Unveiling Surveillance Capitalism: Sociocultural Reflections in James Ponsoldt's film *The Circle*

رفع الستار عن رأسمالية المراقبة

تأملات سوسيوثقافية في فيلم الدائرة لجيمس بونسولت

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Abstract:

This research explores the profound sociocultural impact of surveillance capitalism through an analysis of James Ponsoldt's film adaptation of "The Circle" (2017). Focused on five central themes—technology and transparency, social media influence, corporate control, data mining and manipulation, and user consent manipulation—this analysis draws inspiration from Shoshana Zuboff's seminal work, "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" (2019). The film dissects the complex interplay between technology and transparency, showcasing the intricate dynamics of digital power. The exploration of social media influence reveals our societal obsession with connectivity and validation, echoing the concept of "the culture of connectivity." A poignant commentary on the overarching power of technology corporations, the narrative encapsulates the heart of surveillance capitalism. Data mining and manipulation emerge as the backbone of surveillance capitalism, transforming individual experiences into behavioral data and posing ethical dilemmas. User consent manipulation uncovers the intricate moral complexities of consent within the surveillance capitalist paradigm, reflecting ongoing discussions on privacy, autonomy, and technology. "The Circle" transcends cinema to become a sociocultural mirror, reflecting the intricate web of our digital age. This research not only illuminates thematic layers within the film but also deepens our understanding of the intricate sociocultural landscape shaped by surveillance capitalism.

Keywords: Surveillance Capitalism; Technology and Transparency; Social Media Influence; Corporate Control.

ملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدّراسة التّأثير العميق لرأسماليّة المراقبة على النّواحي الاجتماعية والثّقافية من خلال تحليل فيلم جيمس بونسولت المقتبس من رواية "الدّائرة" (2017)، مركّزة على خمسة مواضيع رئيسيّة — التكنولوجيا والشّفافية، تأثير وسائل التّواصل الاجتماعي، السّيطرة الشّركاتيّة، التنقيب والتّلاعب بالبيانات، والتّلاعب بموافقة المستخدم. تستلهم هذه الدّراسة من عمل شوشانا زوبوف البارز "عصر رأسماليّة المراقبة" (2019). يفكّك الفيلم الديناميّات المعقّدة بين التكنولوجيا والشّفافية، حيث يعرض التّفاعلات المعقّدة للقوّة الرّقمية. وتكشف الإضاءات المتناولة على تأثير وسائل التّواصل الاجتماعي عن هوس المجتمع بالاتّصال والتحقّق، مُردّدة فكرة "ثقافة الاتصال". تظهر السّيطرة الشّركاتية كتعبير مؤثر عن السّلطة الشّاملة التي تمارسها الشّركات التكنولوجية. يظهر التنقيب وتلاعب البيانات كمحور رئيسي في رأسماليّة المراقبة، حيث يحوّل التجربة الفردية إلى بيانات سلوكيّة ويثير تساؤلات أخلاقية. ويكشف التّلاعب بموافقة المستخدم عن التعقيدات الأخلاقيّة الدّقيقة المتعلّقة بالموافقة ضمن إطار رأسماليّة المراقبة. وبعكس الفيلم تلك المشكلات الأخلاقيّة في صورة النّقاش المتواصل حول الخصوصيّة والاستقلاليّة والتكنولوجيا. يتجاوز "الدّائرة" الفضاء السّينمائي ليصبح مرآة اجتماعيّة تعكس

الشّبكة المعقّدة للعصر الرقمي. لا تسلّط هذه الدّراسة الضّوء فقط على الجوانب الموضوعيّة ضمن الفيلم ولكنّها تعمّق

فهمنا للمشهد الاجتماعي المعقّد الذي تشكّله رأسماليّة المراقبة.

كلمات مفتاحية: رأسماليَة المراقبة؛ التّكنولوجيا والشّفافية؛ تأثير الوسائط الاجتماعية؛ سلطة الشّركات.

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1. Introduction

The advent of the digital age has ushered in a paradigm shift in the relationship between technology, society, and individuals. The omnipresence of technology, accompanied by the increasing prevalence of surveillance capitalism, has cultivated an intricate socio-cultural landscape that warrants profound exploration. Surveillance capitalism, as posited by Shoshana Zuboff, represents a novel form of economic and social order characterized by the relentless extraction of data from individuals, covert mechanisms of control, and the perpetual commodification of human experiences. These pervasive practices not only challenge traditional notions of privacy but also transform the very fabric of our societal structures.

