



THANKS FOR ADDING ME!

THE COMPLEXITY OF FACEBOOK FRIENDSHIPS AND PUBLIC PRIVACY

CASE: FINNISH POLITICIANS

TAMPERE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
THESIS OF MEDIA PROGRAMME
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OPINNÄYTTEEN TIIVISTELMÄ

Anna Fagerlund-Savisaari

Kiitos, että lisäsit mut! Facebook-ystävyyden problematiikka ja julkinen yksityisyys. Tapauksena kotimaiset poliitikot.

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Opinnäytetyöni on jaettavissa neljään osaan. Ensimmäinen sisältää tiivin esittelyn sosiaalisesta mediasta, Facebookista ja yhteisöpalveluista. Toisessa osassa tutkitaan Facebook -ystävyyden mahdollisuuksia ja haasteita: onko ystävä määrällä merkitystä? Onko olemassa optimaalinen määrä ystäviä? Kuinka Facebookissa voi tulla suosituksi ja mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat siihen? Minkälaisia stereotyyppioita ja lainalaisuuksia sieltä on löydettävissä? Mitä voidaan tulkita väärennetyistä, fiktiivisten henkilöiden ja julkisuuden henkilöiden profiileista, ja lisäksi, kuinka monimutkaista itse asiassa on ystävän poistaminen Facebookista? Kolmannessa osassa selvitetään mm. sosiaalisen pääoman, löyhien siteiden, itseilmaisun, sosiaalisen vetovoiman, Dunbarin luvun sekä ”sosiaalisen kohennuksen” ja –kompensaation käsitteet (työn sekä lähdemateriaalin vieraskielisyyden vuoksi osa käsitteistä saattaa olla epävirallisesti käännettyjä).

Kolmas osa keskittyy julkisen ja yksityisen väliseen ristiriitaan verkossa. Pääpaino on Facebookin yksityisyysasetusten muutosten aiheuttamalla keskustelulla, Mark Zuckerbergin lausunnolla, jonka mukaan julkinen on uusi yhteiskunnallinen normi, sekä yksityisyyden paradokseissa.

Neljännessä ja viimeisessä osassa esittelen pienimuotoisen tapaustutkimuksen kotimaisten poliitikkojen Facebookin käytöstä. Tutkimuksessa selvitetään mm. kuinka julkisuudessa olevat henkilöt selviävät julkisen ja yksityisen välisestä ristiriidasta, sekä mitkä ovat heidän kantansa ja käytäntönsä yksityisyysasetusten käyttöön ja ystäväpyyntöihin.

THESIS SUMMARY

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Abstract:

This thesis can be divided into four sections. The first is a light introduction to social media, Facebook, and social networking sites. In the second, investigation turns to what are the possibilities and challenges of Facebook friendships: does the amount of friends count? Is there an optimal number of friends? How does one become popular on Facebook and what factors affect it? What kind of stereotypes and conformities can be found? What can be interpreted from fake -, celebrity - and fictional characters' profiles, and moreover, how complex is the procedure of "unfriending"? This section also clarifies the concepts of social capital, weak ties, self-disclosure, social attraction, Dunbar's number, social enhancement and social compensation hypotheses.

The third section concentrates on the contradiction between public and private in the online world. The main focus is on Facebook privacy controversy, Mark Zuckerberg's statement about public being the new social norm, and the privacy paradoxes.

In the fourth and last section, I'm representing a small-scale case study of Finnish politicians and their Facebook usage. It is clarified how these public figures deal with the conflict of publicity and privacy: what is their stance and policy regarding privacy settings and friend requests.

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I FOREWORD

I KNOW, THIS IS "JUST" A THESIS, BUT I'D STILL LIKE TO THANK...

KATRI LIETSALA FOR THE INSPIRING LECTURE THAT WOKE ME UP TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND TAKING ME UNDER HER WINGS

CAROLINA PAJULA FOR SUPERVISING AND HELPING WITH THIS THESIS

MY MOTHER AND AUNT FOR THE GIGANTOUS AMOUNT OF REFERENCE BOOKS

MY BEST FRIENDS SARI & ANNIINA

MY DARLING HUSBAND FOR THE BREAKFASTS, LIFTS, SUPPORT AND LOVE

CAFFEINE & STEELY DAN FOR KEEPING ME AWAKE DURING THE DARK HOURS

GRETA & FRIDA FOR TAIL WAGGING

DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED FATHER, A GIFTED PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN **PAUL ERIK FAGERLUND** (1944-1994).

"THERE WAS OF COURSE NO WAY OF KNOWING WHETHER YOU WERE BEING WATCHED
AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT... IT WAS EVEN CONCEIVABLE THAT THEY WATCHED
EVERYBODY ALL THE TIME.

BUT AT ANY RATE THEY COULD PLUG INTO YOUR WIRE WHENEVER THEY WANTED
TO. YOU HAD TO LIVE – DID LIVE, FROM HABIT THAT BECAME INSTINCT – IN THE
ASSUMPTION THAT EVERY SOUND YOU MADE WAS OVERHEARD, AND EXCEPT IN
DARKNESS, EVERY MOMENT SCRUTINIZED." (GEORGE ORWELL)

2 INTRODUCTION

Little did **Mark Zuckerberg** know when he developed *Thefacebook* along with his college friends in Harvard back in 2004. Now Zuckerberg is the youngest billionaire in the world, and Thefacebook has become Facebook, a community service used by more than 400 million people. Facebook is used by every 5th Finn¹, and is, according to Fast Company magazine, the world's most innovative company².

For many, social media equals Facebook, though that hardly is the case. However, in this thesis, the concept of social media is concentrated only around Facebook, as the concept of friendship equals Facebook friendship.

In the spring of 2009, I completed my practical training in one of the leading social media companies in Finland, *Gemilo Ltd*. During my training it became even clearer to me that I'd like to study and learn more about social media, in practical as in theoretical form. I'm a so called heavy user on Facebook, so it was obvious that I would concentrate my thesis on this particular social networking site.

My interest in social psychology also had a big influence on this thesis. To understand social media, one must understand human behaviour, the instinctive need to be social, and the power of the crowd. In addition, hierarchy questions have always interested me, as well as social attractiveness.

A Facebook friend of mine posted an article of Mark Zuckerberg's statement about public being the new social norm. That together with the fact that I found one Finnish celebrity writing about the difficulties with her ex-husband openly on Facebook, were the ultimate inspiration for the subjects examined in this thesis.

I would like to point out that this thesis is written to a person already having some basic knowledge on social media. My purpose is not to give you a handbook on the use of Facebook, nor am I concentrating social media in general. Still, my humble wish is that the result will be clear and easy enough for nearly everyone to understand.

This thesis investigates what can be accomplished with “friendships” on Facebook: what are the challenges, what are the benefits, and what is the relationship between private and public dealt on and by Facebook. Moreover, this thesis includes a compressed study of how the fine line between public and private is handled by public figures, in this case Finnish politicians. The thesis excludes Facebook’s other features, and is, as already mentioned, concentrated only around friendships and privacy issues. I would also like to notify readers that Facebook’s Pages –feature has changed and the old term is now obsolete. However, this thesis was written before the update.

Wanting to stay true to my subject, I used mainly online references, created a group on Facebook about the thesis, and used the medium to communicate with my friends and asked them about their experiences on Facebook usage, friendships and privacy.

These four years spent in Tampere University of Applied Sciences have completely changed my perspective on what my future will hold for me. When I entered TTVO, my main goal was to become a television and radio show producer. However, little by little I became more interested in digital media, and at the latest when social media became a part of my life, I was smitten instantly.

At the time I am writing this, Apple has just brought iPad to the market, a volcano has erupted in Iceland and airports are closed, Facebook Community Pages and Connected Profiles have just been released, and I have 1 new friend suggestion.

In Tampere 23.4.2010

Anna Fagerlund-Savisaari

3 SOCIAL MEDIA AND FACEBOOK

3.1 SOCIAL MEDIA - WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT SO POWERFUL?

3.1.1 A BRIEF HISTORY FROM ARPANET TO WEB 1.0

Social media took its first steps approximately at the same time as internet took its corresponding. As researcher **Danah Boyd** writes in her dissertation, in October 1969, machines at Stanford and UCLA were able to first talk to one another through the nascent ARPANET¹, which would later become the internet. The first public bulletin board system (CBBS) and the first multiuser dungeon/domain (Essex MUD) were both created in 1978 and Usenet was launched in 1979.³

Boyd continues by explaining that different instantiations of these services took root in the 1980s alongside the emergence of “virtual communities” (e.g., the WELL²). According to her, after the 1993 launch of Mosaic (browser) popularized the World Wide Web, a whole new set of social media tools began to form. Online dating sites, blogging, social bookmarking, and wikis are just a few examples of web-native genres.

Indeed, commercial online services reached their peak in the 1990s, first as destinations in of themselves, and later as a way to access the internet. At the same time when the web became accessible to ordinary users, these services reached their peak, turning the internet into a mainstream phenomenon. When the population of computer users expanded rapidly and user communities grew, online services began to build communities around the more diverse interest groups, most of them not related in computers at all. The community focus then shifted from computers to people who used computers. During the period of Web 1.0, approximately from the mid-1990s to 2000, companies rushed to reproduce online service on the web. Many notable social services, for example *GeoCities*, were created during that time.⁴

¹ ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), was the world's first operational packet switching network, and the predecessor of the contemporary global Internet (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ARPANET>)

² The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link, normally shortened to The WELL, is one of the oldest virtual communities in continuous operation (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_WELL).

3.1.2 ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

In social media, everyone is an influencer. It is changing the whole society, offering us unlimited possibilities and markets. Internet is a never-ending platform, like a space of its own. It is a world where you can run out of fuel, but never run out of roads. Social media is made of us.

John Blossom, author of *Content Nation*, gives social media the following definition: “Any highly scalable and accessible communications technology or technique that enables any individual to influence groups or other individuals easily” (Blossom 2009, 29.) Thus, the key points of social media are interaction and sharing.

Social media genres can be categorized as content creation and publishing tools, social networking sites, content sharing sites, collaborative production sites, virtual worlds and add-ons (Lietsala & Sirkkunen, 2008:28). Social networking sites (SNS), as Facebook, are defined by Boyd and **Ellison**⁵ as web-based services that allow individuals to:

- construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system
- articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection
- view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system

Genre	Main practices
content creation and publishing tools	Production, publishing, dissemination
content sharing	Sharing all kinds of content with peers
social networks	Keeping up the old and building new social networks, self promotion etc.
collaborative productions	Participation in collective build productions
virtual worlds	Play, experience and live in virtual environments
add-ons	Adoption of practices from one site to another. Transforms a service into a feature of another site or adds new use-value to the existing communities and social media sites through 3 rd party applications.

Image 3.1 Some (preliminary) genres of social media and their activity types (Lietsala & Sirkkunen, 2008: 29.)

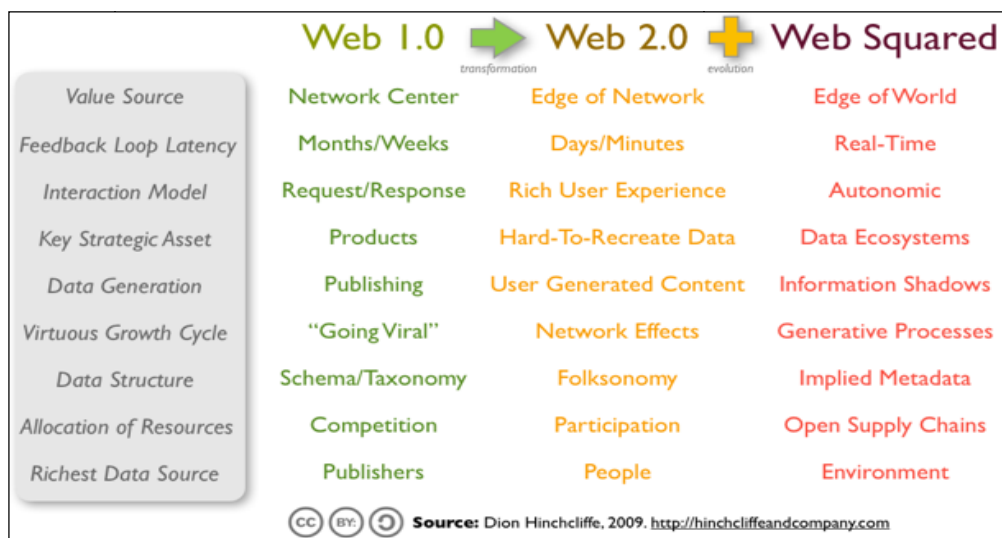
Danah Boyd³ sees social media as an umbrella term that refers to the set of tools, services and applications that allow people to interact with others using network technologies. Social media, or “social software, “social computing” or “computer-mediated communication”, includes groupware, online communities, peer-to-peer and media-sharing technologies, as well as networked gaming. That is, systems that support one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many interactions. In addition to social media genres represented above, Boyd separates different tools, such as instant messaging, blogging, microblogging, forums, email, virtual worlds, texting and social networks. Most of these genres leverage computers and the internet but mobile networks are increasingly serving as an additional key network technology. Social media supports the creation of spaces for people to gather and publics to form. Boyd calls these spaces “networked publics”, of which for example Usenet, the blogosphere and social networking sites.

It is these “networked publics”, or social networks, that I’ll be focusing on in this thesis. In image 3.1, **Katri Lietsala** and **Esa Sirkkunen** present some preliminary genres of social media and their activity types. The purpose of this table is only to represent them and clarify the definition of social media, not to deal with them any more profoundly. Social networks are an exception, and I will generally analyze them in subchapter 3.2.

3.1.3 FROM WEB 1.0 TO WEB 2.0 AND WEB SQUARED

Whereas virtual reality was so Web 1.0, the next wave, Web 2.0, brought us closer to user-created content, open interfaces, crowdsourcing, participatory economy, enterprise 2.0, and naturally – social media. Starting approximately in 2004 from the Web 2.0 conference of *O'Reilly Media*, Web 2.0 was and is customer-related, scalable, user-friendly, interactive and innovative.

Image 3.2
From Web 1.0
via Web 2.0 to
Web Squared



Nevertheless, the term Web 2.0 is starting to be obsolete. **Tim O'Reilly** and **John Battelle** came up with a solution for this - the term Web Squared. **Dion Hinchcliffe**⁶ sees it as a broader fusion between the world-at-large, the Web and the people connected to it. Compared to Web 2.0, it's a more extreme view, the full environment, which makes it all work. Web 2.0 is and has been a relentless growth of devices and network connectivity that is increasingly hard to ignore.

The image above clarifies the changes from the times of Web 1.0 to the future of Web Squared. As described by Hinchcliffe, it is not necessarily a generation beyond Web 2.0, since many of the concepts are simply more refined or focused. Still, many Web 2.0 ideas, like collective intelligence, feedback loops and network effects are turned up quite a bit more, and fueled more directly by our interactions with the world as well as our synthesis of it.

3.1.4 MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

In the image 3.3, I'm presenting Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is a theory in psychology, proposed by **Abraham Maslow** in 1943.⁷

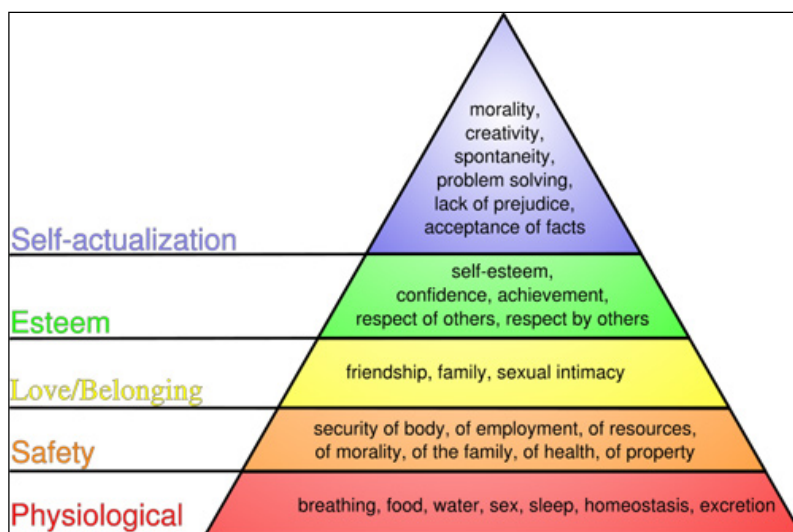


Image 3.3 Maslow's Hierarchy of needs

Without going any further on the subject in psychosocial point of view, I'm letting the picture speak for itself.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been brought up on several occasions when dealing with social networking. For instance **John Antonios**⁸, a blogger and a marketing consultant, has created a replica of the particular pyramid, and applied it to social media (image 3.4). This is just one of the numerous examples how social media and social psychology can be joined together, and therefore an excellent and justified start for this thesis.

Dr. Jim Mullaney was contemplating Maslow's theory with his students, in relation with Facebook.⁹ When wondering the secret of Facebook, a student started to draw parallels between Maslow esteem/relationship phase and the need for personal affirmation. *"Maybe this was why many younger people found Facebook so powerful – it met their need for the respect of others"*, Mullaney pondered.

