20 Q. Good afternoon, Dr. Simons. My name is
21 Greg Halperin. I represent Meta in this litigation.

22 You and I met this morning. Is that correct?

23 A. That is correct.

24 Q. You talked about various criticisms in
25 your testimony with the plaintiff lawyers this morning

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, John Arndt, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Certified Court Reporter, do hereby certify that JOSHUA SIMONS MP, prior to the commencement of the examination, was sworn by me on April 1, 2025, to testify the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I DO FURTHER CERTIFY that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the proceedings as taken stenographically by and before me at the time, place and on the date hereinbefore set forth.

I DO FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither a relative nor employee nor attorney nor counsel of any of the parties to this action, and that I am neither a relative nor employee of such attorney or counsel, and that I am not financially interested in this action.



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