The cinematic narrative emerges as an invaluable medium for scrutinizing the complex interplay between technology and culture. James Ponsoldt's cinematic adaptation of Dave Egger's literary work, "The Circle" (2017), presents a compelling exploration of the surveillance capitalism phenomenon. The film invites viewers to traverse a dystopian landscape where the boundaries of surveillance capitalism, technology, and human agency become increasingly blurred. The Circle Corporation, a fictitious tech behemoth, serves as a focal point for this exploration. In the film, The Circle's pervasive reach extends into every facet of human existence, from social interactions to personal privacy, thereby reflecting the multi-faceted nature of surveillance capitalism's intrusion into the human experience.

This research embarks on an ambitious endeavour to illuminate the sociocultural implications of surveillance capitalism through a meticulous thematic analysis of "The Circle." Beyond its role as a work of cinematic art, this film can be regarded as a cultural artifact, emblematic of the zeitgeist in which it was conceived. The thematic analysis, rooted in the framework elucidated by Elsaesser and Buckland (2002), underscores the film's ability to unearth and scrutinize thematic layers that remain concealed beneath its seemingly straightforward narrative. This analytical approach affords the opportunity to decipher the intricate subtext of the film, delving into thematic elements that transcend the boundaries of mere storytelling, and it provides the groundwork for discerning the deeper connections between surveillance capitalism and the broader socio-cultural milieu.

In the pages that follow, we embark on an intellectual voyage that navigates the intricate thematic landscape of "The Circle." We scrutinize themes such as technology and transparency, social media influence, corporate control, data mining and manipulation, and user consent

manipulation. Each theme serves as a vessel through which we explore the nuanced interactions and implications of surveillance capitalism within the narrative. The purpose is not merely to disassemble the cinematic composition into its thematic components but, rather, to decipher the implications that these thematic elements hold for contemporary society.

Our exploration of these themes will extend beyond the mere deconstruction of narrative elements. It will encapsulate the pivotal intersection of film analysis and cultural critique. In doing so, we uncover a tapestry of insights that unravel the intricate socio-cultural fabric of surveillance capitalism. The thematic interpretation of "The Circle" serves as an invaluable prism through which the broader implications of surveillance capitalism and its ethical ramifications come into focus. As we undertake this journey, the critical analysis will be guided by the scholarship of theorists and cultural critics, acting as navigational waypoints to illuminate the path forward. The ultimate objective is to furnish the reader with a profound understanding of the cinematic and societal dimensions of surveillance capitalism, encapsulated within the microcosm of a single cinematic work. As the curtain rises on this exploration, it is our aspiration that the synthesis of cinematic narrative and cultural reflection will provide a rich tapestry of insights, thereby offering a critical perspective on the sociocultural dimensions of surveillance capitalism in the digital age. In so doing, we illuminate the path toward a deeper understanding of the intricate socio-cultural web that we, as a society, continue to weave in the era of ubiquitous technology and surveillance capitalism.

2. Review of Literature

In her analysis, Ella Hafermalz delivers a comprehensive examination of Zuboff's theoretical framework in "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism." She astutely outlines Zuboff's insights into the strategies employed by tech giants for acquiring personal data, while also drawing insightful comparisons to earlier critiques. Hafermalz's review, though concise, effectively underscores the need for a discerning approach to the perceived omnipotence of data analytics and algorithms, contributing a thoughtful perspective on the implications of surveillance capitalism (Hafermalz, 2021). While such a reading fits within a large criticism, Kirstie Ball engages with "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" by offering a perspective that diverges from the conventional surveillance scholarship. Ball asserts that the book, despite its title, deviates from the established discourse within surveillance studies over the last two decades. Notably, she argues that the work bypasses many foundational contributions of surveillance studies, essentially duplicating their core arguments without significantly advancing the field. Drawing on her own theoretical and empirical research in surveillance studies, Ball underscores the absence of a comprehensive treatment of surveillance scholarship in the book. Instead, she positions the work as a wake-up