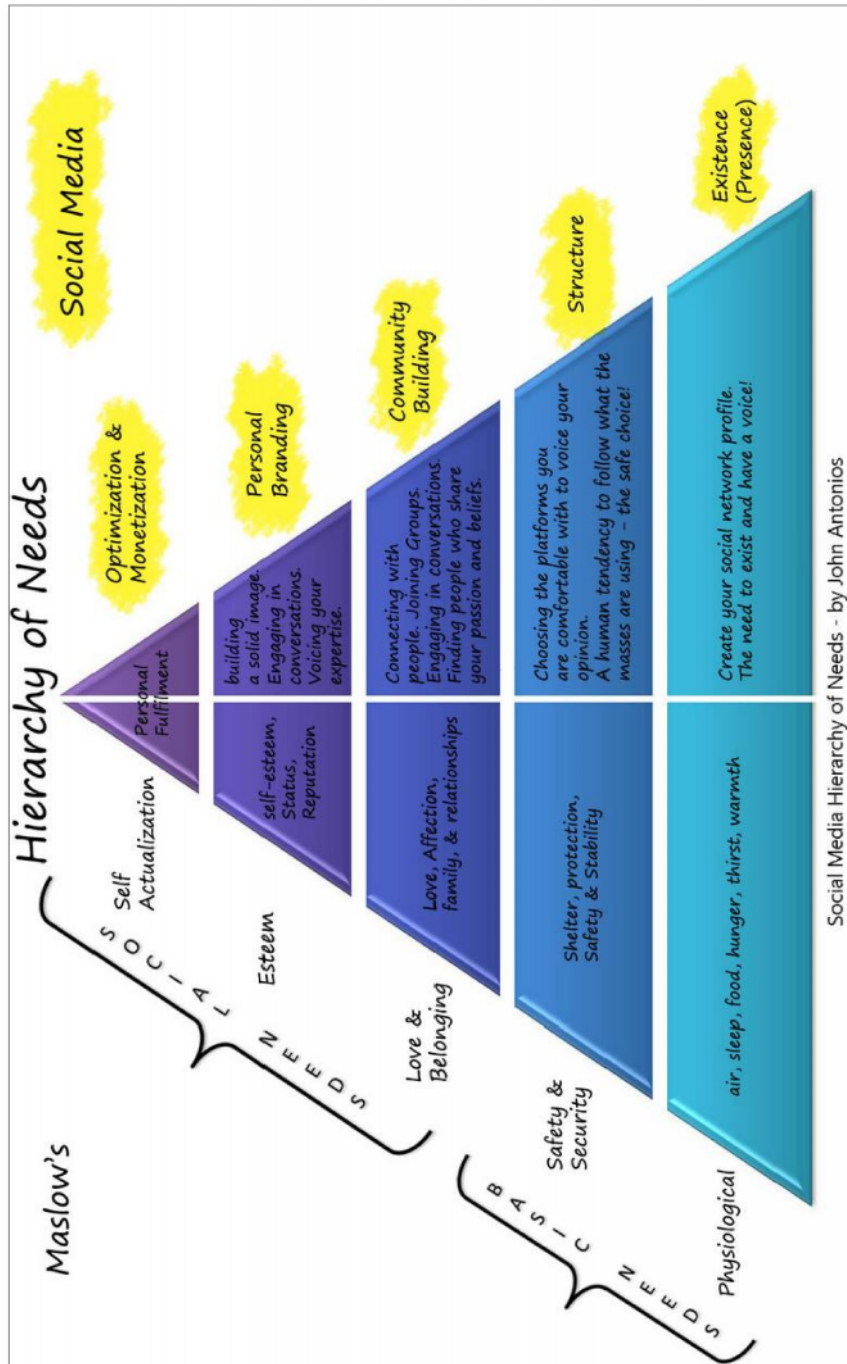


Image 3.4
Social media hierarchy of needs, as presented by John Antonios

3.2 FACEBOOK

3.2.1 ABOUT SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

It's already been a while since social networking passed pornography on the internet¹⁰, which is on its own a strong enough argument for its power. First there was *Friendster*, predecessor of Facebook, launched in 2002, a competitor for online dating site *Match.com*. Friendster was designed to help friends-of-friends meet, assuming they'd make better romantic partners. (Cohen, 2003 and J. Abrams, 2003, cited by Boyd & Ellison, 2007). However, Friendster's popularity grew, and the site encountered technical and social difficulties, which led users to replace it with email (Boyd, 2006b, cited by Boyd & Ellison, 2007).⁵ Image 3.5 represents some launch dates of major social networking sites, including e.g. Friendster, *LinkedIn*, *Flickr*, *YouTube*, *Twitter* and Facebook.

The usage of Facebook has indeed changed during the last few years – one could even say it has been improved. I am not talking about the changes concerning user interface or privacy policy, but simply the way people are using Facebook. It seems that users have learned some sort of “smart usage”.

Naturally, when time elapses, people get more comfortable with devices, platforms interfaces, etiquettes, common practices (to name a few). My own Facebook friends don't forward me quizzes anymore, which is a remarkable progression of what it was two years ago. One must also mention that Facebook developers have made some improving usability changes, like the publishing feature, for instance.

Communication online has changed its tune: personal relationships are forming online as well as offline. These relationships can also be maintained online, although online communication can lack face-to-face characteristics, such as physical proximity. However, people in an online setting can still reduce their uncertainty about one another.¹¹

Pavica Sheldon from Louisiana State University, has researched³⁶ self-disclosure, social attraction, predictability and trust as important predictors of Facebook relationships.

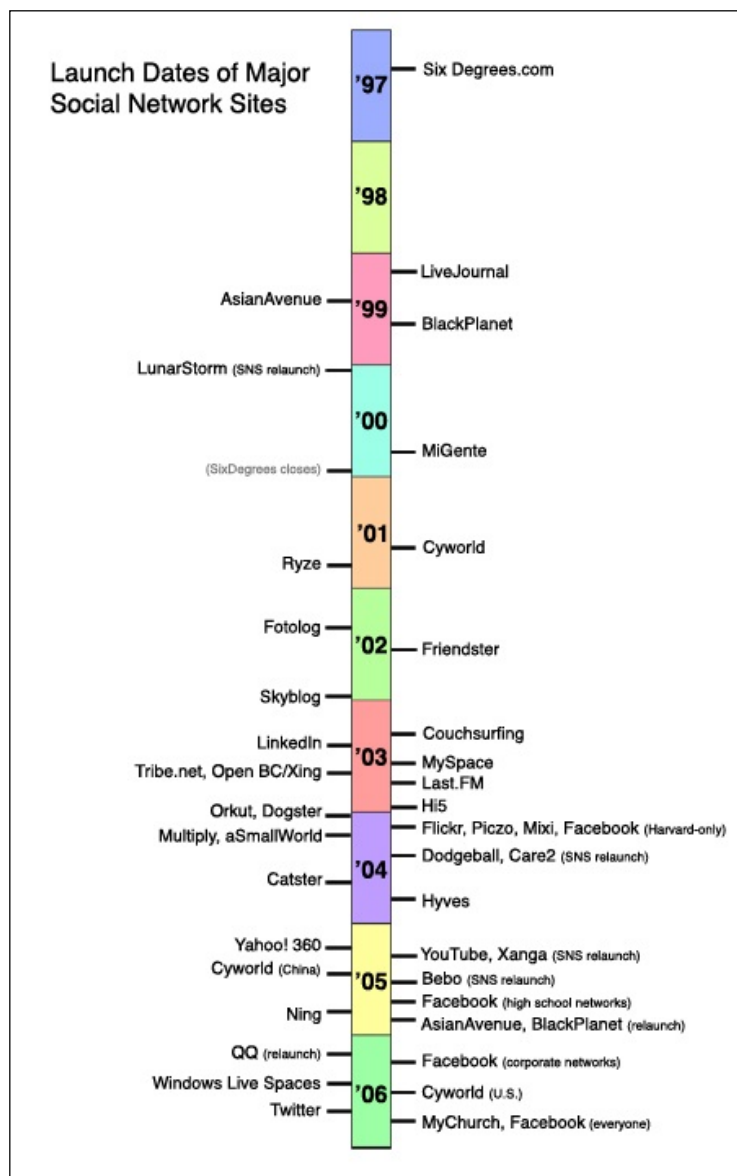


Image 3.5 Launch dates of major social network sites

Frequency of contact is what is crucial in the formulation of online relationships (Bargh & McKenna & Fitzsimons, 2002; McKenna & Green & Gleason, 2002; Wellman & Gulia, 1999, cited by Sheldon, 2009). Social networking sites are not only larger than regular social networks but also structurally different since they are not highly influenced by demographic factors such as income and attractiveness (Acar, 2008, cited by Sheldon, 2009).

However, forming and maintaining relationships in social networking sites is indeed affected by social attraction (subchapter 4.3).

According to a previous research, university students go to Facebook to maintain their relationships (Ellison et al., 2007; Sheldon, 2008, cited by Sheldon, 2009), pass time when bored,

or to find companionship (Sheldon, 2008, cited by Sheldon, 2009). Within and across social networks, users are allowed to search for other registered users and can initiate requests to other individuals to be friends.³⁶

I'll concentrate more on Sheldon's research in chapter 4.

3.2.2 A VERY SHORT HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION OF FACEBOOK

Facebook was founded by a Harvard student, **Mark Zuckerberg** together with **Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz** and **Chris Hughes**. The background work was done years earlier, but the first version of Facebook was released in 2004. Back then, called Thefacebook, it was meant for the sole use of Harvard university students, but little by little the service grew bigger, and spreaded to graduate schools in Boston area, Ivy League universities and Stanford university.

In late 2006, Facebook adopted a so-called “open signup” model that took the site off campus and reached out to the entire world. Still, Facebook remained relatively closed because members did not have access to the profiles of all other users (Fraser & Dutta, 2008: 60). Nevertheless, constantly developing and gaining more financiers, the site started to reach worldwide popularity in 2007. To date, Facebook has more than 400 million users (see image 3.12 on page 23 for more statistics).

Facebook is banned at least in Syria, China and Iran (Bell, 2009: 189) for a few different reasons, mostly related to politics. Its usage is also been prohibited or blocked during working hours by several employers. There has also been several controversies. Brothers

Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss claimed that Zuckerberg, a fellow Harvard student who had been asked to write programming code for a website that they wanted to create in 2003, stole their idea and launched it as his own business. In 2008, they were offered a court settlement of \$65 million by Facebook after a four-year legal battle.¹² Privacy controversies will be dealt more profoundly in chapter 5.

“They have never thought of themselves as a vertical social network with a static social contract. Their ability to change and evolve at scale is beyond impressive. It has never been seen before. - From College kid profile pages, to app platform, to stream platform, to stream platform with deep identity and routing. Their flexibility, rate of change and reinvention is staggering. They put Madonna and Michael Jackson to shame.” (Chris Saad)⁶⁵



Image 3.6 The first layout of Thefacebook

3.2.3 WHY OVER 400 MILLION PEOPLE ARE USING IT?

What is the motivation for using Facebook? Is it justifiable, or do we become users because social pressure tells us so?

In today's world, being aged 18-45 and not being on Facebook is a conscious choice. It could even be stated as a contention. However, not being a member on Facebook is a completely different story than not knowing about it at all.

A service with nearly 400 million users is definitely a part of common knowledge. **Farhad Manjoo**¹³ shares my view, as he compares mobile phones and being on Facebook. Manjoo describes how Facebook, like mobile phones back in the days, has become such a common phenomenon, "*grown so deeply entwined with modern life*", that it becomes an affectation not to become part of it.

Every time when a new commodity becomes a part of everyday life, so, that it no longer is available for only the selected few, there are always people rebelling against it. When one makes a statement by abstaining, he also gains self-confidence, -appreciation and reinforces his identity by separating from "the masses".

Facebook has been said to have replaced *MySpace*, and a question has been posed whether some new service would soon replace Facebook. Twitter has already taken steps down that road, according to some premonitions. Facebook has also "stolen" users from many network communities, e.g. *Irc-Galleria*.

Personally, I have never really understood the comparison of MySpace and Facebook, though there naturally are some similarities, both of them being social networking sites. In the big picture, however, these two services are very different, especially when observing relationships. MySpace "friendships" are even further from the true meaning of the word than Facebook equivalents. It seems to be mainly a marketing tool.

What becomes of Irc-Galleria, its loss of members was to be expected. Irc-Galleria is definitely more "youth-oriented", and I would advise it to stay that way. Facebook has a user age limit of 13 years, Irc-Galleria's corresponding being 11. Though there isn't much difference, Facebook is a much more complicated and versatile network, and it would be a lot harder for a child to preserve one's privacy there than in Irc-Galleria, where users have nicknames.

As it will be designated in chapter 4, Facebook makes it easy to create an ideal image of oneself. Ideal image is the kind one wants to preserve, develop and distribute to others. Hence, on Facebook, users tend to show their positive qualities. Nevertheless, a recent research shows (see subchapter 4.3.1), that faking on Facebook is harder than presumed. The composition is still somewhat more complex than that, taking fictional, fake and celebrity profile into account.

Facebook feeds human urges, such as the need to profile oneself and explain one's actions to others. One's need to tell about his own values and attitudes can be gratified for example with groups and applications that "communicate" with one's personality. Therefore, different personality tests, for example, are a very popular recreation.¹³

Nowadays it is trendy to be popular and famous, and also the threshold of being such is lower, which was proven earlier by reality tv, for example. Facebook users' urge to be a "celebrity" is satisfied in many ways. The more friends one has, the more popular and better of a person one might feel he is. The question of popularity is dealt more profoundly in chapter 4.

Status update -function answers to this same need, as user can tell others what he does, feels, wants or wants to promote. Status updates also allow users to show off easily. Personal photo gallery will also help satisfy the desire for publicity.

Facebook applications, such as games, answer well to the need to entertainment, and quizzes in addition to the need of profiling. While user spends time with these applications, well designed marketing messages will be saved unconsciously.

The need to attach to other people is answered by the main idea of Facebook, friends. The same feature also supports the second, very basic human weakness: the need to pair up. Facebook already has hundreds different dating applications, but the basic functions are just as adequate.

For the curious and peeping ones Facebook is also a very handy tool. This alone is reason enough to join the service, and, when joining, the person, of course, makes the service more interesting for other users, as their network expands.

Since Facebook is focused mainly on interaction between people and profiling, it is recommendable to do such marketing campaigns that people get to satisfy those same needs, which is why they are on Facebook in the first place. So, if a marketing message is wanted to be successful, it must be a providing relief to these same needs.¹⁴

Social media is extremely well suited for ingenious viral marketing campaigns, because everyone can spread marketing messages to friends, if considers them entertaining and worth sharing. Facebook is also a good platform for guerrilla marketing.

Friendvertising (Tuten, 33, 2008.) is a term launched by **Tracy L. Tuten**, the author of *Advertising 2.0*. Friendvertising describes viral marketing; forwarding marketing message to one's friends on social networking sites, such as Facebook. Viral marketing is advertising that is voluntarily passed around because it is found interesting and "cool", not necessarily because one would want to help build publicity. Guerrilla marketing, on the other hand, ambushes the viewer and grabs their attention when they least expect it.¹⁵

3.2.4 HOW DO WE USE IT? STATISTICS

In this subchapter, my purpose is not to go any deeper into the different ways of using Facebook. Instead, I'm representing some charts e.g. from *Facebakers.com*, a site that provides statistics of the usage of the social network mentioned.¹⁶

Image 3.7
Growth of
Facebook
users in
Finland

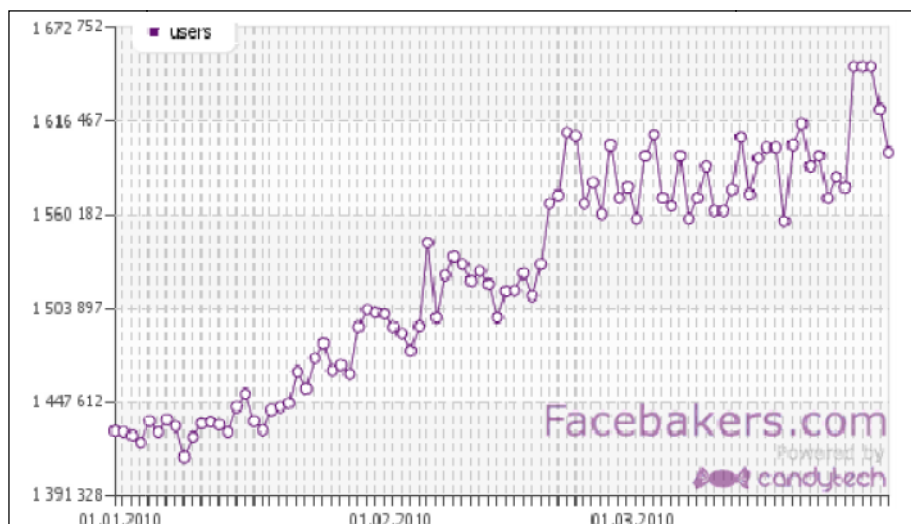
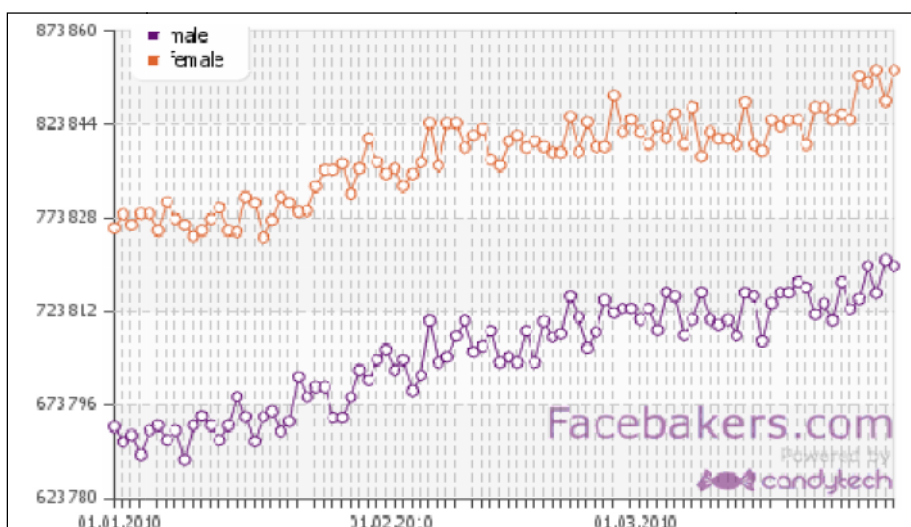


Image 3.8
Growth of the amount
of Finnish
male /
female
Facebook
users



As can be interpreted from the charts 3.7 to 3.11, there are somewhat more female users as there are male. The biggest age group is from 25 to 34 years of age. The number of users has been constantly growing except for the sudden plunge in March 2010. During the last three months, the number of men in age groups 45-54, 55-64 and 65 onwards has remarkably increased.

Image 3.9 Age distribution of Finnish Facebook users

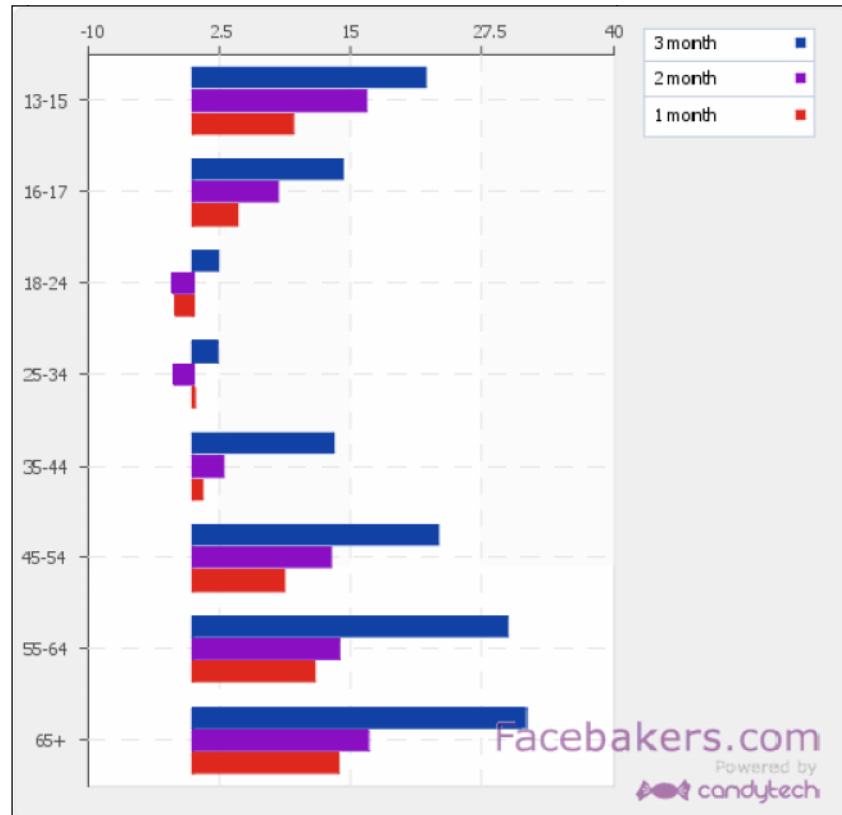


Image 3.10 Male/female ratio of Facebook users in Finland

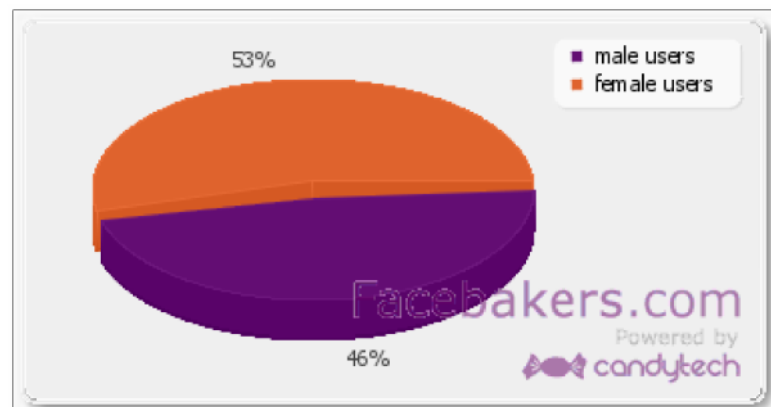
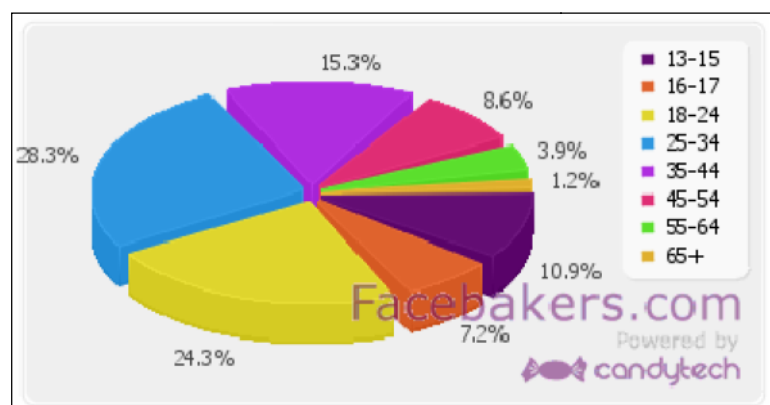


Image 3.11 Age growth of Finnish Facebook users



Statistics	
Company Figures	<p>More than 400 million active users</p> <p>50% of our active users log on to Facebook in any given day</p> <p>More than 35 million users update their status each day</p> <p>More than 60 million status updates posted each day</p> <p>More than 3 billion photos uploaded to the site each month</p> <p>More than 5 billion pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.) shared each week</p> <p>More than 3.5 million events created each month</p> <p>More than 3 million active Pages on Facebook</p> <p>More than 1.5 million local businesses have active Pages on Facebook</p> <p>More than 20 million people become fans of Pages each day</p> <p>Pages have created more than 5.3 billion fans</p>
Average User Figures	<p>Average user has 130 friends on the site</p> <p>Average user sends 8 friend requests per month</p> <p>Average user spends more than 55 minutes per day on Facebook</p> <p>Average user clicks the Like button on 9 pieces of content each month</p> <p>Average user writes 25 comments on Facebook content each month</p> <p>Average user becomes a fan of 4 Pages each month</p> <p>Average user is invited to 3 events per month</p> <p>Average user is a member of 13 groups</p>

Image 3.12 Facebook general statistics

In images above, I'm representing in numbers how Facebook users conduct. Images from 3.7 to 3.11 are Finnish statistics, whereas image 3.12 is a screencapture from Facebook's official statistics site. It needs no further explaining.

4 THE COMPLEXITY OF FACEBOOK FRIENDSHIPS

4.1 LESS IS MORE?

4.1.1 E-QUAINTANCES

Collecting friends is the main appeal of many social networking sites. In the virtual culture of narcissism, the composition of our “friends” network has become a key identity signature. It’s a social barometer that validates self-esteem, confers status and measures social capital (Fraser & Dutta, 2008: 41.).

*Urban Dictionary*¹⁷, a website that clarifies proverbs and words used mainly in unofficial, spoken English, says the following of the term “Facebook friend”: 1) a friend on Facebook but not in real life, 2) someone you met and know in real life, but contact is confined to facebook for reasons other than distance. True - a facebook friend hardly is the embodiment of a real friendship: the implicit definition ranges from established intimate relationships to simply being acquainted (Boyd, 2006, cited by Sheldon, 2009).³⁶

There are several opinions on whether the amount of Facebook friends counts. According to me, there is some difference, taking the age group and context into account. However, a following question could be posed: who is the smartest – the one who keeps his Facebook friend circle as narrow as possible, or the one who networks efficiently, while taking care of his privacy? Still, gathering a large number of Facebook friends is not always a sign of effective networking: several companies and organizations create Facebook profiles instead of fan pages, trying to befriend as many people as possible. Public figures, depending on their policy, accept as a friend anyone who dares to ask, and fictional characters, e.g. the characters of Finnish soap opera series *Salatut elämät*, also have their own profiles. I’ll concentrate on these issues more accurately in chapters 4 and 5.

Another story of its own are also those so called heavy users of Facebook game applications, *FarmVille* or *Café World*, for instance. These heavy users tend to grow their friend lists in the purpose of acquiring more fellow players, with whom they are not in any contact otherwise. It is hard to identify these friend lists and therefore they cannot be compared as well as the afore mentioned.

Finnish actor **Juha-Pekka Mikkola**, from *Salatut Elämät*, says on the official site of the series, that he is getting numerous friend requests on Facebook.¹⁸ *“Many unknown people send me friend requests – some of them I comment on, on the others I don’t. I wish, that people would add a message to the request, explaining why they want to become my friend”,* he explains.

Ragnar Orav, known from the popular reality show *Big Brother*, says in an interview of gossip magazine *7 Päivää*, that he has more than 6000 friend requests pending, and more than 1000 messages in his inbox. However, Orav doesn’t want to accept any unknown people as his friend.¹⁹

Jeff Bercovici, author of blog *Mixed Media*, calls himself an “accidental Facebook slut”²⁰. In late 2008, Bercovici wrote that “the enviable thing is to have a trim Facebook network comprising only people one actually knows and likes; or, failing that, to have a strictly-regimented network with different tiers of access accurately reflecting degrees of real-world intimacy”. Bercovici brings in another perspective saying that his friend list is sprawling and disorganized because he randomly accepted every request, from family members to frenemies. *“Having a random friend list of people I barely knew was a little pathetic, but not as pathetic as having a list that wouldn’t be able to field a softball team. I did have one rule, half defense mechanism, half experiment: I didn’t issue friend requests, only accepted them.”*

Bercovici continues, that this strategy was more defective than practical. His inbox was cluttered, and accepting high-schoolers’ friend requests didn’t just feel comfortable. After using a filtering tactic by accepting only the kind of friends he had common contacts with and realizing it wasn’t working, he decided to “follow his gut”. All in all, Bercovici wrote that he didn’t see his random friend list as a reflection of his social success, but it was a *“weird amalgam of past and present, personal and professional, wanted and unwanted – but isn’t that how life is?”*

4.1.2 DUNBAR'S NUMBER AND THE OPTIMAL NUMBER OF FRIENDS

Another case, which has bred several opinions, is the question whether there is an optimal number of Facebook friends?

kelle681³ criticizes²¹ the claim that the number of Facebook friends would actually matter, unlike **Matthew Hutson** in a blogpost of *Psychology Today*, that links social connectivity into genetics. I will focus more on that in subchapter 4.4. However, about the optimal number, Hutson refers a research where college students viewed Facebook profiles that were identical except for the number of friends, and rated the target's social attractiveness. The number with best results out of 102, 302, 502, 702 or 902 was 302. Appeal dropped off above and below that.³²

As kelle681 writes, there are specific rules for Facebook regarding the amount of friends a user is allowed to have or, how well one has to know one another to add them as a friend. Unlike the theories and hypotheses I'm representing in the following chapters, kelle681 argues that "people with too many friends" may just have met a lot of different people over time. This point should also be payed regard to. Nevertheless, there definitely are groups of people "friending" others out of desperation, and those who feel more comfortable in a computer-mediated environment. kelle861 brings out another example, **Gina Chen**, a blogger²² who wrote about her husband, refusing to "*friend*' anyone on Facebook except people he cannot really see frequently in real life". He "friends" his childhood friends, who live far away, but not the people he sees everyday at work. Chen continues that her husband would not even add her because he is afraid of the potential friend requests he would receive from others because of it. Gina Chen's husband supports my hypothesis presented in subchapter 4.3, and according to kelle861, he "*may only want to connect with certain people and not get caught up in the highly addictive website*".

³ There is no more more accurate personal information available than this nickname

Dunbar's Number (150) is a theory by British anthropologist **Robin Dunbar**, a cognitive limit to the number of individuals with whom any person can maintain stable relationships.²³ During the age of Facebook and questions of relationships inside it, it has regularly been brought up and argued. One of these opponents is **Cameron Marlow**, Facebook's "in-house-sociologist", whose findings, however, do not argue Dunbar's Number as it usually is being questioned. As studied by Marlow²⁴, while many people have hundreds of friends on Facebook, they still only actively communicate with a small few. Marlow's study is very thorough, and therefore I'm only bringing up a very small percentage of it – the maintained relationships of a Facebook user.

Image 4.1 presents "how many users probably exist somewhere between their total network size and their support network" (Marlow).

A research by **Gueorgi Kossinets** and **Duncan Watts**²⁵, observing all email communication at a university shows that the number of ongoing contacts hovers somewhere between 10 and 20 over a 30 day period.

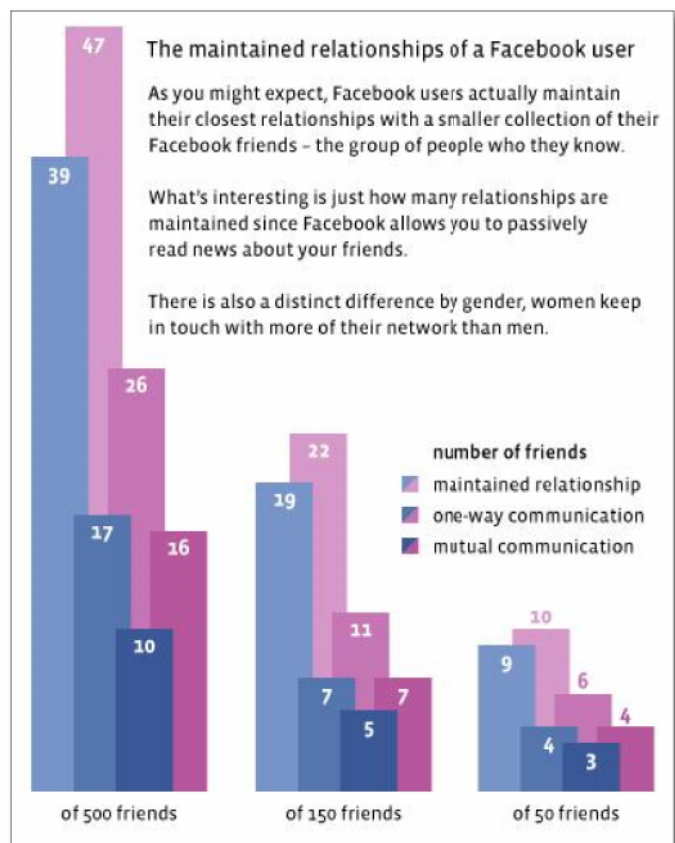


Image 4.1 Maintained relationships of a Facebook user

4.2 CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND WEAK TIES

4.2.1 SOCIAL CAPITAL

The word “friend” has become a verb for a reason: people spend countless hours “friending” on social sites in a frantic, competitive drive to acquire, maintain and build what they believe is social capital (Fraser & Dutta, 2008: 42.).

Social capital is a sociological concept that closely related to social network analysis, created by **Pierre Bourdieu**. It refers to the connections within and between social networking sites.²⁶

Much empirical research supports that online communities supplement the face-to-face interaction and increase the social capital (Wellman, Hasse, Whitte, & Hampton, 2001; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007, cited by Suo, 2008).²⁷

Most social networking sites are used to support offline relations (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, cited by Suo, 2008). Ellison (2007) et al. suggested that a strong association between use of Facebook and with the three types of social capital, with the strongest relationship being to bridging social capital, which corresponds to weak ties (see subchapter 4.2.2). They also found that Facebook usage is positively related to psychological well-being for those who have a low self-esteem and low life satisfaction. Online communities do not necessarily remove people from their families and friends; on the contrary, they help people to access to a wider range of people by providing a platform to making new friends and keeping the old. Such friendships and emotional support can enhance people’s satisfaction of their “first lives”. (Suo, 2008).

Thus, Facebook friendships are an excellent example of acquiring social capital. People are status-seekers and status attainment is a powerful motivator on social networking sites. In the virtual world, status is not assigned, it is earned. The difference between real-world and virtual-world status resides in the link between social status and identity. In the online world, social status is highly personalized. Moreover, it is not based on values, but on facts. Social capital is no different from economic capital, it is an investment in social relations with expected returns. As sociologist **Nin Lan** puts it in his book *Social Capital: “Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits.”* (Fraser & Dutta, 2008: 111-117.).

4.2.2 THE POWER OF WEAK TIES

A good network should not be a sum of primary social ties; rather, it should be a combination of both “strong ties” and “weak ties”, writes **Huijun Suo** in his essay *The Benefits of Virtual Communities*.²⁸

Strong ties, such as family and intimate friends, are close relationships that provide emotional support or scarce resources. Weak ties, such as acquaintances, are loose relationships that provide information or opportunity but seldom emotional support (Granovetter, 1973, cited by Sao, 2008). Contrary to common sense, “the strength of weak ties” (Granovetter, 1973, cited by Sao, 2008) is vital in everyday life. For instance, weak ties can be extremely helpful in job hunting by providing useful information or new perspectives. As another example, Freemasons and Rotarians are essentially loose-knit networks: everybody certainly don’t know each other closely. However, their bond is strong. That can be called the power of weak ties (Fraser & Dutta, 2008: 50).

Social network analysis questions the “zero-sum” assumption, which dominated the discourse of online interaction for a long time. Such “zero-sum” assumption believed that virtual communities separate people from their real life. Social network analysis, however, acclaimed that virtual communities is a supplement of face-to-face contact by providing the framework of “strong ties and weak ties”.

Such weak ties not only increase individual’s social capital by offering information access and emotional support, but also provide opportunities for public discourse among relative strangers, which are vital to democracy (Calhoun, 1986 & 1998, cited by Sao, 2008). Calhoun (1986 & 1998, cited by Sao, 2008) proposed the importance of secondary relationships in public life by comparison with primary relationships. The comparison of primary relationships and secondary relationships emphasizes the fact that different relationships have different strengths, much the way strong ties and weak ties do. The main distinction between these two groups of relationships is: strong ties and weak ties are discussed at individual level while primary relationships and secondary relationships are used at public level.²⁸

4.3 QUESTIONS OF HIERARCHY AND SOCIAL ATTRACTION

4.3.1 HIERARCHY, ATTRACTION AND POPULARITY

As in every group or community, the concept of hierarchy manifests itself. In virtual communities, the concept of popularity is often connected to the user's activity, which can be seen as the amount of friends (Facebook) or as a high number of posts (forums).