call intended for educated business readers to recognize the vast power wielded by tech platforms. Emphasizing the book's deployment of the term "surveillance" for popular impact, Ball likens its style and level of criticism to George Ritzer's "McDonaldisation of Society." Ball delves into a nuanced evaluation of the major claims presented in the book, particularly critiquing its persistent use of a security lexicon. She posits that this lexicon hints at the insecurities inherent in the surveillance capitalist narrative. The essay goes on to explore the book's construction, describing it as a historical narrative that skilfully weaves together the stories of major corporations in the context of a new capitalist epoch. The work incorporates elements of classical social theory, with subtle references to theorists such as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber (Ball, 2019). In another direction, Grégoire Mallard asserts that "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" stands as a landmark text for multiple compelling reasons, as presented by Shoshana Zuboff in 2019. Primarily, the book is characterized by an elevated theoretical ambition that seeks to illuminate the broader public about the profound threats posed to freedom and dignity. These threats emanate from the unprecedented and unaccountable concentrations of knowledge and power wielded by a select few capitalists. Mallard outlines the contextual backdrop, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between digital and social media companies and national security agencies, particularly emerging in the aftermath of the 9/11 events. He notes that readers might be familiar with surface-level scandals, such as the notorious case of Cambridge Analytica's use of personal data for predicting voting behaviour. According to Zuboff's revelations, the practices of such entities closely parallel those of more established "surveillance capitalist" companies. However, Mallard contends that the book's unique contribution lies in its capacity to deepen readers' understanding. It reveals that the nature and scale of the operations underpinning the accumulation of power and knowledge are often underestimated, along with their profound effects on individual freedom. In essence, Mallard underscores the book's pivotal role in bridging the gap between public awareness of surface-level incidents and the intricate mechanisms that drive the accumulation of power and knowledge in the digital age (Mallard, 2022).

3. Method

This research employs a thematic study approach to investigate the repercussions of Shoshana Zuboff's theory of Surveillance Capitalism in James Ponsoldt's film adaptation of Dave Egger's novel, The Circle. The thematic study methodology, as outlined by Elsaesser and Buckland (2002), involves the dissection of the central themes into inter-related segments. To begin with, the film's narrative and audiovisual elements will be closely examined to identify

the overarching themes related to Surveillance Capitalism ant its main tenets. This will involve a comprehensive viewing and note-taking process, paying attention to key scenes, dialogues, and visual cues that reflect these themes and their various intersections. Once the main themes have been identified, a systematic categorization of their constituent elements will be carried out. This will involve organizing scenes, characters, and narrative events into relevant categories, such as power dynamics, privacy concerns, ethical dilemmas, leading to the examination of technology and transparency, social media influence, corporate control, data mining and manipulation, user consent and consent manipulation. Each category will be analysed in relation to Zuboff's theory, examining how the film portrays and critiques the workings of Surveillance Capitalism, as well as its implications for the newly introduced themes. Furthermore, the interrelationships between these categories will be explored to uncover the complex dynamics and intersections within the film's depiction of Surveillance Capitalism and its various facets.

Data analysis will be conducted through a close reading and interpretation of the film, supported by relevant scholarly sources and critical frameworks. The findings will be synthesized and presented in the subsequent Results and Discussion section, offering insights into the sociocultural implications of Surveillance Capitalism as depicted in The Circle, with a particular focus on the themes identified. The limitations of this methodology include potential subjectivity in the interpretation of themes, the reliance on a single film for analysis, and the need for additional analysis for the newly introduced themes.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of *The Circle* reveals several significant themes, including technology and transparency, social media influence, corporate control, data mining and manipulation, user consent and consent manipulation. These themes shed light on the film's portrayal of the sociocultural implications of surveillance capitalism in the digital era. In the following sections we will scrutinise such themes.

4.1. Technology and Transparency

The juxtaposition of technology and transparency in James Ponsoldt's cinematic rendition of "The Circle" (2017) encapsulates a dichotomous relationship emblematic of the digital age. The intricate interplay between these two entities surfaces as a crucible for societal introspection. As technology continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace, it concurrently begets a compelling discourse on transparency, epitomizing the dual-edged sword inherent to surveillance capitalism. Zuboff's seminal work, "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism," underscores the

contemporary reality that "an unprecedented form of power has grown in the folds of our digital technologies: surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 9). This form of power operates symbiotically with technological innovation, capitalizing on the data-rich digital ecosystem to perpetuate its dominance. The Circle, as depicted in Ponsoldt's adaptation, becomes an apt microcosm, wherein the notion of "transparency" is both lauded and laden with unsettling undertones. The film viscerally portrays The Circle's mission to catalyse a new era of radical transparency. As depicted by Eggers (2013), the company's motto, "Secrets are Lies, Sharing is Caring, Privacy is Theft," exemplifies the fervour with which The Circle champions the cause of transparency (p. 345). The seemingly benevolent intent of transparency underpins the argument that relinquishing privacy is justified in the pursuit of societal good, an argument reminiscent of the "privacy paradox" discussed by Acquisti and Grossklags (2005). The concept of the paradox lies in the "mismatch between privacy concerns and privacy-protective behaviors" (p. 37). The Circle's endeavour to blur the distinction between private and public existence starkly mirrors this paradox, encapsulating the complex narrative of surveillance capitalism.