It is predictable in that where you stand in the hierarchy depends on your ability to attract and hold positive social attention.²⁸

A very unflattering term of "social slut" defines someone who spends a highly above average amount of time in social networks collecting friends. Urban dictionary mentions in its definition²⁹, that this behaviour targets into achieving popularity. Although not necessarily being the most reliable source in internet, Urban Dictionary covers some "street cred" terminology, which is not available otherwise.

Can the amount of virtual friends actually define someone as "popular" or "unpopular"? Already during the early days of virtual reality and Web 1.0, it was a common theory that internet was a place for escapism, where it was possible to create an ideal personality. The unpopular "four-eyed fatso" could become a liked and appreciated beauty queen. On Facebook, people use their real names, but still it offers similar possibilities: things we share about ourselves, groups we join in, pages we are fans of – these aspects together create an image of what we are, or what we want others to think we are. One cannot decide to be popular, it has to be earned, but what are the factors affecting it? Is the amount of friends a result of popularity, or does it support and help it to grow?

Psychology Today refers in its blogpost³⁰ a research by **James Fowler**, **Christopher Dawes**, and **Nicholas Christakis** from PNAS, which compared data on 1110 identical and fraternal twins from 142 schools and found heritability in "in-degree" (how many people call you a friend), "transitivity" (how many of your friends are friends with each other), and "centrality" (how easy it would be to play six degrees of Kevin Bacon using you in the role of Kevin Bacon). "Out-degree" (how many people you name as friends), however, is not significantly heritable.

Fowler, Dawes and Christakis found in their experiments that virtual people with heritable in-degree (how attractive you are as a friend) and connectivity (how often you introduce your friends) created network patterns that matched the real-life data.

Another research, also presented in Psychology Today, by psychologist **Alexandra Burt**, concluded that so called “bad boys” are found socially more attractive than others. They *“tended to carry a variation of a serotonin-receptor gene associated with impulsivity and rule-breaking behaviour”*.³¹

My personal observation, which, however, cannot be taken for valid scientific fact, is that, people with a very low number of friends, less than 35, for example, can be divided into three categories:

- People who don’t use Facebook for networking but as a communication channel only with the closest ones
- Middle-aged or older people, not familiar or comfortable with computers
- Young people with less social attraction than average, and placed low hierarchywise

What are the factors that make someone socially attractive on Facebook? **Wikihow** has two articles dealing with popularity: *“How to become popular on Facebook?”*³² and *“How to be cool on Facebook?”*³³

According to Wikihow, users should update their status in every few hours, even if nothing would have happened to them. A witty status, participating as many opportunities and joining as many interesting groups as possible, not to mention taking “cool quizzes” is recommendable. Socializing includes sending virtual gifts, poking, and “throwing stuff”.

Anyone who has used Facebook more than a week knows that constant spamming and harassment is a no-no. There is one point, however, in which Wikihow has it right: *“If you want to have a friend, you have to be one.”*

Whereas Wikihow’s “advice” is still mostly ridiculous and urging to spamming, blogger **Millionaire Hoy**³⁴ actually has some good points. Following basic netiquette, minimizing tagging (*“tagging is a great way to end up on your friend’s ignore or deleted list and is the antithesis to becoming popular on any social network”*) and

spamming (*“the only way to get popular via a Facebook app is if you’re the developer”*), taking care of grammar and punctuation, putting quality over quantity – that is to say basic things suitable for nearly everywhere in the internet - one should have every reason to become liked and popular.

Hoy writes wisely that one should become popular on Facebook the same way as in real life. *“It’s not about requesting tons of friends- it’s about making yourself a person worthy of having more friends in your network. Facebook is a great place and becoming popular is only reserved for the people that can exhibit their unique qualities and make people want to be associated with them”*, he points out.

Still, who of us is popular? It makes all the sense in the world that same rules apply in real life as on social networking sites – internet isn’t some unknown virtual reality anymore, it is just one form of communication among the others.

Moreover, Hoy writes that “friending” on Facebook should take place when people want to be associated with one another, not because they feel obligated to. He calls “friend mining” the act of going through one’s friend’s network and carelessly adding everyone. What comes to popularity, this action is strongly forbidden, making one look desperate. The reputation one should aim to have on Facebook is being witty, original and interesting. Being those things in addition to being respectful, focusing on one’s friends and making quality posts should lead to popularity. Building a network should be done by using one’s existing network and developing it by using the same kind of principles as in viral marketing: posting great responses on friend’s posts and getting them to promote one’s content (on their own will). According to Hoy, the only way user’s friends can start promoting is if they are given something worth promoting: a profile page worth of being bookmarked, consistently providing interesting content. This way user’s friends will check the profile frequently and a movement will begin to create, making one more popular.³⁵

From observation's point of view, however, Wikihow's posts bring out some questions. It is for example suggested that one should have some fake personal info to be popular on Facebook. Secondly, Wikihow suggests³⁴ that purposely made spelling errors would make one look as they had written it fast because having something better to do. Looking good and smiling in pictures, even shutting your eyes ("it looks cute") is also recommended.

Naturally, Wikihow is available for anyone to edit. Still, these suggestions represent views and impressions that surely more than one person signs. The fake personal info is however a bit hard to understand. Or is there a syndrome equivalent to class reunions – that one wishes to make himself look better and more successful in the eyes of old classmates? But sugarcoating facts is a different story than total distortion. According to an American research, among teens whose profiles are public, 46 percent say they give at least some false information (James, 2009: 37.) Isn't the purpose of Facebook that people are there as themselves?

A recent study³⁵ found that "faking it" online is tougher than previously imagined. Students took multiple personality tests in order to determine both their actual personality and their idealized personality. The assumption that the online versions of the participants would match up more closely with the idealized personalities, not the real ones, is called the idealized virtual-identity hypothesis.

As it was concluded, we are displaying our real personalities online. There was no evidence of self-idealization, instead, these results suggested that people are not using their profiles to promote an idealized virtual identity, but Facebook might be an efficient medium for expressing and communicating real personality.

That is still not always the case, as I present in subchapter 4.5.

4.3.2 POOR-GET-RICHER VS. RICH-GET-RICHER

The “*Poor-Get-Richer*” (PGR), that is social compensation hypothesis and “*Rich-Get-Richer*” (RGR), also known as social enhancement hypothesis have also been applied to Facebook. The PRG hypothesis suggests that those who have poor social networks and social anxiety, can get more benefit by disclosing themselves freely and creating new relationships through the Internet. The RGR hypothesis, on the other hand, states that the internet primarily benefits extraverted individuals. According to **Katelyn McKenna & John Bargh** (2000, cited by Sheldon, 2009), internet benefits introverts more than extraverts: new relationships and interactions online may compensate for the social capital that these people lack in the offline world.³⁶

A research by **Jolene Zywica** and **James Danowski** (2008), from the University of Illinois, investigates these two competing hypotheses that 1) those more popular offline augment their popularity by increasing it on Facebook (RGR), and 2) that users attempt to increase their Facebook popularity to compensate for inadequate offline popularity (PGR). The research had 614 participants, all of them university students. In the results Zywica & Danowski found that those users who were more extraverted and with higher self-esteem, supported the RGR hypothesis, being more popular both offline and on Facebook. Another group, those less popular offline, supported the PGR hypothesis, because they are more introverted, have lower self-esteem and strive more to look popular on Facebook. Further analysis revealed that these two user groups also had different meanings for online and offline popularity. In addition, regression explains nearly twice the variance in offline popularity as in Facebook popularity, indicating the latter is not as socially grounded or defined as offline popularity.³⁷

It has been proved in studies that the internet’s anonymity and reduced cues might stimulate online self-disclosure because there is no fear of being ridiculed or rejected (Derlega, Metts & Petronio, 1993; Pennebaker, 1989, cited by Sheldon, 2009). Also the RGR hypothesis has been argued to be true, as extraverted adolescents self-disclosed⁴ and communicated online more often (Kraut, Kiesler,

⁴ See subchapter 4.3.3

Boneva, Cummings, Helgeson & Crawford, 2002, cited by Sheldon, 2009). In addition, MacIntyre, Babin, and Clement (1999, cited by Sheldon, 2009) found that extraverts communicate more with other on the internet than do introverts. In fact, individuals who feel anxiety and fears in their face-to-face communication use Facebook to pass time and feel less lonely more often than other respondents, but they have fewer Facebook friends (Sheldon, 2008, cited by Sheldon, 2009).³⁶

Finnish newspaper *Iltalehti* made a poll³⁸ in which readers were asked how Facebook has affected their social lives. As a result among 5000 respondents, it was concluded that Facebook had little or no effect on their social activity. Majority of the respondents had contact with their old or new Facebook friends just as much as before joining the service. Social media researcher **Janne Matikainen** from Helsinki University commented that “real life” and life on Facebook should not be separated too much. His opinion was that Facebook doesn’t have much effect on people’s “real lives”. However, he admitted that Facebook could invigorate their online lives.

Thus, there is no unambiguous answer if the PGR and RGR hypotheses are applicable for offline popularity. They do both seem to be supported online.

4.3.3 SELF-DISCLOSURE, PREDICTABILITY AND TRUST

As I mentioned in chapter 3, Pavica Sheldon (2009) has researched how social attraction on Facebook influences self-disclosure, predictability, and trust in another individual.³⁶ The purpose of her research was to test how one Facebook user's social attraction influences another person's self-disclosure and perception of trust in that individual.

Self-disclosure is the process of revealing personal information about oneself verbally (e.g. Berg & Derlega, 1987, cited by Sheldon, 2009). In interpersonal relationships, self-disclosure plays a crucial role in the development of human relationships. Self-disclosure can also be a strategy for impression formation, social validation, or social control (Kim, Lee, & Park, 2006; Derlega et al, 1993, cited by Sheldon, 2009).

Although communication on Facebook lacks many nonverbal cues, its users still perceive a high predictability on their friends' behaviour: the more users talk, the less uncertainty they experience and are able to like each other more. The more certain they are about their behaviour, the more they trust them, and the more they trust them, the more they disclose to them. This supports Uncertainty Reduction Theory.

As argued by Sheldon, on Facebook we tend to like people to whom we self-disclose our intimate information, but the key is not in the quantity of self-disclosure (breadth) that makes us like our Facebook friends, but in the quality (depth).

This supports Altman and Taylor (1973) and Social Penetration Theory, which suggest that changes in the outer layer (breadth) minimally change the relationships.³⁶

4.4 STEREOTYPES AND CONFORMITIES

It would be subject to a whole another thesis or research to investigate what kind of conformities and stereotypes can be found from different people's Facebook profiles. Could it be indicated that i.e. people from a certain social class tend to become fans on certain groups, for instance? I personally have made some observations, but as they are not survey results or therefore any valid, researched information and contain some sensitive issues, it is unfortunately impossible to post them here. Still, there is one hypothesis I will dare to present: a person, who has as a friend many professionals of a certain field, creates an image – which can also naturally be truthful – of a force to be reckoned with, that is, raises his level of credibility.

However, many bloggers and heavy users of Facebook have accomplished to make observations of stereotypes, usually presented with a tongue-in-cheek –attitude and humor. Although being very unofficial information, these observations still reflect the psychosocial views of many people: there must be some reason for them for being popular and amusing. That reason obviously indicates there being a kernel of truth.

Images from 4.2 to 4.4 are from **The Oatmeal's**³⁹ comic: How to suck on Facebook. The Oatmeal is one of the most wittiest, funniest and interesting creators of comics, stories and quizzes what the web has to offer.



Image 4.2 The Oatmeal: How to suck on Facebook

David Schultz⁴⁰ represents six different stereotypes, which he calls annoying:

The Filterless

They'll post updates about everything, even when it's something you'd never, ever want to know.

Hey everybody, I just took a dump and it's shaped like a mountain lion!



Image 4.3 The Oatmeal: How to suck on Facebook

The Rash

This person will follow you around facebook and comment on everything you do.



Image 4.4 The Oatmeal: How to suck on Facebook

1. THE "MISSIONARY"

This person makes it their mission in life to spread their religious beliefs via their Facebook updates. This accomplishes nothing other than further alienating anyone they may want to save while being cheered on by other believers.

2. THE "BIG EVENT BRAGGER"

These people assume we are deeply concerned about how many more sleeps they have until their big cottage vacation. On the bright side, they are certain to announce when they will be away so we can safely ransack their houses.

3. THE "THE INSECURE ATTENTION SEEKER"

These people need comments & attention STAT! An example status update might look like: "worst day ever!" or "is sad". Apparently these people hope to get enough pity or cheers such that their daily drama can match that of the best soap operas.

4. THE "SOCIAL MEDIA MAVEN"

These people are updating all their social media status messages at once using tools like ping.fm. Heads up, lazy random out-of-place status update incoming!!!

5. THE "MARKETER OF MINUTIA"

These folks will be sure you to let know that they are eating breakfast, just watched the latest episode of True Blood or how much they love their boyfriend/girlfriend/wife/dog/cat etc.

6. THE "EXCLAMATIONER"!!!!!!!

These people end literally every sentence with an exclamation. Similar to #3 and #5, these people have a sad idea of what is exciting or dramatic in life but try to make up for it with bad punctuation.

4.5 FICTIONAL, FAKE AND CELEBRITY PROFILES

Facebook is not only a network for real people, it is also filled with profiles of fictional characters, profiles of celebrities created by someone else than the person himself and of course, profiles of real celebrities.

A popular Finnish "soap opera" of 11 years, *Salatut Elämät* is an excellent example of this questionable fan behaviour. Profiles of fictional characters from the series are extremely popular to become friends with, as seen in image 4.2, where "**Miika Mäkelä**" (played by Juha-Pekka Mikkola) has 1622 friends. It is not in my knowledge whether there is one certain person who maintains these profiles, or are they randomly created by anyone willing to make the effort. Production company of *Salatut Elämät*, *Fremantle Media*, however states on their web page⁴¹ that they are in no way responsible for the profiles. Still, it is highly unlikely that Fremantle would complain about the advertisement value. Nevertheless, as much as this is free advertisement for them, they have no power over the content released in the profiles.

This is social media at its best and worst: free, shared content created by everyday users, the one's many marketers tend (or used) to forget and dismiss.

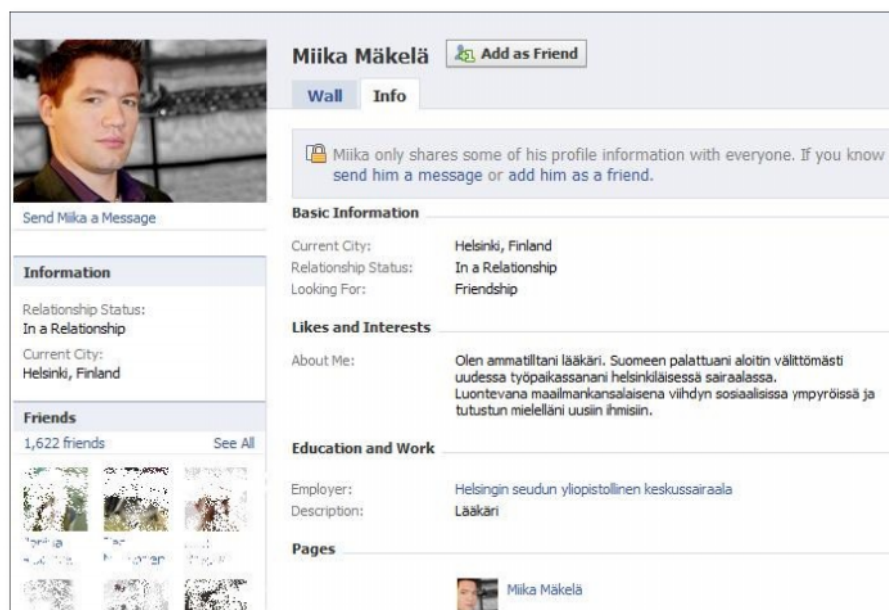


Image 4.3 Fan-created profile of a character in *Salatut Elämät*

From psychosocial point of view, it is somewhat interesting to research, why someone would like to befriend with these fictional profiles. That certainly isn't for networking purposes, nor making new friendships, let alone a relationship, certainly since the communication lacks reciprocity. Befriending with celebrities is understandable, as it adds user's social capital and popularity, at least in user's own opinion. **Roger Highfield** and **Nic Fleming** from the *Daily Telegraph* call these designated friends as "trophy friends".⁴² This leads us back to questions of hierarchy: an intentional augmentation of the amount of friends, in this case, by using fictional profiles, is one option for making it appear that one is the more popular, the more friends one has. However, my hypothesis is that one can only achieve "serious" popularity, if he befriends wisely with celebrities. By wisely I mean a network, a friend list, which can be taken seriously: profiles of celebrities are not mixed with profiles of fictional characters. If these two are mixed, and moreover, if the user is young, it in my opinion indicates that the profile holder is only collecting friends, and no real, reciprocal communication is taking place between these public figures and the user.

But it is not only those fake profiles of public figures or fictional characters, also pets are having their own. Many people list their pets as their "children", and instead of applications such as *Dogbook*, create their own pages for their dogs and cats.

Many young people create Facebook profiles for other people so that they can add those names to their friend list and thus exaggerate the extent of their offline popularity (James, 2009: 41). In the Finnish law, it is not considered a crime to pretend to be someone else on Facebook, nor copying someone else's personal information,⁴³ but a new law against identity thefts is in the making in the European Union.⁴⁴

However, defamation cases are quite common on Facebook, and their controlling is difficult. One of the most interesting cases relevant to this thesis is the defamation and harassing of **Astrid Thors**. As a Minister of Migration and European Affairs, Thors has been the most discussed politician in Finland for a long while, mainly because the rising wave of "immigration critics" (in their own words), who blame Thors for the current policy of migration.

Thors has on Facebook, according to my calculations, two fake profiles and one genuine. The false ones both are abusive, but the other one⁵ is limited and is made to give an impression that it would be Thors' actual profile. In the other one⁶, Thors is being described as a person who likes hardcore pornography and is a muslim, among other things. Against Thors there has also been created numerous anti-groups, some of them even containing life threatening material. The chief of Police Force, **Mikko Paatero**, states⁴⁵ that threatening in internet has become very easy with social networking sites, especially Facebook. Social media has created a new trend and people are appearing even in kill threat groups using their real names and photos.

Another perspective on public figures on Facebook is presented in subchapter 5.5.

⁵ <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?v=info&ref=search&id=100000530975032>

⁶ <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?v=info&ref=search&id=100000912915928>

4.6 THE FINE ART OF UNFRIENDING

In 2009, *New Oxford American Dictionary* chose the word “unfriend” as their pick for word of the year. The correct definition is subsequent: “*To remove someone as a ‘friend’ on a social networking site such as Facebook*”.⁴⁶

Finnish digital media expert and a popular writer **Tuija Aalto** debates on her blog *Tuhat Sanaa*⁴⁷ about the complex situation of unwanted Facebook friends. Though this virtual relationship demands a mutual acceptance, one’s needs, procedures, life situation, friendships and privacy strategy may change. One should not be offended if the other party suddenly wants to cut off the relationship, anyway, if the matter is represented with diplomacy.

However, the question of offending or not may be more complicated than that, but in matter of media and communication, it should always be allowed to reevaluate one’s communication manners. If the profile holder is a public figure, instead of blocking the Facebook account with several unrelated posts by unknown fans, a fan page is often a more recommendable option.

Aalto writes: “the most proper procedure depends on the expectations you and your networks have on the content and policies of communication. When it becomes awkward, the reason usually is the diversity of the circle of friends, which may contain everything from colleagues and random acquaintances to good friends and family”.

Whatever may be the case, safety issues, e.g. those relating privacy, should be seriously taken under consideration. Going through your divorce and dirty laundry is not only unwanted behaviour and against Facebook etiquette, but it can also lead to revenge and even to acts of violence.

An article in *The Wall Street Journal*⁴⁸ covers the concept of “unfriending” by present a few example cases. A student, who, after reevaluating the composition of her friend list and unfriending a former classmate after losing contact with her, decided to “refriend” her because of the feedback and accusations of the offended counterparty.

A software engineer uses a service called *Qwitter* to receive an email every time someone stops following his updates on Twitter and wonders every time what he has done to offend the “qwitter”. A jeweler is offended of unfriending and doesn’t find it diplomatically the right thing to do.

People have different options to find out about being unfriended. Either the number of friends has dropped down, or Facebook may suggest that they’d become friends with the one who deleted them. Removing friends is easy, taking no more than a click or two. Nevertheless, e.g. Facebook doesn’t notify its users about unfriending. The purpose of this policy is to reduce awkwardness and to respect users’ privacy. A Facebook spokesman says the isn't concerned with the impact of unfriending and it prefers to *“leave the delicate etiquette of defining online social norms”* to its users.⁴⁵

Moreover, users agonize over whom to friend, and worry about whether their friend requests will be accepted or ignored, *“lingering in cyberspace in what some dub friend purgatory.”* Author of the article, **Jessica E. Vascellaro**, writes that there is a shift from the days when users, *“eager to boast about their online popularity, added new friends - whether or not they really knew them”*.

The article was written in late 2008, which indicates that there could have been a period or a “trend” leading to these measures – taking under consideration that Facebook’s popularity started to rise in 2007 and there could have been enough time to evaluate one’s manners of usage. Still, I personally did not notice any such thing. On the contrary: fictional profiles have become more popular and those who collect friends probably continue such behaviour also nowadays.

5 PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

5.1 PUBLIC PRIVACY

Marshall Kirkpatrick, a technology journalist and the lead writer at *ReadWriteWeb*, delivers: *"While real life communication lets us share different things with different people, online social networking has tended to have two modes: public or private."*⁴⁹

Keeping one's privacy⁷ online is easier said than done. In chapter 5, I'm focusing on privacy questions around Facebook. Being a social networking site, even the word "social" implies to sharing and public. How is it possible to find a balance between sharing and keeping, public and private? Social media encourages users to participate and share, that is, giving parts of themselves to the online world.

Public privacy as a concept alludes to individuals' control of information about themselves⁵⁰. It places somewhere between absolute publicity and absolute secrecy, in this thesis in context with Facebook. However, the lines of public privacy are still yet to be defined: what is left for society to be faithful to after one has decided to share parts of his private self to the environment of public privacy.

Michael Fitzgerald writes⁵¹ about how Facebook and Twitter are changing data privacy rules. Whereas people share vast amounts of information about themselves on social networks, marketers are developing better tools to exploit information about what individuals do online. Already ten years go, *Sun Microsystems* CEO **Scott McNealy** declared *"You have zero privacy anyway, get over it"*. Though people are nowadays more in touch with their "inner exhibitionist", as Fitzgerald puts it, it is worth questioning how far common sense goes in the online world. Sitting in front of a computer creates a false sense of anonymity.

The cultural shift toward consumer control of personal data seems to be gaining steam, whether or not there are legal prescriptions for privacy change.

Al Gidari, from legal company *Perkins Coie*, interviewed by Fitzgerald, said that our values about privacy may be changing: *"I wonder whether we are 10 years behind in our*

⁷The general definition of privacy contains a sub-definition of internet privacy, which is more relevant in this thesis. Naturally, in this context, privacy equals internet privacy.

views of privacy, and this next generation may not be much concerned about the things this generation is screaming about."

Nevertheless, according to MIT professor and cofounder of *Sense Networks*, **Alex "Sandy" Pentland**, privacy isn't dead. Different people do have different attitudes about privacy, but they care about control. Users are willing to put something up on Facebook, but they want to control who sees it.⁵¹

How can privacy be protected in an increasingly public world? Consumers want control of information about themselves. Facebook needs consumers to have privacy-based trust in them if they want to succeed. *"Privacy is an atomic bomb," Ken Auletta* has quoted a Google executive as whispering. *"Our success is based on trust."*⁵⁰

As I'm presenting later in this thesis, Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, has claimed that public is the new social norm. In Zuckerberg's case, this statement is mostly interpreted as an explanation for Facebook's new privacy settings, but in a wider perspective, social media has indeed changed the rules of privacy.

5.1.1 PEEPING TOM: VOYEURISM AND EXHIBITIONISM ON FACEBOOK

It has often been proposed in the media and popular science that narcissism, the feeling of being a very special person who deserves a lot of attention, might be the reason for self-exhibition on social media such as social networking sites (Keen, 2007; Orlet, 2007; Rosen, 2007, cited by Krämer & Utz, 2008).⁷³

Jason Piccone from California State University, refers in his essay *Curiosity and Exploration*⁵², **D.E. Berlyne** and **J.F. Wohlwill**, both leaders of exploration research, by representing three conceptual distinctions of exploratory behaviour:

1. Inspective behaviour, which is aimed at uncertainty reduction.
2. Diversive behaviour, which is stimulus/sensation seeking.
3. Affective exploration, which is directed at maintenance of an optimal hedonic tone. In adults it may take the form of mental explorations, such as philosophizing. The difference between affective and diversive exploration can be thought of as different levels of the same thing. Whereas diversive behaviour is aimed at boredom relief, or simple stimulation, affective behaviour is more on the side of extraordinary stimulation.

AllFacebook.com has pointed out a report⁵³, put together by Facebook and **Moira Burke**, from Carnegie Mellon University, examining 140,000 new users on Facebook, and trying to predict how much of their personal life they'd share, based on their first two weeks of activity. According to the report's conclusion, people participate more when other people notice a newcomer, e.g. if they are tagged in other people's photos, or get comments when they upload their own albums, they will add more content to their profiles.

Another thought, also relatable to Facebook, is by **Dr. John Grohol**⁵⁴ who poses a question, if modesty – as a concept or social value – is even relevant or useful anymore? As teenagers *“think nothing of sending semi-nude photos of themselves to their boyfriends (and vice versa),* Grohol wonders if exhibitionism is the new modesty.

5.1.2 FACEBOOK STALKING

Urban dictionary, the ever reliable source of street terminology, sees "Facebook stalking"⁵⁵ as regular stalking, allowing the stalker to secretly gather information about the person they are interested in; the stalkee if you will. Unlike regular stalking, Facebook stalking is less likely to have an illegal component and is generally accepted by its voyeuristic victims.

Forrest Koboyashi⁵⁶ thinks that there is no such thing. However, he seems to consider the phenomenon as a more serious matter than myself. Koboyashi says that one can always manage his privacy settings and unfriend unwanted connections. My idea of Facebook stalking is something quite harmless, entertaining recreation , which can be acceptable when not using any illegal resources. Of course the question of morality arises when someone hasn't e.g. known how to use his privacy settings. Nevertheless, in this case the person should not post anything personal in his profile, if uncertain in any way about its privacy.

Of course, Facebook stalking takes a more serious form when jealousy comes in the picture. According to a British survey⁵⁷ clarifying the Facebook stalking of couples, 58% of respondents had looked up two or more past partners, and 15% had actively changed their Facebook status expressly to make a current or past partner jealous. Almost half admitted to reading their partner's emails to look for evidence of cheating. Men were more likely to stalk women, with a tendency to spend 8 minutes or more "spying" on their partner's profile per day.

5.2 FACEBOOK AND PRIVACY CONTROVERSY

5.2.1 CRITICISM OF NEW PRIVACY SETTINGS

Facebook has had its share of privacy concerns – and criticism - before, out of which the *Beacon* case has been one of the most significant ones. Beacon, launched on November 2007, was a part of Facebook’s advertisement system that sent data from external websites to Facebook. Its purpose was to allow targeted advertisements and allow users to share their activities with their friends. Certain activities on partner sites were published to a user’s News Feed. Beacon became eventually a target of a class action lawsuit and was shut down in September 2009.

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The questions of privacy and public began to rise, when in June 2009, Facebook announced that they are renewing service’s privacy settings. First major change had been the Everyone –update, which, in short is Facebook’s answer to Twitter. Whereas other content posted to Facebook which is managed by the privacy settings, Everyone –updates are accessible to the web at large, meaning that Facebook can leverage them for real-time search and can also syndicate them to e.g. *Google* and *Bing*. The feature had been available in Facebook’s privacy settings since summer 2008, but was not commonly used nor even commonly known.⁵⁹

In December, however, the Everyone –update became a default setting, forcing users to be proactive and to change their settings, unless they wanted their status updates, among others, to be available for all the world to see (image 5.1). At the same time, Facebook eliminated regional networks, stating that they could not anymore ensure their security. Also fan pages were no longer available to be set as private.

In the following, I’m representing views of some of the leading technology journalists,

experts of social media. One of them is the already mentioned Marshall Kirkpatrick, one of the loudest critics of the new privacy settings.

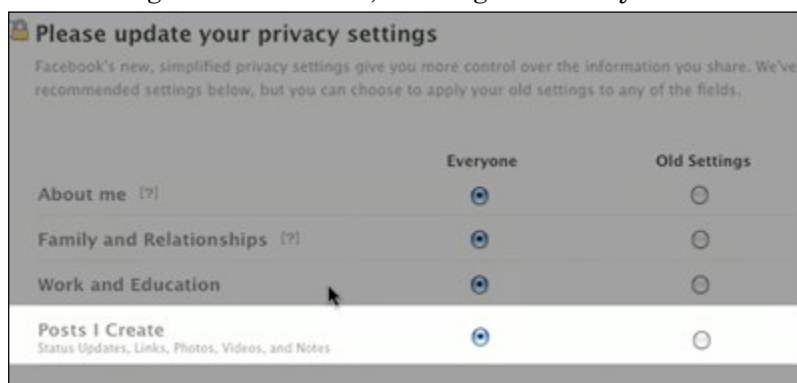


Image 5.1 Facebook privacy settings transition screen

When Kirkpatrick pointed out⁶⁰ to a Facebook executive in July, that the new Facebook publishing interface has "everyone" as the privacy setting at the top of the list (image 5.2), and, the most realistic option, sharing specific things with specific people in appropriate context, is at the very bottom under "custom", the explanation was that because it is hard for people to tell the difference between users with similar friends, more publicly shared information would make one's

friends with common names easier to identify.

Kirkpatrick found this explanation



Image 5.2 Facebook status visibility settings (the Everyone –update)

inadequate and weird, especially the fact that the least controlled privacy setting was at the top of the list and the most controlled version buried. Other Facebook executives, also interviewed by Kirkpatrick, pointed that the new privacy changes are all about increasing a user's control over their privacy and letting them be "as public or as private as they want to be".

Kirkpatrick speculated that it's possible that Facebook wants to increase publicly visible real estate (conversations with friends) so that it can bring in search traffic and sell ads. Moreover, he wondered why the executives stated that Facebook is about learning about people you don't know and searching for what people are saying about topics that interest you?

"Far more often, we've heard the saying "Facebook is about people you know, Twitter is about people you want to know and MySpace is about people you used to know." The point is, turning Facebook into a place where people meet new people and learn new things about a topic actually represents a radical change in the Facebook user experience. Facebook has always been about connecting with the people you already know." ⁶⁰

In December 2009, *Electronic Privacy Information Center* – a group that advocates Internet privacy, filed a formal complaint with the *Federal Trade Commission* over Facebook’s decision to open more of its members’ information to public view unless they actively take steps to limit their data’s exposure.⁶¹

Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the group, commented that changes in privacy policy will make too much user information available to the public, and also to third-party application developers that create games, contests, and other programs for Facebook.⁶²

In accordance with Rotenberg, **Jason Kincaid** from *TechCrunch* wrote⁵⁹ that the real trouble will start when Facebook starts sharing these status updates with the search engines and other third parties. Up until now, content uploaded to Facebook is been controlled by the site: getting rid of it has usually deleted it completely. With Everyone –update, the situation changed, as, according to Facebook’s privacy policy, deleted content will be removed from user’s profile, but Facebook has no control over it outside of the site.

At the time of the December’s privacy update, Marshall Kirkpatrick interviewed **Barry Schnitt**, Director of Corporate Communications and Public Policy at Facebook⁶³ about the reasons for the new privacy policy. Schnitt explained the changes by saying that *“the site is changing, our userbase is changing and the world is changing.”* When asked for a further explanation, he claimed that the userbase is growing in size and people are sharing more information with more people. About the “changing world” he mentioned that by making the world more open and connected, Facebook is expanding understanding between people. Also, when users find their friends, are found by their friends and learn more about the world around them – they find more value on the site.

Moreover, Schnitt brought up the business perspective, mentioning that if users are finding more value from the site they will come back more and engage in more activity.

Kirkpatrick doesn’t see eye to eye with Schnitt. In his opinion it should be Facebook, having grown from 140 million users over a year ago to being the 3rd largest nation on earth at over 400 million users today, that is a leading agent changing the world, not just reflecting it. As a summary, Kirkpatrick delivered in his ironic way:

“That's the new Facebook! Recommending you share your content with the whole web at large because users requested it, because it believes the world is changing that way so you'll feel comfortable with it, because it believes openness increases human connection and because it's going to increase traffic and advertising revenues.”

Also in December, Facebook announced that only 15-20 percent of its (then) 350 million users have ever modified their privacy settings. This alarming and baffling piece of information is certainly worth discussing. As it has been stated numerous times, once some information is released online, it can never be completely removed. What can be blamed: the ignorance of Facebook users? Their free will to go public? Hardly. I would suggest that it all comes down to not knowing enough about the privacy settings, and secondly, not realizing the seriousness of the situation what comes to information leaks and exploitation. Many people seem to think that the best way to maintain one's privacy on Facebook is not to use the settings, but to keep the information released, e.g. in status updates, in as general level as possible. Of course there are groups of people who don't even think that far, but keep a naïve attitude that no one would be interested about their information, thoughts and political views, for instance.

*Helsingin Sanomat*⁶⁴ wrote about Facebook intending to share its users' information to other sites. This is an expected, but still a questionable move. What is interesting about the article, however, is the minor survey the newspaper did by contacting a few dozen users of Facebook, who had a completely public profile. A significant majority of these people were surprised, that their information is available for everyone.

I wonder, is it really a necessity for a Facebook user to be computer savvy, and moreover. can it be taken for granted? Taking care of one's privacy isn't just about not having something to hide, privacy doesn't equal secrecy. It seems that users are still very confused of the constant privacy changes

5.2.2 CRITICISM OF CRITICISM

Not everybody agree with critics such as Kirkpatrick and Kincaid. Blogger **Chris Saad** considers the privacy changes understandable and not that nefarious. Saad writes that Facebook's actions are obvious: they want search inventory to sell to Google and *Microsoft*, and they want to be "as cool as Twitter". According to Saad, it is unusual to have a platform that encourages so much "public" peer-to-peer participation.

"Ultimately Facebook wants to be the Microsoft Outlook and Google AdSense of the Social Web all rolled into one. Maybe throw some PayPal in for good measure. To do this I think you will see them continue to provide square or triangle options for their users (with their own personal bias towards triangles) and deprecate legacy parts of their system like canvas pages and groups."⁶⁵

But even Kirkpatrick finds something worth crediting⁶⁶ in the new privacy settings – the publishing feature (image 5.3), that is. This feature, though being part of the criticized Everyone –update, allows users to share their status updates with just a particular list of their friends. Kirkpatrick even writes, that thanks to Facebook, communication is human again. Facebook may be solving one of the biggest problems in social networking, *"the unnaturally uncontrollable nature of communication"*.