The film underscores the notion that "transparency" is far from a monolithic concept; it is a multifaceted prism refracting the hues of power, control, and individual agency. Zuboff (2019) astutely discerns the intricacies of surveillance capitalism when she emphasizes that "these operations take root when a series of nested asymmetries coalesce and bloom in unexpected ways" (p. 17). Such nested asymmetries are manifest within The Circle's technologically bolstered model of transparency. Through ever-present cameras and social pressure, transparency morphs into surveillance, a mechanism by which power and control are imposed. The synthesis of these elements elucidates the tension between the idealized transparency advocated by The Circle and the dark reality of unchecked surveillance capitalism. As this exploration advances, the sociocultural implications of this dynamic come into sharper focus. Transparency, under the aegis of surveillance capitalism, extends beyond mere openness to unveil the intricate tapestry of power, control, and its subtle implications for individual autonomy. This thematic analysis of "The Circle" thus serves as a conduit for cultural critique, shedding light on the intricate and often paradoxical relationship between technology and transparency. The cinematic portrayal, anchored in Zuboff's theory, encapsulates the multifaceted nature of transparency within the surveillance capitalism narrative. In the pages to follow, the critical discourse will navigate the labyrinthine interplay between these two facets, culminating in a profound understanding of their intricate sociocultural implications.

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4.2. Social Media Influence

Within James Ponsoldt's cinematic adaptation of "The Circle" (2017), the ubiquitous sway of social media platforms in moulding human behaviour emerges as a resonant theme that is indelibly intertwined with the undercurrents of surveillance capitalism. In this portrayal, the film offers a dynamic reflection of a society held captive by the allure of connectivity and social endorsement, echoing the critical narratives of contemporary scholars. Shoshana Zuboff's work "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" (2019) aptly encapsulates the essence of social media's influence within the surveillance capitalist framework. As Zuboff underscores, "Surveillance capitalists discovered that the most predictive data come from intervening in human action, learning how to tune and herd our behavior in a computational milieu" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 88). The correlation between social media's incessant data harvesting and its ability to shape human action is irrefutable. The Circle's invasive "See Change" cameras, emblematic of surveillance capitalism's watchful eye, personify the digital embodiment of these data-driven interventions. Drawing from Van Dijck's critical discourse in "The Culture of Connectivity" (2013), it becomes evident that social media platforms, such as the fictional Tru You and the real-world counterparts they mirror, fundamentally recalibrate the human experience. Van Dijck's exploration of "the culture of connectivity" underscores that "social media, as connectivity platforms, link personal expression to society's preoccupation with being connected to others" (Van Dijck, 2013, p. 1). The Circle's truistic commitment to "going transparent" corresponds to this societal preoccupation, manifesting the socio-cultural consequences of technological interconnectedness. The film also delves into the complex dynamics of social approval, introducing the notion of 'smiles' as a quantifiable currency that influences not only professional advancement but also the very fabric of one's existence. Zuboff's elucidation of "behavioral futures markets" resonates here as she posits, "The game is selling certainty, first and foremost in the form of guarantees against future behavior" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 217). The Circle's 'smile' system embodies this notion, acting as a conduit through which one's behaviour can be regulated and guaranteed, echoing the broader surveillance capitalist narrative. This thematic synthesis underscores that the relentless pursuit of social approval and connectivity within the surveillance capitalist paradigm transcends individual transactions; it represents the aggregation of influence that capitalises on the collective human yearning for social affirmation. The exploration of social media's influence within "The Circle" engenders a potent discourse that penetrates the very essence of human behaviour and agency in the digital age. As this narrative unfolds, it becomes increasingly apparent that the socio-cultural implications of surveillance capitalism, mediated through the prism of social media, encapsulate an intricate

tapestry that warrants in-depth analysis. The following discourse endeavours to deconstruct the thematic layers embedded within this cinematic narrative, shedding light on the multifaceted implications of surveillance capitalism and its digital passages.