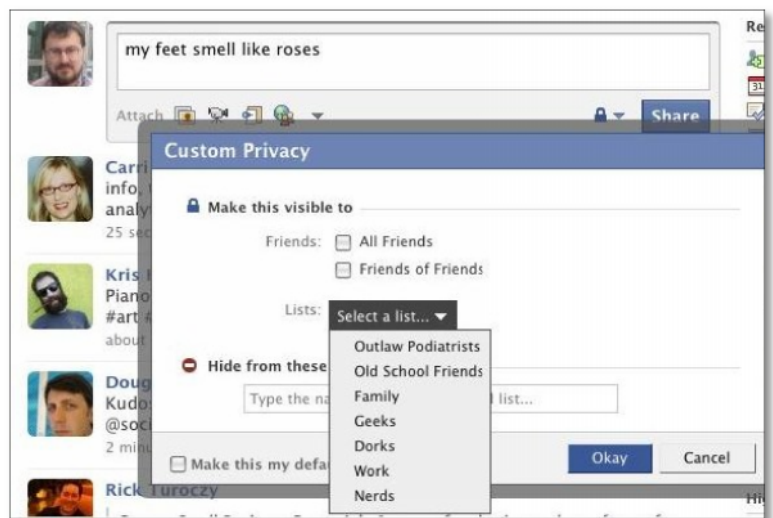


Image 5.3 Facebook publishing feature

However, Kirkpatrick says that the new feature is clearly still in its infancy, as even users who are able to control who sees their messages can't control visibility of other actions, such as joining groups. Moreover, mobile clients have "all or nothing" publishing tools when it comes to privacy.

Chris Saad understands the pressure of Facebook executives and developers, asserting that Twitter is like a triangle (small group of people broadcasting to a large group of people), whereas Facebook is more like a square: everyone communicating more or less as equal peers.

“Facebook is trying to have its cake and eat it too. They want to be a triangle for those who want one, and a square for those who want one of those.”⁶⁵

Finally, **Michael Arrington**, the founder of TechCrunch, who has interviewed Zuckerberg⁸, thinks⁶⁷ that people like Facebook and extremely few of them is going to stop using it. The changes Facebook has made are not only inevitable, but also what’s best for the company. If users hate it enough, someone else will launch a competing service that has different policies and thrive, but that is highly unlikely.

Although Facebook offers several options for the protection of one’s privacy, it is still worth considering why one should obtain friendships with people they don’t want to share even their wall posts with. If and when the true meaning of Facebook is to communicate and to share?

As a link between the complexity of friendships and privacy issues, I could suggest, than an extremely limited profile actually argues with the whole point of using Facebook. Why keep as a friend someone you hide practically your whole profile for? Isn’t this kind of communication – if it can even be called such – more rational to move to another environment, e.g. e-mail, for instance. Even though I can myself be blamed for having such “unrational friendships” and do not admit that my behaviour is oriented towards “friend collecting”, I would say that having numerous afore mentioned connections are suggesting that the profile holder is conducting that kind of behaviour. However, the wholeness of this phenomenon is impossible to diagnose just by observing. It is understandable that the “unfriending” procedure is complex, and therefore many people keep someone(s) as a friend out of courtesy. But, if the other party is a so-called “frenemy”, does it actually matter what he thinks – if even notices that someone has “unfriended” him.

⁸ See subchapter 5.3

5.3 IS PUBLIC THE NEW SOCIAL NORM?

5.3.1 ZUCKERBERG AND OPPONENTS

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg claimed, while being interviewed by Michael Arrington at the Crunchiesawards in January 2010, public being the new social norm. *“The age of privacy is over”*, proclaimed Zuckerberg. This statement has caused a lot of discussion, i.e. it has been suggested that Facebook is competing against Twitter, already mentioned in sub-subchapter 5.2. However, it has been said already in 2006 that public is the new private (James, 2009: 38.). Zuckerberg’s statement, though, has caused controversy mainly because it has been seen as an explanation for Facebook’s new privacy policy.

Zuckerberg emphasized, that world is changing, and Facebook with it. He said that if Facebook was starting out now, sharing with everybody – rather than with a small group of friends – would be the starting point.⁶⁸

“And then in the last 5 or 6 years, blogging has taken off in a huge way and all these different services that have people sharing all this information. People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people. That social norm is just something that has evolved over time. We view it as our role in the system to constantly be innovating and be updating what our system is to reflect what the current social norms are.”⁶⁷

Mashable’s Pete Cashmore agrees with Zuckerberg. As reported by Cashmore, the change was inevitable: if Facebook wouldn’t have been the starting motor, Google would definitely have *“made our lives more public in its quest to make all the world’s information accessible. And if not Google, then Twitter.”* According to Cashmore, public sharing is unavoidable.⁴⁵

However, Marshall Kirkpatrick from ReadWriteWeb doesn’t believe Zuckerberg’s claim. He had interviewed Zuckerberg in 2008, when the founder had pounded the importance of user privacy, declaring that “privacy control is the vector around which Facebook operates”.⁶⁹

Kirkpatrick treats Zuckerberg's argument as superficial explanations that are *"just convenient stories to tell while the company shifts its strategy to exert control over the future of the web"*. In addition, he finds it hard to understand to competition with Twitter, as "it would take 36 years for Twitter to pass Facebook in number of users" and that Facebook is growing a Twitter's worth of users every eight days.

In his critique, Kirkpatrick brings out a good point: what makes Facebook think that the world is becoming more public and less private? Zuckerberg's comparison to the rise of blogging doesn't seem adequate. Though blogging has made a big impact on the world, the amount of bloggers is still a very small percentage of people compared to the 400 million users of Facebook.

"People signed up for Facebook under the belief their information could be shared just between trusted friends. Now the company says that's old news, that people are changing. I don't believe it."⁶⁸

Also **Paul Jacobson** from *Web.Tech.Law* has his say on the subject. As stated in his blog⁷⁰, Jacobson feels that Facebook is pushing its users to go public. He feels that the key issue is competing with Twitter, *"despite Facebook's clear superiority in numbers and Twitter's continued instability and unreliability"*. But it's not just the pushing he's worried about, it is the potential harm going far beyond Facebook profiles; affecting the user's presence elsewhere on the Web and compromising more restrictive privacy settings on other sites:

"Consider that your Facebook profile contains a fair amount of personal information which you previously kept private behind Facebook's privacy controls. At the same time you may have had profiles on other sites, similarly restricted by privacy settings or less personal information disclosure on those other sites."

Marshall Kirkpatrick also wrote another article about Zuckerberg's vision, *"Why Facebook is Wrong: Privacy is Still Important"*.⁷¹ In this article, Kirkpatrick represents three reasons why *"making some of this (status updates, fan pages, profile pictures etc.) data public by requirement and some public by default is the wrong thing to do and, why society is not in fact changing the way that Zuckerberg claims it is"*.

In first of the three, *“evolving preferences don’t justify elimination of choice”*, Kirkpatrick brings out that even though Mark Zuckerberg might be right in people becoming more comfortable sharing their personal information publicly, privacy still is a fundamental human right. “Why does that (comfort, as mentioned above) mean it’s ok to take away peoples’ choices and force them to make public some of their information all the time?”, Kirkpatrick ponders.

In the second, *“privacy doesn’t just mean secrecy”*, Kirkpatrick refers an academic research by **Chris Peterson** from University of Massachusetts, who argues that an *“accurate and contemporary understanding of privacy is based more on the integrity of context than on absolute secrecy”*.

Third, there are many people in need of control over personal information, such as *“people who’ve escaped abusive relationships, people with marginalized religious or sexual preferences, people who fear losing their jobs or who’ve been pushed around by bullies throughout their lives”*. Kirkpatrick writes that the group of Ivy League elites who run Facebook are mostly socially less vulnerable and have less need to control their personal information.

Privacy control is extremely important especially for young people. **Katie James** mentions about youths who, disclosing personal information online, assume that their audience will behave responsibly. Such assumptions can be naïve and expose youth to significant risks (James, 2009: 40.).

Michael Arrington, who interviewed Zuckerberg in the first place, argues with Zuckerberg’s opponents, stating that Zuckerberg didn’t actually say the things he has been claimed to have said about the age of privacy being over. Instead, he writes that privacy truly is dead, but Zuckerberg only has mentioned about wanting Facebook to change along with its users, to keep the product fresh.⁶⁷

“If you have something that you don’t want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn’t be doing it in the first place.” (Google CEO Eric Schmidt, cited by Kirkpatrick, 2010)

5.3.2 MULTIPLE PUBLICS

Danah Boyd presents in her dissertation³ the concept of multiple publics. She finds the concept of networked publics “slippery”, because the concept of “publics is messy”. The term public has multiple meanings and is used across disciplines to signal different concepts.

During her interviews, she found that teenagers struggled with the term definition and rely on multiple meanings. Lila, a 18-year-old, whom she interviewed, said: *“When it’s public, anyone can see it.”* *“Lila notes that ‘you think about public as like within your big group of friends’. In this way, she bounds public through the construct of a population”*, Boyd writes.

The concept of multiple publics is easy to understand when thinking of presidents of different countries, e.g., who address “the public”. The definite article “the” implies that there is only one public. However, different presidents address to different publics. *“Rarely does a politician speaking about “the public” mean all who are living regardless of nationality, residence, or language. Using the indefinite article allows us to recognize that there are different collections of people depending on the situation and context”*, Boyd clarifies.

This leaves room for “multiple publics”, as individuals often engage with and are members of different publics, and move between them fluidly.

“Publics are not always distinct from one another and there are often smaller publics inside broader publics. For example, Lila’s cohort may represent a public, but they exist within other publics, including those labeled as teens, Americans, and consumers. Just as publics are made of smaller publics, there are also collectives that emerge to challenge the normative cultural ideas of the public to which they implicitly belong; these can be understood as “counterpublics” (Warner 2002, cited by Boyd, 2008).”

This brings out the question of multiple privates, but that I will save for my dissertation.

5.4 WHAT BECOMES OF THE PRIVACY PARADOX

5.4.1 PRIVACY PARADOX AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

The privacy paradox is a phenomenon designating the contradiction between information shared online and the necessity to keep it private. According to Assoc. prof. **Dr. Michel Walrave** from University of Antwerp (Belgium), the privacy paradox is a “discrepancy between reported privacy concern and actual disclosure of personal data”. As a solution, Walrave suggest raising awareness, adding education, legal and self-regulatory initiatives.⁷²

Sonja Utz and **Nicole Krämer**, from VU University Amsterdam, and the University of Duisburg-Essen, respectively, have researched the privacy paradox on social networking sites, as well as the role of individual characteristics and group norms. As argued by Utz & Krämer, the privacy paradox might arise because users have to find a trade-off between two opposing motives: privacy concerns and impression management.⁷³

Utz and Krämer argue that a user can only be found by old acquaintances or friends if the profile is visible. This supports the statement of Facebook executives. Impressing potential employers or dates also requires a public profile.

It has been shown by means of a content analysis of Facebook accounts that in the nonymous environment users produced identities especially by implicit identity claims (such as photos, groups or quotes) instead of explicit descriptions of their person.

Impression management has been found to be a major motive for hosting a profile on a social networking site (Krämer & Winter, 2008; Banczyk, Krämer, & Senokozlieva, 2007, cited by Utz & Krämer, 2009). Siibak (2009, cited by Utz & Krämer, 2009) found that users were very strategic and deliberately selected pictures with the goal to appear more popular.

Thus, impression management is an important concern for Facebook users. **Zeynep Tufekci** (2009, cited by Krämer & Utz, 2009) argued that privacy has to be seen as a compromise between pressures for withdrawal and disclosure. Therefore, opposite effects are expected for privacy concerns and impression management.

What becomes of Mark Zuckerberg and his statement about the new social norm, privacy, **Adam Thierer** says⁷⁴ that words were put in his (Zuckerberg's) mouth. The privacy paradox he sees in this set-up is that people were outraged, claiming that privacy is still alive and worthy of protection, *“even if it means an onerous federal data regulation regime.”* Thierer wondered how many of those outraged people actually left Facebook or changed their behaviour in any other way. He suspected that *“most people went right along with their lives and probably jumped right back on Facebook and starting sharing even more about themselves with the world”*.

Adam Thierer also quotes **Michael Zimmer**, an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, whose statement is maybe the embodiment of the whole idea of privacy paradox. Zimmer says that users want to be able to control what information they provide and to whom it is visible, as a responsible user of information technology does. However, when asking most of those people in a random survey do they care about their privacy, they are naturally going to answer yes. Translating that to real-world behaviour is a different story. Not to mention what are the ramifications for public policy?

And, as Washington Post columnist **Michael Gerson** puts it, also quoted by Thierer: *“It is the paradox of the cyber era: we are “a nation of exhibitionists demanding privacy.”⁷³*

5.4.2 THE REAL PRIVACY PARADOX

Larry Downes, author of *The Laws of Disruption*, argues that there actually isn't any privacy paradox⁷⁵. Downes says that much of the research conducted is of poor quality, and *"consumers when they're being surveyed are very likely to think differently about their 'attitudes' than when they are busily transacting and navigating their information pathways"*. User surveys find that consumers are constantly concerned about their online privacy, and yet do nothing to protect it. Consumers don't read privacy policies, don't protect their information even when given the tools to do so and click on targeted advertisements.

As said by Downes, the real paradox is between the privacy apocalypse preached with increased hysteria by different coalitions, leaving unnoticed the reality of much more modest set of problems which for most users present little to no problem at all. Quoting *CNET's Matt Asay*, Downes writes that it is not that people wouldn't value their privacy, but it being in so many contexts, leaving them value other things as much or more. When weighing the risks versus the benefits, the benefits often trump the privacy risks.

Downes admits that there naturally are privacy issues, but they are far more subtle and far more ambitious than the ones the public is concerned about. Instead of militarizing consumers to reflect their privacy attitudes, more behaviour study should be executed.

5.4.3 (PRIVATE) PUBLIC FIGURES WITHIN OUR REACH

It has never been as easy as today to get in touch with public figures. Gone are the days when a letter was sent to an agency, and a possibly reply would contain a picture and an autograph. Public figures socialize on Facebook like the rest of us, they share information, use it for marketing and advertising, they network and keep in touch with their friends. Some of them accept just plain anyone as friend, the others may not. I have been wondering for awhile how they keep the whole package together. If a public figure has thousands of friends and he doesn't take care of his privacy settings, it can be a disaster in the making. On the other hand, Facebook is an unlimited platform for them to advertise, or become even more (in)famous, if wanted.

This setting is, what could be thought as the third privacy paradox, the first and second being the ones mentioned before, by Walrave and Downes.

Still, public figures can conduct on Facebook in many ways. If they are there as their "private selves", they might accidentally share something that is not in any way intended to be seen by others, who might exploit this information. If public figures don't have any comprehension on privacy settings, major faux-pas' can take place. However, there are many celebrities who have excellent comprehension and precise strategies concerning the usage of Facebook – and possibly a profile created by a consultant. Nevertheless, they seem to be the underdogs. Between the groups of public figures who have a) a completely public "fan" profile, b) a completely private personal profile, there are the ones who are not maybe A-list celebrities. That group, whose profiles are not updated and administered by any P-R –specialists – not stating that it is a necessity, but a strategy or a privacy settings' comprehension is - are the ones in the biggest risk group.

6 PUBLIC FIGURES ON FACEBOOK - CASE: FINNISH POLITICIANS

6.1 POLITICS ON FACEBOOK

Politics has a lot of visibility on Facebook. There are numerous outspoken groups with highly opinionated members and, which in almost every single case create a counter reaction in a form of a group. I would dare to argue, that the public has never before participated as much in social influencing as they do these days, thanks to social media. Is Facebook actually the best medium after a long while what comes to social influencing – or does it just create unnecessary agitation?

An old proverb cautions not to intermingle religion and politics with friendships. This hardly can be avoided when being in the public eye as a politician. Nevertheless, sometimes questionable political or religious views in one's Facebook profile can affect one's employment, friendships, and certainly the image distributed to others. With politicians, there is a different story – from these groups, e.g., they can find a lot of new ground and new voters.

Barack Obama's case is probably the most known example of how social media can be successfully used for a political campaign. Obama, powered by the web, not advertised on it⁷⁶, created a massively successful brand of himself.

The primary benefit of social media in politics is that the “selling” of political views by politicians is becoming less empowered than the “buying” of political views by citizens. In politics social media provides a way for people to make their own informed political decisions using influence and information from peers as a key driver in their decision-making processes.

Political peers could be local and using a local language, or anywhere in the world using a common language to express political thoughts. Whatever the scope of their interest and actions, social media enables more groups around the world than ever before to think and act together as they shape the outcome of political matters. With social media, any and all politics can become local politics, the politics of one person having personal influence over another (Blossom, 2009: 199).

6.2 STUDY PRESENTATION

In the following, I'm representing my small case study of Finnish politicians using Facebook. I sent a link to a questionnaire via e-mail and Facebook to 82 politicians, among of them were members of parliament, members of European Parliament, youth politicians, city council members and vice members of the above. Out of 82, 28 people answered, making the percent 34%, out of which the percentage of women was 46,43 %, and men 53,57 %. Average age of the respondents was 42 years. Represented parties were: National Coalition Party, Social Democratic Party, Centre Party, The Greens of Finland, True Finns and Finnish Communist Party.

The respondents were randomly chosen using the following criterias:

- The respondent is active in politics
- The respondent is or has been within the last few years either as a member or a vice member of parliament / European parliament / city council / or youth league of a political party
- The respondent has a profile on Facebook
- Every party represented in current parliament line-up has to be included. Other registered parties can also be included.