4.3. Corporate Control

The portrayal of corporate control in James Ponsoldt's "The Circle" (2017) serves as a formidable reflection of the central tenets of surveillance capitalism. The film encapsulates the pervasive influence of powerful technology companies and their insatiable quest for control, mirroring the narratives expounded by leading scholars in the field. Shoshana Zuboff's treatise, "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" (2019), accentuates the overwhelming dominance of technology corporations in the surveillance capitalist landscape. In her words, "The implicit vision, promoted with missionary zeal by the tech moguls, is one of individuals seamlessly connected to an autonomous global computation with effortless power over their own behavior and assured command over the data they generate" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 24). This vision comes to fruition within the realms of "The Circle," where the eponymous tech behemoth emerges as the embodiment of the autonomous global computation, epitomizing the autocratic power wielded by corporate entities.

The film underscores the multifaceted nature of control, encapsulating not only individual autonomy but also the societal ramifications of corporate dominance. Zuboff's exploration of "the dispossession of the future," as she elucidates, "refers to the harvesting and use of human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 33). In the cinematic context, The Circle's relentless pursuit of personal data mirrors this dispossession, converting human experiences into commodities of control. Moreover, the narrative reflects the ethical conundrum associated with corporate control, bringing to the fore the question of power dynamics and the consequences of unfettered corporate influence. As theorized by Wacks (2010), "Issues surrounding the power of information producers to manipulate human behavior, and to do so largely in secret, make it reasonable to believe that the resulting power imbalances raise serious moral issues" (Wacks, 2010, p. 102). The ethical dilemmas portrayed within the film are emblematic of these power imbalances and their insidious implications. This thematic synthesis underscores the narrative's overarching message — the pervasive control exercised by technology corporations transcends mere corporate interests; it permeates every facet of human existence. The exploration of corporate control within "The Circle" engenders a critical discourse that penetrates the intricate tapestry of power, autonomy, and ethics in the surveillance capitalist age.

4.4. Data Mining and Manipulation

The thematic exploration of data mining and manipulation in James Ponsoldt's cinematic interpretation of "The Circle" (2017) serves as a poignant narrative that echoes the tenets and concerns elucidated by seminal scholars in the field of surveillance capitalism. The film unfurls a dystopian vision where data mining and manipulation emerge as the epicentre of control, a notion profoundly interwoven with the socio-cultural fabric of contemporary digital existence. Shoshana Zuboff's magnum opus, "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" (2019), unveils the intrinsic connection between data mining and the overarching goals of surveillance capitalism. As she contends, "Data mining is the exhumation of the hidden knowledge of the behavior of the digital milieu for the purposes of rendering it as behavioral data" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 170). Within "The Circle," this exhumation is made manifest through the pervasive data gathering, epitomized by The Circle's panopticon-like surveillance cameras.

The film illuminates the underlying premise that data mining and manipulation are not confined to the realms of economics but have a profound impact on human autonomy and social discourse. Zuboff's observation that "surveillance capitalists have no interest in the past; their data are history's end" is strikingly manifested in the film's narrative (Zuboff, 2019, p. 208). The Circle's ceaseless drive to collect real-time data subjugates historical context and positions the present as the sole domain of corporate influence. Furthermore, data mining as portrayed within "The Circle" underscores the ethical dilemmas that surface when data is wielded as a tool of manipulation. In line with Nissenbaum's exploration of "obfuscation," the narrative prompts reflection on the critical distinction between data collection and its interpretation for manipulative purposes (Nissenbaum, 2011). The film captures this transition through which data transforms from benign records into tools of manipulation. This thematic synthesis reveals that data mining and manipulation are not mere mechanistic processes but complex narratives that touch upon power dynamics, ethics, and the manipulation of individual agency. The exploration within "The Circle" presents a profound narrative that offers an insightful glimpse into the intricacies of surveillance capitalism. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes increasingly apparent that the socio-cultural implications of surveillance capitalism, mediated through data mining and manipulation, encapsulate an intricate tapestry that warrants in-depth analysis. The resulting discourse seeks to dissect the thematic layers embedded within this cinematic narrative, shedding light on the multifaceted implications of surveillance capitalism and its data-centric pathways.

4.5. User Consent and Consent Manipulation

The thematic exploration of user consent and its manipulation within James Ponsoldt's cinematic interpretation of "The Circle" (2017) serves as a pertinent narrative that resonates with the critical discussions advanced by leading scholars within the realm of surveillance capitalism. The film's depiction unveils a chilling narrative where the notion of consent is dissected, revealing the delicate interplay between individual autonomy and corporate coercion. Shoshana Zuboff's monumental work, "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism" (2019), elucidates the pivotal significance of user consent as a central pivot in the surveillance capitalist landscape. She adeptly observes, "Consent has become the focal point of an exalted game—a battle in which individuals are enlisted as combatants, deceived, coerced, and confused while surveillance capitalists declare their innocence" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 271). The film unearths this dichotomy, portraying the overt efforts of The Circle in orchestrating user consent while, paradoxically, cloaking its invasive practices in the guise of beneficence.