The case study could be divided into four different sections:

- general usage of Facebook
- friendships
- privacy issues
- strategies, influencing and advertising

6.3 THE USAGE OF FACEBOOK IN GENERAL

6.3.1 GENERAL QUESTIONS

Politicians were asked about their Facebook usage; if they used it for promotional purposes only (Q1) and did they use it for a) networking b) marketing c) campaigning or d) “because it’s relevant” (Q2). In Q2, the respondents could choose either only one or all of the represented options.

7 % used Facebook only for promotional purposes. Out of networking, marketing, campaigning and relevance, networking was chosen by 96% of the respondents. Campaigning proved to be the second popular alternative, gathering 60 %

Marketing purposes were used by 42 % of the respondents, relevance being the least popular alternative by 11 %.

Out of 28 responses in Q3 (Have you been instructed from your party regarding Facebook usage) only 2 answered yes. However, I was notified afterwards that I should have added I don’t know – alternative. The two who answered yes were from different parties, but their party camrates answered no. The same conclusion can be made from Q4 (Does your party have general guidelines for using Facebook). In this case, the only conclusion that can be made is that politicians are not aware if their party has a common lining in Facebook usage.

Only one politician (3 percent of the respondents) didn’t update his profile himself.

6.3.2 REASONS FOR USAGE

In Q6, politicians were inquired the reason why they joined Facebook to begin with. Responses varied from being invited by a friend, curiosity and networking purposis, to interest in social media and because of campaigning. To avoid repetition, I'm not representing all the answers (this applies to nearly every following question).

"Social media is a modern way of communication"
(male, 36)

"Networking and keeping track of current times. I have both created and used social media since the beginning of the internet. (BBS's)"
(male, 49)

"I have always been interested in social media. I was on MySpace before, but I think it is more about advertising than Facebook."
(female, 29)

"I have interest in social media and new networking tools."
(male, 31)

"It is important to participate in new media. People want to be in touch with politicians online too. It's an important part of democracy and being involved."
(female, 42)

"I'm social, I like people and like to spread information about fitness and nutrition"
(female, 54)

"Curiosity, networking, keeping track of things and people"
(female, 41)

"Someone invited me. I was sceptical at first, but it turned out to be fun"
(male, 41)

"My father's family lives in Canada and this is an easy and cheap way to keep in touch with them. I also wanted to find lost friends."
(female, 27)

"Because many of my friends were there and it felt natural to move on from Irc-Galleria." (female, 21)

"My co-workers talked me into it for a year."
(male, 58)

"My assistant recommended it." (male, 43)

"It is considered essential for a politician to have one." (male, 65)

"I wanted to know what my support group was up to." (male, 24)

"My support team thought it was essential concerning the election." (female, 48)

"20 000 people in groups defending social services in Helsinki." (male, 57)

"To help campaigning and communicate with the citizens." (female, 55)

"Just for the election." (male, 55)

6.3.3 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

In Q7, respondents were inquired how has using Facebook appeared advantaging and/or disadvantaging? None of politicians found Facebook disadvantaging, only time consuming. One of the respondents mentioned privacy concerns.

"It is a useful tool for creating and maintaining networks, but updating one's profile is quite time consuming" (male, 36)

"I haven't noticed anything negative. Sometimes it's quicker to reach people through Facebook than email. Facebook takes a lot of time, because people ask a lot of questions and I answer everyone." (female, 54)

"I keep track of the way how people think and act, I also have been able to contact people and groups I otherwise couldn't as a politician" (female, 41)

"I've found many contacts, old friends and people who think like me. Good links to current subjects and quick commenting. Only good experiences" (male, 49)

"I have hired some people through Facebook and have received some work opportunities myself." (male, 41)

"All advantage. It's an excellent promotional and communication tool." (male, 24)

"I see no disadvantages. It's a great way of keeping in touch with friends. I utilised the internet during election." (female, 21)

"Facebook has known advantages. Downsides are its time consuming nature and the risk of private material getting in public." (male, 31)

"I hear people's opinions and tell my own. Spent time is the only disadvantage." (female, 42)

"I keep track of my friends' lives. Some of the council members in Helsinki have Facebook conversations during the meetings." (female, 42)

"Quick way of commenting political decisions. Can make invitations. The more friends, the more work." (male, 57)

"I can contact over 4500 people at once." (male, 55)

"No disadvantages, removed a few "friends" due to their overly negative comments." (female, 48)

"I've noticed that the citizens like to contact me through Facebook, which is a good thing." (female, 55)

6.3.4 TIME SPENT ON FACEBOOK

In Q8, politicians were asked for how long they've had a Facebook profile. Given options were: less than a month / 1 to 3 months / 3 to 6 months / 6 months to 1 yr / 1 – 2 years / over 2 years. A vast majority had been on Facebook at least a year.

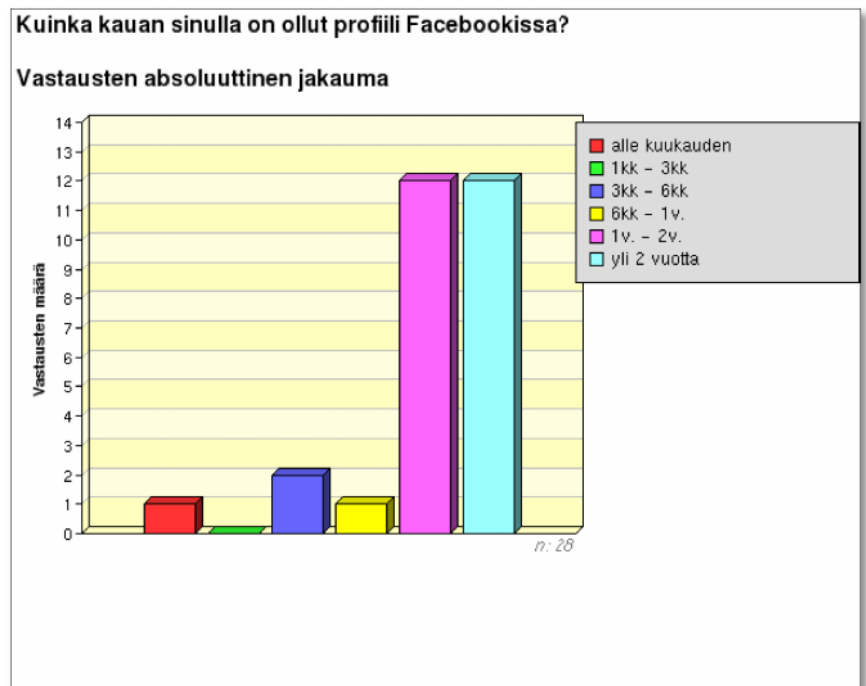


Image 6.1 How long have you had a Facebook profile, absolute distribution of answers

6.4 FRIENDSHIPS

The average amount of respondents' Facebook friends was 1452, smallest amount being 358 and highest 4614. In this section I wanted to determine how politicians conduct with relationships on Facebook; do they randomly accept as friend anyone who dares to request (Q9), if they separated their friends in groups (Q10) and in which situation they have unfriended someone (Q11).

6.4.1 FRIEND ACCEPTANCE POLICY

When asked about their policy of accepting friend requests – if they accepted everyone, many of the respondents required mutual friends, if they didn't know the person. Most of the respondents accepted only people they knew or if a good reason was given. Few politicians accepted all friend requests, some declined requests if the other party had significantly different opinions. 32 % of the respondents separated their friends in groups, 68 % didn't. Following answers were given:

"Yes. Facebook is a way of communicating with my voters. I have declined some foreign frauds and domestic extremists." (male, 24)

"I accept actual people's requests. Sometimes I have to ask who they really are." (female, 54)

"I accept all real persons, not Robin Hood. As a politician I don't root out anyone based on friendship." (female, 42)

"The first 1000 were people I actually know, now I accept everyone whose background can be checked. I can't choose people coming to hear me speak in public, why would I choose people contacting me on Facebook." (female, 41)

"Sometimes even people I don't know at all if they have enough connections to others. I accept about 50%." (male, 41)

"I accept if we have some mutual friends." (female, 38)

"No. I check if I know the person and if we have mutual friends." (male, 43)

"No. I don't accept celebrities or people who just want as much friends as possible." (male, 55)

"No, because of fake profiles and troublemakers." (female, 43)

"No. I do background checking." (male, 58)

"I don't accept if a person's opinions differ significantly from mine." (male, 65)

"I check the persons first. I don't accept right wing extremists or racists." (male, 57)

"Yes, if I know the person. I see no harm in communicating widely on Facebook. Facebook benefits me." (female, 23)

"I don't accept requests from people I don't know. Sometimes I'm not so sure if I know someone even if we have a lot of friends in common." (female, 34)

"Basically only if I really know the person. I don't accept fans or strangers, even if we have mutual friends. Facebook is a personal platform for me." (female, 29)

"No. Only friends, colleagues, schoolmates, collaborators and, naturally, party members." (female, 27)

"No, only people I know." (male, 58)

"No, there must be some real reason." (male, 39)

"No, only about 5%." (female, 48)

"Usually I don't accept anyone I don't know. I also don't like political debate on my wall." (female, 42)

6.4.2 REASONS FOR UNFRIENDING

Politicians' reasons for unfriending people on Facebook were very similar: inappropriate messaging and wall posting, and/or different values. All in all, unfriending was done rarely and only in extreme cases.

"I have unfriended a few who have turned out to be trouble"
(male, 36)

"I've unfriended a few people whose actions have appeared to be inappropriate (not towards me in particular). E.g. racist opinions which I can't approve" (female, 41)

"A few, due to obnoxious wall writing"
(male, 49)

"When someone posts inappropriate messages. At first I accepted some foreign dating suggestions, I have removed them."
(female, 38)

"Very rarely. I have removed some malicious spammers." (male, 24)

"If a person appears to be one of the former (fake profiles and troublemakers)." (female, 43)

"I've removed one person who wrote untrue things about others on my wall" (male, 57)

"Too weird must go." (female, 48)

"Dog profiles and preachers." (male, 55)

"I've removed a few friends, some strangers I had added by mistake and some people whose behaviour was annoying." (female, 29)

"At some point I've added people who are not my friends, but removed them later." (female, 27)

"Former boyfriends." (female, 23)

"No general rule." (male, 39)

"I have removed an old acquaintance." (female, 42)

6.5 PRIVACY ISSUES

In this section, my goal was to clarify how politicians preserve their privacy in a public environment such as Facebook.

6.5.1 GENERAL QUESTIONS

Majority (77 percent) of the respondents knew how to use Facebook's privacy settings, 68 percent answered yes when questioned if they wanted to use them. Those who didn't, explained in Q20, that they "have nothing to hide".

Only 11 percent said that they have a separate private profile. No one had had a profile made of them without their permission. One of the respondents had had someone posing as them on Facebook.

6.5.2 SLANDER AND DEFAMATION

32 percent of politicians had experienced slander. Those who had, also often had a background outside politics, or were known to have strong opinions. 14 percent of the ones who had experienced slander, had not had the insulting material removed.

"I have received all kinds of negative feedback."
(male, 36)

"Pretty ordinary, one hate page and general badmouthing in groups. I usually don't do anything about it, because there is so much of it."
(female, 34)

"Inappropriate commenting on my opinions."
(female, 23)

"All kinds, but that's politics. You mustn't be too intimidated. I haven't even tried to remove offensive material."
(male, 24)

"Insulting private messages and discussions."
(male, 31)

"Some mocking a year or two ago. I contacted the people who did it and they apologized and removed the material."
(female, 27)

"Of political nature, also distribution of totally untrue information."
(male, 57)

6.5.3 HOW IS PRIVACY PROTECTED?

Using privacy settings divided a lot of opinions. Some didn't pay any attention of their privacy, as others kept extremely strict settings. Main rule among politicians seemed to be keeping private matters to a minimum.

"All my information is not public, and I don't discuss my private affairs on Facebook." (male, 36)

"Only friends can read my profile." (female, 34)

"None. It annoys me when politicians have an assistant updating their profile, just trying to exploit" (female, 54)

"I act on a no-nonsense basis, I don't add information that isn't already public, I pay particular attention to photos"

"Only friends can see my profile. I don't define "friends" that strictly" (male, 49)

"Even finding my name is made difficult. I divide people in groups quite strictly" (male, 41)

"Nothing in particular."
(female, 38)

"I don't pay attention to my privacy."
(male, 43)

"I don't share my private matters." (male, 65)

"My profile is totally public. I don't publish anything private on Facebook." (male, 24)

"Only about 20% of my Facebook friends can see my status updates or my photos. Others see only one profile picture and basic info." (female, 21)

"I use the settings and as a rule don't put anything on Facebook I wouldn't put in a newspaper." (female, 43)

"I don't really know how to do it and don't know who could teach me." (male, 58)

"I don't tell about private matters, I use it mostly as a politician."
(female, 42)

"I don't." (male, 58)

"By restricting the way my profile can be viewed." (male, 39)

"There's nothing in my profile I want to hide." (female, 55)

"Sometimes I limit the way my profile shows, when people request friendship I always visit their profiles." (male, 55)

"Very strict privacy settings." (female, 42)

6.6 STRATEGIES, ADVERTISING AND INFLUENCING

6.6.1 STRATEGIES

In Q21, politicians were inquired about their possible strategy for Facebook usage. Most of the respondents didn't have any other strategy than common sense.

"I use Facebook with care and only when sober" (male, 36)

"Same strategy as when going to a bar: chatting with friends" (female, 34)

"Actual people. Businesses as friends is just advertising. My principle is to answer every message." (female, 54)

"No. Council members are ordinary people who use Facebook mainly to communicate with friends." (female, 38)

"No. It's plain fun!" (male, 43)

"No, but I have a strategy for the internet in general." (female, 21)

"I'm trusting my instinct." (male, 24)

"Not really. I keep travel diaries and add a picture and a short story daily." (male, 58)

"I have my own profile and a group. In my profile I tell my news, in the group I tend to rise political discussion." (female, 42)

"I use Facebook to inform and communicate." (female, 55)

"Expressing my values and playing Mafia Wars." (male, 55)

"Just to be involved. I plan to make groups for colleagues and such. (male, 55)

"I use it as a tool for my political work and networking." (male, 57)

6.6.2 INFLUENCING ON FACEBOOK

82 percent of politicians thought that it is possible to influence through Facebook. It seemed that it is not a only an easy channel to reach many people at once, but also

"Acknowledgement about problems can be increased through groups, and joining a group can strengthen your identity."
(female, 34)

"Because Facebook gets covered in the media so much and a lot of people have a profile. It represents widely the public point of view. We must fight for good things and make our opinions get noticed."
(female, 54)

"As a bad example: Facebook dockers during the recent strike."
(female, 41)

"If a group has 30000 members, the media may notice it"
(male, 49)

"There seemed to be a significance during the dockers' strike."
(female, 38)

"This is a modern way of networking, expressing one's opinion and influencing." (male, 43)

"Everything has an effect on everything." (male, 65)

"It's direct influencing in the same way as demonstrations and petitions. You can get support for your ideas through groups and fan pages, and be encouraged to take political action." (female, 21)

"They rise discussion and in many cases they make it possible to make it to the decision level." (female, 43)

"The more stupid people, the more stupidity." (male, 58)

"Us politicians follow the people's opinion on every forum."
(female, 42)

"You can create polls and discussions among your friends." (male, 39)

"Social media appears to be an important way of influencing."
(female, 55)

"They can reach a lot of people quick." (male, 55)

"They can rise issues and mobilise masses, but action outside the internet is also needed." (male, 57)

"The media and the politicians take some people's outbursts too seriously." (female, 42)

Some of the respondents stated, however, that it is only possible to some extent.

"They (groups) have significance, but rarely and only to some extent. Finnish dockers' Facebook group had significance."
(male, 36)

"It depends." (female, 27)

"Only a little." (male, 58)

18 percent didn't consider it possible, indicating that groups are a different thing than taking action.

"It's easy to join any group, but making a group take action is another thing." (male, 41)

"They're just groups. One can demonstrate with them but they have no political substance." (male, 24)

"I've even written a column about groups that annoy me. Group members just mostly express a mutual sense of humour and don't actually aim to change things."

"The possibility to influence through Facebook only is very small."
(male, 58)

"Most online opinions are based on feeling, not knowledge."
(female, 48)

6.6.3 ADVERTISING, CAMPAIGNING AND P-R

In this section, my goal was to clarify how politicians use Facebook for campaigning, advertising purposes and P-R. Because of upcoming parliamentary election, the politicians were asked how do they planned to utilize Facebook in their campaign.

"There will probably be a group"
(male, 36)

"I don't plan to be, but even if I did I wouldn't ruin my friendships with spamming"
(female, 34)

"Maybe just a personal profile, I don't like the idea of an "election page". Let's see"
(female, 54)

"The current way, maybe I'll create a fan page or a support group"
(female, 41)

"if I'm a candidate, through my fan page. I will also consider Facebook advertising" (male, 49)

"I may advertise on Facebook, I haven't decided yet." (female, 42)

"I can communicate with my supporters through a fan page."
(male, 31)

"If I'll be a candidate, Facebook will be an essential part of my campaign." (female, 23)

"My support team will probably create a support page." (female, 48)

"I plan to do so and hope to find a support group in my friends."
(male, 58)

"I tell about my agenda and tell short stories about my tour."
(male, 43)

"Inform about my campaign." (male, 58)

"I remind the importance of voting." (male, 39)

"It will be my main communication channel." (male, 55)

"Informing about occasions." (male, 58)

Q24 clarified what kind of role did Facebook have in politicians P-R. Most of the respondents neither didn't use Facebook for P.R, its role wasn't significant, or there was simply a link to their home pages on their profile or fan page. However, many people seemed to appreciate Facebook as a promotional tool, but were uncertain how to use it.