"The Circle" captures the crux of the contemporary dilemma, where consent mechanisms often become mere illusions, yielding to the imperatives of corporate dominance. This thematic representation resonates with Wacks's observation that "consent is of no moral significance in some of the most important cases of information processing, because consent is no more meaningful than not consent" (Wacks, 2010, p. 85). The film's depiction of the coercive tactics employed by The Circle casts a glaring spotlight on the moral insignificance of consent in the face of overwhelming corporate power. Furthermore, the exploration of consent within "The Circle" evokes a profound ethical debate, as discussed in Lynch's work on "privacy, technology, and the threat to the self." Lynch postulates, "The possibility of choice in accepting or rejecting privacy-threatening technologies is the heart of the privacy and autonomy debate" (Lynch, 2013). The film, by rendering consent a tool of corporate manipulation, accentuates the heart of this debate, compelling us to reevaluate the intersection of privacy, autonomy, and technology. This thematic synthesis reveals that user consent and its manipulation within surveillance capitalism represent a complex narrative that delves into the intricate facets of autonomy, ethics, and corporate coercion. The exploration within "The Circle" presents a compelling narrative that offers profound insights into the delicate balance between individual agency and corporate control. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes increasingly apparent that the socio-cultural implications of surveillance capitalism, mediated through user consent and its manipulation, encapsulate a nuanced tapestry that provides adequate grounds for rich analysis. The outcome promises to unveil the thematic layers embedded within this cinematic narrative, evoking unexplored aspects of surveillance capitalism.

5. Conclusion

The thematic analysis of James Ponsoldt's "The Circle" (2017) through the lenses of technology and transparency, social media influence, corporate control, data mining and manipulation, and user consent manipulation, within the framework of surveillance capitalism, has unravelled a multifaceted narrative that profoundly resonates with contemporary socio-cultural realities and scholarly discussions. The film's exploration of technology and transparency underscores the intricate interplay between technological advancements and the quest for societal openness. Shoshana Zuboff's conceptualization of surveillance capitalism as "an unprecedented form of power" mirrors the central theme of corporate control as depicted in the narrative (Zuboff, 2019, p. 9). The omnipotent tech corporation, The Circle, emerges as a microcosm of this digital power dynamic.

The analysis of social media influence within "The Circle" showcases the film's acute reflection of the societal obsession with connectivity and social validation. It aligns with Van Dijck's examination of "the culture of connectivity," wherein social media platforms link personal expression to society's preoccupation with connectivity (Van Dijck, 2013). The film exposes the intricate dynamics of digital approval and its consequences. Moreover, the exploration of corporate control serves as a vivid portrayal of the overarching power that technology corporations wield. Zuboff's exploration of data mining as the "exhumation of hidden knowledge" finds resonance in the data-centric practices depicted in the narrative (Zuboff, 2019, p. 170). The film unearths the commodification of human experiences and the consequential ethical dilemmas. Data mining and manipulation emerge as the keystone of surveillance capitalism within "The Circle." This theme underscores the transformation of individual experiences into behavioural data, accentuating the film's alignment with scholarly insights into the commodification of human experiences. Lastly, the thematic layers of user consent and its manipulation shed light on the moral complexities surrounding consent in the surveillance capitalist paradigm. The film's dissection of consent as an illusion in the face of corporate coercion resonates with scholarly discussions on privacy, autonomy, and technology. "The Circle" transcends being merely a cinematic narrative; it embodies the complex realities of our digital age. The film serves as a sociocultural mirror, reflecting the nuanced interplay between technology, corporate dominance, individual autonomy, and ethical dilemmas. Therefore, the sociocultural implications of surveillance capitalism, as unveiled through "The Circle," resonate with the intricate web of our contemporary existence. This synthesis of cinematic narrative and scholarly insights offers a rich tapestry of discourse, exemplifying the intricate sociocultural realities we navigate in the era of ubiquitous technology and surveillance

capitalism. "The Circle" underscores the delicate equilibrium between the promises and perils of the digital age. Our scholarly exploration not only illuminates the thematic layers within the film but also advances a profound understanding of the intricate sociocultural web we continue to weave in the era of surveillance capitalism.

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