"I naturally let people know that I've had a profile for a long time and not just for the election" (female, 54)

"A link to my fan page on my home page (male, 49)

"It's a part of my public profile." (male, 43)

"It's an essential part of informing about my work." (female, 43)

"Facebook is a useful promotional tool in any election." (female, 27)

"A means of communication along with telephone and email." (male, 39)

"I try to keep the group pages up to date." (female, 42)

"Not noticed." (male, 55)

"A small one." (male, 58)

"I haven't planned yet." (male, 57)

"I don't do PR." (female, 42)

"I don't know." (male, 58)

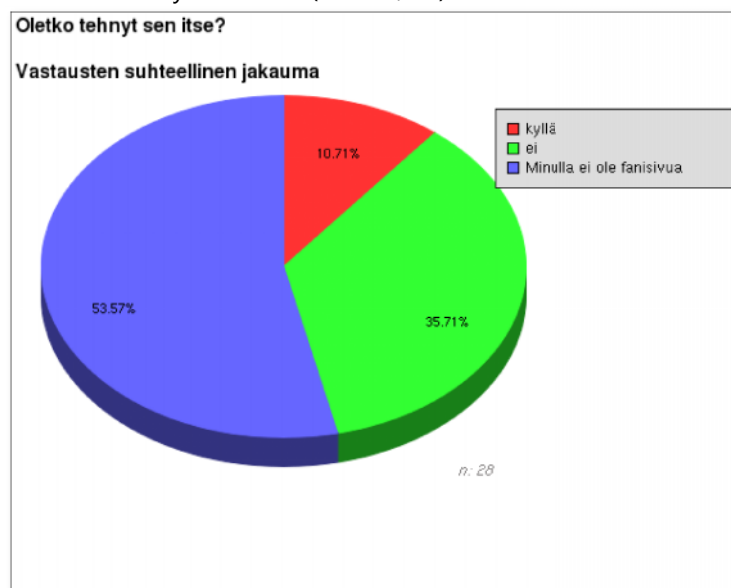


Image 6.2 Fan page, relative distribution

In Q26, politicians were inquired if they had a fan page, and how many fans they have? 36 percent had a fan page, the amount of fans varied from 125 to over 1500. Fan pages were mostly created by someone else than the politician himself. One respondent mentioned, that she also had a support group of 1659 members.

"I don't know, I have 3 fan pages which I don't follow" (female, 34)

"Over 1500. I was asked for permission, it's about fitness, nutrition and mental endurance" (female, 54)

"1280 at the moment. I think the internet will have a more and more significant role in all elections. I think online voting should be made possible too. I'm all for true democracy, freedom of speech and fairness." (male, 49)

Those who didn't have a fan page, were asked a disambiguation for the reasons (Q27). Responses varied from cultural reasons to not even knowing about the tool.

"I'm not that self centered yet, but a fan page is probably coming up" (male, 36)

"It seems a bit strange in Finland. I will consider one for the next election." (female, 41)

"Things are not that far yet. There are plans though." (female, 21)

"I have a support group and that's enough." (female, 27)

"I didn't create one during the election because I thought there would be embarrassingly few fans. Who needs those anyway?" (female, 38)

"Because fan pages are embarrassing unless you are someone really big, like Barack Obama." (female, 29)

"I wouldn't be anyone's fan myself." (female, 42)

"I don't want to have one." (male, 41)

"I haven't ever heard about fan pages." (male, 65)

"I don't know how to create one." (male, 58)

"I don't need one." (male, 58)

6.7 CONCLUSION

Politicians use Facebook mainly for networking and campaigning. They either don't know, or their parties don't have a common lining in Facebook usage. Politicians update their profiles themselves .

The reasons for joining Facebook in the first place varied between curiosity, interest in social media, networking purposis and being invited by a friend. Some politicians joined Facebook only for campaigning purposes, because it was considered essential for a politician to have a profile.

Facebook was considered an advantaging tool. None of the respondents found it disadvantaging, only time consuming. One politician brought up privacy concerns. A vast majority had been on Facebook at least a year.

The average amount of respondents' Facebook friends was 1452, smallest amount being 358 and highest 4614.

When asked about their policy of accepting friend requests – if they accepted everyone, many of the respondents required mutual friends, if they didn't know the person. Most of the respondents accepted only people they knew or if a good reason was given. Few politicians accepted all friend requests, some declined requests if the other party had significantly different opinions. 32 % of the respondents separated their friends in groups.

Politicians' reasons for unfriending people on Facebook were very similar: inappropriate messaging and wall posting. All in all, unfriending was done rarely and only in extreme cases.

Majority (77 percent) of the respondents knew how to use Facebook's privacy settings, 68 percent answered yes when questioned if they wanted to use them. Those who didn't, explained that they "have nothing to hide". There were several different views of protecting one's privacy. Most of politicians kept a profile only visible to friends. Only a few had extremely strict privacy settings in use. Some didn't pay at all attention to their privacy on Facebook. The most common lining seemed to be not sharing one's private affairs.

32 percent of politicians had experienced slander. Those who had, also often had a background outside politics, or were known to have strong opinions. 14 percent of the ones who had experienced slander, had not had the insulting material removed.

Only 11 percent said that they have a separate private profile. No one had had a profile made of them without their permission. One of the respondents had had someone posing as them on Facebook.

Few politicians had a strategy for Facebook usage. Common sense was the most popular alternative. Those who had a strategy, professed, that they use Facebook to inform, communicate and expressing their values.

Most of the respondents didn't use Facebook for P.R either, its role wasn't significant, or there was simply a link to their home pages on their profile or fan page. However, many people seemed to appreciate Facebook as a promotional tool, but were uncertain how to use it. The upcoming election in mind, many of the respondents were eager to utilize Facebook, especially fan pages, or even using it as their main communication tool.

Up until now, 36 percent of politicians had a fan page, the amount of fans varied from 125 to over 1500. Fan pages were mostly created by someone else than the politician himself. Those who didn't have a fan page, didn't find it necessary or found it a bit strange.

82 percent of politicians thought that it is possible to influence through Facebook, mainly because it reaches a lot of people quickly. Those who didn't found it mostly demonstrating, not having any political substance.

Based on the study, I would give politicians the following advice:

- Do not accept as a friend anyone who you don't know
- Don't keep as your only strategy the fact that you don't share your private affairs
- Keep strict privacy settings and separate your friends into groups
- Keep a separate public and private profile, or even better: keep a private profile and a fan page. You can communicate with your supporters through your fan page. Using that tool, you can also share updates e.g. about your campaign
- Follow Facebook: it has many groups reflecting citizens' opinions and important issues. Pay regard to these issues when campaigning.

7 OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

7.1 ABOUT FRIENDSHIPS

Collecting friends is the main appeal of many social networking sites. In the virtual culture of narcissism, the composition of our “friends” network has become a key identity signature. It’s a social barometer that validates self-esteem, confers status and measures social capital.

Still, gathering a large number of Facebook friends is not always a sign of effective networking; several companies and organizations create Facebook profiles instead of fan pages, trying to befriend as many people as possible. Public figures, depending on their policy, accept as a friend anyone who dares to ask, and fictional characters and even pets also have their own profiles.

Another case, which has bred several opinions, is the question whether there is an optimal number of Facebook friends? Dunbar’s Number (150) is a cognitive limit to the number of individuals with whom any person can maintain stable relationships. During the age of Facebook and questions of relationships inside it, it has regularly been brought up and argued.

Facebook friendships are an excellent example of acquiring social capital. People are status-seekers, and status attainment is a powerful motivator on social networking sites. In the virtual world, status is not assigned, it is earned. The difference between real-world and virtual-world status resides in the link between social status and identity. In the online world, social status is highly personalized. Moreover, it is not based on values, but on facts. Social capital is no different from economic capital, it is an investment in social relations with expected returns. Individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits.

A good network should not be a sum of primary social ties; rather, it should be a combination of both “strong ties” and “weak ties”. Strong ties, such as family and intimate friends, are close relationships that provide emotional support or scarce resources. Weak ties, such as acquaintances, are loose relationships that provide information or opportunity but seldom emotional support. Contrary to common sense, “the strength of weak ties” is vital in everyday life.

As in every group or community, the concept of hierarchy manifests itself. In virtual communities, the concept of popularity is often connected to the user's activity, which can be seen as the amount of friends (Facebook) or as a high number of posts (forum).

What are the factors that make someone socially attractive on Facebook? Many type of advice on how to become popular is available. A research found heritability in "in-degree", "transitivity" and "centrality", another research concluded that so called "bad boys" are found socially more attractive than others.

The social compensation or "Poor-Get-Richer" hypothesis suggests that those who have poor social networks and social anxiety can get more benefit by disclosing themselves freely and creating new relationships through the Internet. Internet benefits introverts more than extraverts. "Rich-Get-Richer" or the social enhancement hypothesis states that the internet primarily benefits extraverted individuals.

On Facebook we tend to like people to whom we self-disclose our intimate information. The key, however, is not in the quantity of self-disclosure (breadth) that makes us like our Facebook friends, but in the quality (depth). We tell our personal secrets to those that we like. The key seems to be in the intimacy of self-disclosure, the quality and not the quantity.

Many bloggers and heavy users of Facebook have accomplished to make observations of stereotypes, usually presented with a tongue-in-cheek –attitude and humor. Although being very unofficial information, these observations still reflect the psychosocial views of many people: there must be some reason for them for being popular and amusing. That reason obviously indicates there being a kernel of truth.

Facebook is not only a network for real people, it is also filled with profiles of fictional characters, profiles of celebrities created by someone else than the person himself and of course, profiles of real celebrities.

Also defamation cases are quite common on Facebook, and their controlling is difficult, e.g. the fake profiles and defamating groups for Astrid Thors.

Though virtual relationships demand a mutual acceptance, one's needs, procedures, life situation, friendships and privacy strategy may change. The most proper procedure on unfriending depends on the expectations you and your networks have on the content and policies of communication. When it becomes awkward, the reason usually is the diversity of the circle of friends, which may contain everything from colleagues and random acquaintances to good friends and family.

7.2 ABOUT PRIVACY

While real life communication lets us share different things with different people, online social networking has tended to have two modes: public or private.

Facebook and Twitter are changing data privacy rules. On social networks and blogs, people share vast amounts of information about themselves. Marketers, meanwhile, are developing increasingly better tools to exploit information about what individuals do online.

It has often been proposed in the media and popular science that narcissism might be the reason for self-exhibition on social media such as social networking sites.

In June 2009, Facebook announced that they are renewing service's privacy settings. First major change had been the Everyone –update, which became a default setting in December. The Everyone –update forces user to be proactive and to change their settings, unless they wanted their status updates, among others, to be available for the entire world to see. At the same time, Facebook eliminated regional networks and deleted the option to set fan pages as private.

Facebook executives explained that the site is changing, our userbase is changing and the world is changing. According to them, Facebook userbase is growing in size and people are sharing more information with more people. Changes were widely criticized, but were also found inevitable. According to one of the critics, Facebook is itself a major agent of social change and not only reflecting the changes that society is ungoing. Maybe Facebook, with all its power, makes the rules and society follows, not the contrary?

In December 2009, Electronic Privacy Information Center, filed a formal complaint with the Federal Trade Commission over Facebook's decision. Also in December, Facebook announced that only 15-20 percent of its (then) 350 million users have ever modified their privacy settings.

Is it really a necessity for a Facebook user to be computer savvy, and moreover - can it be taken for granted?

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg claimed public being the new social norm. “The age of privacy is over”, proclaimed Zuckerberg. This statement has caused a lot of discussion, e.g. it has been suggested that Facebook is competing against Twitter.

Zuckerberg emphasized, that world is changing, and Facebook with it. He said that if Facebook was starting out now, sharing with everybody – rather than with a small group of friends – would be the starting point.

The privacy paradox is a phenomenon designating the contradiction between information shared online and the necessity to keep it private. Users want to be able to control what information they provide and to whom it is visible. That's the essence of privacy, and it's still very much in demand. Larry Downes argues that the real privacy paradox, however, is “between the imminent privacy apocalypse preached with increased hysteria by a coalition of legal scholars, security companies, journalists and a small fringe of paranoid privacy crazies and the reality of a much more modest set of problems which for most users present little to no problem at all.”

The “third privacy paradox”, is my own hypothesis of public figures as their private selves on Facebook. There is no such thing as a Facebook VIP lounge: we all are on the same page.

7.3 ABOUT POLITICIANS

A questionnaire was sent to 82 politicians, among of them were members of parliament, members of European Parliament, youth politicians, city council members and vice members of the above.

Out of 82, 28 people answered, making the percent 34. Average age of the respondents was 42 years. Represented parties were: National Coalition Party, Social Democratic Party, Centre Party, The Greens of Finland, True Finns and Finnish Communist Party.

Politicians use Facebook mainly for networking and campaigning and update their profiles themselves. The reasons for joining Facebook in the first place varied between curiosity, interest in social media, networking purposes and being invited by a friend. Facebook was considered an advantaging tool. A vast majority had been on Facebook at least a year.

The average amount of respondents' Facebook friends was 1452. Most of the respondents accepted as friends only people they knew or if a good reason was given. Politicians unfriended people on Facebook rarely and only in extreme cases.

Majority (77 percent) of the respondents knew how to use Facebook's privacy settings, 68 percent answered yes when questioned if they wanted to use them. Those who didn't, explained that they "have nothing to hide". There were several different views of protecting one's privacy. Most of politicians kept a profile only visible to friends. Only a few had extremely strict privacy settings in use. Some didn't pay at all attention to their privacy on Facebook. Thirty-two percent of politicians had experienced slander.

Few politicians had a strategy for Facebook usage. Most of the respondents didn't use Facebook for P.R either. The upcoming election in mind, many of the respondents were eager to utilize Facebook, especially fan pages, or even using it as main communication tool. Up until now, 36 percent of politicians had a fan page. Those who didn't have a fan page, didn't find it necessary or found it a bit strange.

82 percent of politicians thought that it is possible to influence through Facebook. Those who didn't found it mostly demonstrating, not having any political substance.

7.4 SELF-EVALUATION

I am extremely proud of myself that I got this far. I wrote a thesis which is extensive – so extensive that it is, when it comes to the amount of pages, my second largest work (largest being a soap-opera story I wrote at the age of 13). The content is clear, coherent and, even interestingly written, if you may – at least from time to time. Researching politicians was not originally my favourite target group, instead I could have written about friendships for ages. I hope that my interest in the subject was detected between the lines. The best thing, however (my favourite word in this thesis - after Facebook – naturally), what came out of this was that I realized that academic research is my future. I don't think this is a bad start for it.

This thesis encountered several problems, out of which time was the biggest enemy. Once again, I under-estimated my schedule, as in practice I worked mostly during the last three days before the thesis was due. I also over-estimated the amount of references, buying dozens of books and searching for weeks for online references. I ended up using the latter, minimizing the amount of literature, which felt like a failure. Also my computer kept on crashing, and until the last minute, I was certain that this file would be lost completely.

It felt that I really got into the theory far too late. When sending the query to politicians, and having already received their answers, I had tons of better questions in mind that I should have inquired. I would have wanted to interview someone (an adult) who collects friends. Also, the amount of time restricted my ability to analyze the theory. Now I feel like there is too much references and too little of my own ideas. Also, the thesis concept was not only very wide, but also that kind that was changing constantly: every week there were news about Facebook. I tried my best to follow them, but at some point a line had to be drawn.

This thesis can either be a success or a total failure. It cannot be anything in between. As I said to a friend of mine yesterday, this isn't a bachelor thesis of media production, this is more like a small-scale master thesis of social psychology – too extensive and nothing to do with economics. Whether it is a good or a bad thing, it is not up to me to decide.

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9 APPENDICES

Questionnaire for Finnish politicians

Name

Age

Gender

Party

Q: Do you use Facebook for promotional purposes only? A: yes/no

Q: Have you been instructed by your party regarding Facebook usage? A: yes/no

Q: Does your party have general guidelines for using Facebook? A: yes/no

Q: Do you update your profile yourself? A: yes/no

Q: Do you know how to use Facebook privacy settings? A: yes/no

Q: Do you want to use the privacy settings? A: yes/no

Q: Do you have separate profiles for private and public use? A: yes/no

Q: Has someone made a profile for your person without your permission? A: yes/no

Q: Has someone been posing as you on Facebook? A: yes/no

Q: Have you experienced slander? A: yes/no

Q: If you have, what has it been like? A:

Q: Has the matter been dealt with (has the insulting material been removed)? A:

Q: Do you separate your Facebook friends in groups? A: yes/no

Q: Do you use Facebook for: social networking / marketing / campaigning / because "it's relevant"?

Q: Why do you have a Facebook profile to begin with? A:

Q: How has your profile appeared advantaging/disadvantaging? A:

Q: For how long have you had a Facebook profile? A: less than a month / 1 to 3 months / 3 to 6 months / 6 months to 1 yr / 1 – 2 years / over 2 years

Q: How do you take care of your privacy on Facebook (e.g. which privacy settings do you use)? A:

Q: Do you accept all friend requests? Why? A:

Q: If you do, under which circumstances have you been unfriended someone? A:

Q: Do you have a specific strategy for Facebook? What kind? A:

Q: If you plan to be a candidate in the next parliamentary election, how do you plan to utilize Facebook in your campaign? A:

Q: What role does Facebook have in your PR? A:

Q: Do you think that Facebook political groups have actual social significance? A:

Q: Why?

Q: Do you have a fan page? A: yes/no

Q: Have you created it yourself? A: yes/no/ I don't have a fan page

Q: If you have a fan page, how many fans do you have? A:

Q: If you don't have a fan page, why? A: