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Facebook : friend or foe

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Abstract

Facebook is an online social networking site that is growing with popularity daily. Due to the current lack of research on this social network the researcher has proposed the following study. This study would survey three populations: high school students, college students, and community members. Areas of interest are: communication, miscommunication, self-esteem, introversion, extroversion, friendships, long distance relationships, and closure.

Facebook: Friend or Foe

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Master of Arts

by

Angela Draeger

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Date Approved

Advisor/Director of Research Paper



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Abstract

Facebook is an online social networking site that is growing with popularity daily. Due to the current lack of research on this social network the researcher has proposed the following study. This study would survey three populations: high school students, college students, and community members. Areas of interest are: communication, miscommunication, self-esteem, introversion, extroversion, friendships, long distance relationships, and closure.

Facebook: Friend or Foe

Over the years social networking sites like Facebook have increased in popularity (Eijnden, Meerkerk, Vermulst, Spijkerman, & Engels, 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Coyle & Vaughn, 2008; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Kapner, 2009; Ross, Orr, Sisc, Arseneault, Simmering, & Orr, 2009; Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2009). Facebook currently has over fifty-seven million active members with an average of 250,000 members joining daily. The typical user spends twenty minutes a day on the site with two-thirds of users logging in daily (Steinfield, 2009; Ellison et al., 2007). Facebook members create an online profile and are able to view the profiles of others and make comments. Members are encouraged to maintain relationships with other users by writing them messages, updating ones daily status, and adding friends. Users are able to find friends, former classmates, people with similar interests, and join virtual groups based on common interests (Kramer & Winter, 2008; Ellison et al., 2007).

Social networking sites have been created to help humans maintain relationships that are needed to survive. Online sites such as Facebook give users the opportunity to create emotional bonds without meeting people face-to-face or communicating over the phone. Ellison et al. (2007) found that the majority of Facebook users utilize online relationships to support offline relationships. People are allowed to stay in contact over distances and in spite of life changes. Such relationships can prove to be beneficial in the future and often decrease ones feelings of loneliness. Researchers Coyle et al.

(2008) found that although these sites foster friendship and communication, face-to-face communication cannot be replaced by online communication.

Relationships

From an early age, forming connections is necessary for healthy intimacy with others. Healthy development depends on forming these connections with family and friends. Not forming these connections can create turmoil and loneliness making individuals less able to adjust to life transitions (St. Clair Ponds, 1998). Good communication is an important factor in making these connections. Communication is about getting our needs met through and with others thereby building healthy relationships (Khalsa, 1996). Valkenburg et al. (2007) found that adolescents regularly communicate with friends both online and offline. Friends that communicate online felt closer to these friends. Researchers also found that lonely adolescents found online communication more effective than offline communication.

H1: Facebook usage increases social communication.

Cross-sex friendships can be complicated and online communication creates more complications. Conversations are often misunderstood or taken out of context. These difficulties in communication make it difficult for cross-sexed friends to communicate a shift from friends to romantic relationship online (Guerrero et al., 2009).

H2: Facebook usage increases miscommunication in relationships.

H3: Facebook usage decreases the ability to obtain closure in a relationship.

H4: Facebook usage decreases face-to-face contact and phone communication on confrontational situations.

Researchers found that proximity is one of the most important characteristics in maintaining a casual friendship (Guerreor et al., 2009). Other researchers have found no differences in self-reported levels of relationship satisfaction, intimacy, trust, or degree of relationship process in relationships that are not geographically close (Guldner & Swensen, 1995). Social networking sites enable people to maintain long distance relationship (Eijnden et al., 2008).

H5: Facebook usage increases the ability to maintain long distance relationships.

H6: Facebook usage increases the likelihood of following through with a long distance relationship.

Extroversion and Introversion

Extroverts tend to have more online usage than introverts. A person that is extroverted will post more blogs, is more likely to have a homepage, and is more likely to disclose more personal information and opinions online (Kramer et al., 2008).

Extroverts benefit from online experiences and are more likely to find one's true identity offline (Ellison et al., 2008). Intimate topics are easier for introverts to discuss online leading to a decrease in social anxiety (Valkenburg et al., 2007). Thus making introverts more likely to find one's true identity online (Ellison et al., 2008). Introverts also tend to

prefer communication online as it satisfies their need for control in social situations. This control decreases the difficulty that introverts often have developing friendships (Kramer et al., 2008).

H7: Facebook usage is positively correlated with extroversion and negatively correlated with introversion.

Self-esteem

Social networking sites have been linked with increasing ones self-esteem which is a needed characteristic for humans. Facebook users with high and low self-esteem both try to look popular online. Elaborate homepage designs, large numbers of friends, and obtaining membership in online groups help to increase self-esteem. People with low self-esteem are even more likely to engage in these activities (Kramer et al., 2008).

Mixed research has been found on people mirroring online and offline personality characteristic. Some researchers found that people are the same online as offline. While others have found that people often will apply constraints online they would not offline. People with low self-esteem are more likely to be self protective to try and lessen social disapproval (Raacke, 2008).

H8: Facebook usage is positively correlated with self-esteem.

Methods

Participants

The researcher purposes several sets of participants. The first set of participants would be high school students randomly selected from three local high schools with varying demographics. The surveys would be administered, with approval of the school, during classes. The survey would be administered to a class of freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors at each school. The numbers would be proportionate to class size.

The second set of participants would be college students at a local university. Students would be randomly selected. Surveys would be sent out to students through their university email addresses. The surveys would be sent out to one-hundred freshman, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

The third set of participants would be members of the community. Five hundred surveys would be sent out in the mail. The participants will be randomly selected and vary in age ranging from sixteen to thirty.

Selection size is larger in the college student and community member groups due to the anticipated lower response rate. All participants will be given the option of completing the survey. No compensation will be provided for the participants.

Materials

The survey that would be administered has not yet been written as the researcher would need to purchase reliable and valid surveys to add to questions about Facebook

usage. Survey questions will be randomly ordered due to the possibility of waning interests by participants in later portions of the survey. Attached are surveys that some researchers have used. The same survey will be administered to all participants.

Design and Procedure

Surveys will be administered at each of the three schools in one day. All emailed and mailed surveys will be sent out at the same time. Response rates of lower than 75 percent on emailed surveys and 50 percent on mailed surveys will result in a second set of surveys being sent.

Participants will be given instructions before the survey is administered. Participants that are receiving either an emailed or mailed survey will be provided with an instruction sheet. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions either in person, by telephone, or over email.

Discussion

This study would have limitations some which cannot be predicted. Facebook was originally created as a social network of college students. It was not until 2004 that membership was open to the general public. Another limitation is the lack of research that has been done on Facebook and the limitations found in the research. The majority of the research that has been done focuses on concerns with privacy. Studies on social networks are also often limited to participants on a single college campus. Additionally the majority of research has been done via survey.

The possibilities of future research are endless as popularity in social networking sites is constantly growing. As popularity of online social networking sites increases so does the memberships of people in varying age groups. Future research should focus on implications for younger memberships. Research should also focus on college alumni and people over thirty. Additional research needs to be done on socializations in relation to online social networking site.

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Appendix A

Retrieved from Ellison et al., 2007.

A) Do you currently have a Facebook account?			Yes	No	
B) If no, why not?			Do not have regular computer access		
			Do not have time		
			Not interested		
			Have never heard of Facebook before		
			Other		
<i>If you answered "Yes" to question A, please continue to item #1. If No, thank you for your time.</i>					
<i>The first part of this questionnaire is to assess your basic use and attitudes towards Facebook</i>					
1. On average, approximately how many minutes per day do you spend on Facebook?					
10 or less	10–30	31–60	1–2 h	2–3 h	3+ h
2. Facebook is part of my everyday activity					

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. I dedicate a part of my daily schedule to Facebook				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged on to Facebook for awhile				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. I feel I am part of the Facebook community				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. I would be sad if Facebook shut down				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<i>This section of the questionnaire is to assess your settings for specific security functions of Facebook</i>				
8a. Who can see your Facebook profile?				

Only my friends	All Networks and Friends	Some networks/all friends	Don't know
8b. Who can see your Facebook profile with respect to the following profile pictures?			
Status Updates: <i>same scale as 8a</i>			
Videos tagged of you: <i>same scale as 8a</i>			
Photos tagged of you: <i>same scale as 8a</i>			
Online Status: <i>same scale as 8a</i>			
Wall: <i>same scale as 8a</i>			
9. What level of security do you have with respect to who can search for you on Facebook?			
<i>Same scale as 8a</i>			
10a. Do you use the Block List to prevent certain people from searching for you?			
Yes	No	Don't Know	
10b. If yes, how many? _____			
10c. If yes, why?			

-To avoid certain people whom I do not want to communicate with

-To prevent certain people from "stalking" me

-Other

11a. Do you use the Limited Profile List to prevent certain people from seeing certain aspects of your profile?

Yes

No

Don't Know

11b. If yes, how many people are on your Limited Profile List?

11c. If yes, why?

-To prevent certain people from seeing more private information

-To prevent certain people from "stalking" me

-Other (please describe)

12. Do you provide your mailing address on your Facebook profile?

Yes

No

13. Do you provide a phone number on your Facebook profile?

Yes

No

This section of the questionnaire is to assess your use of the basic Facebook functions and applications.

14. Approximately how many friends are on your Facebook Friends List?

15. How many Networks do you belong to?

16a. Approximately how many Photo Albums do you presently have on Facebook?

16b. What do you post pictures of?

Family:	Yes	No
Significant Other:	Yes	No
Friends:	Yes	No
Pets:	Yes	No
Parties:	Yes	No
Myself:	Yes	No
Scenery:	Yes	No

Sporting Events	Yes	No
Art	Yes	No
Other	Yes	No

16c. How frequently do you post pictures of:

Family:	More than once daily
	once daily
	2 or more times weekly
	once weekly
	twice monthly
	once monthly
	less than once monthly
	a few times per year
	less than once per year
Significant Other:	same as "family"
Friends:	same as "family"
Pets:	same as "family"

Parties:	same as "family"
Myself:	same as "family"
Scenery:	same as "family"
Sporting Events:	same as "family"
Art:	same as "family"
Other:	same as "family"
16d. How often do you comment on other people's photos?	
same as 16c	
17a. Which function do you prefer more:	
Facebook Wall	Facebook Messages
17b. Why?	

18a. How often do you post on other people's Walls?	
same as 16c	
18b. Whose Walls do you post most frequently on?	
People from your friends list/people who belong to the same groups you	

do/random people

18c. How often do you check your own Wall?

same as 16c

19a. How often do you send private Facebook messages?

same as 16c

19b. To whom do you send private Facebook messages to most frequently?

People from your friends list

People who belong to the same groups you do

Random people

20a. How often do you "Poke" people on Facebook?

same as 16c

20b. Whom do you "Poke" most frequently?

People from your friends list

People who belong to the same groups you do

Random people

21a. How many Facebook Groups do you belong to?

21b. How many of these groups are "hidden"?		

21c. How many Facebook Groups have you created?		

22a. How many events have you attended that were coordinated on Facebook?		

22b. How many Facebook events have you created?		

23. How often do you change your Facebook status?		
Same as 16c		
24a. Do you use email notifications to alert you to whether someone has contacted you via Facebook?		
Yes	No	Don't Know
24b. For which functions?		
When someone sends me a	Yes	No

message		
When someone adds me as a friend	Yes	No
When someone writes on my wall	Yes	No
When someone "pokes" me	Yes	No
When someone tags me in a photo	Yes	No
When someone tags me in a note	Yes	No
When someone tags one of my photos	Yes	No
When someone invites me to join a group	Yes	No
When someone invites me to join an event	Yes	No
When someone requests to join a group of which I am an admin	Yes	No
When someone request to join an event of which I am an admin	Yes	No

When someone comments on my notes	Yes	No
When someone comments on my photos	Yes	No
m	Yes	No
When someone comments on a photo of me	Yes	No
When someone comments after me in a photo	Yes	No
When someone comments after me in a note	Yes	No
When someone comments after me in a posted item	Yes	No
When someone tags me in a video	Yes	No
When someone comments on my video	Yes	No
When someone comments on a video of me	Yes	No
When someone replies to my discussion board post	Yes	No

When someone posts on the wall of an event I admin	Yes	No			
25. What is your most preferred function/application of Facebook?					
-Photos					
-Notes					
-Groups					
-Events					
-Posted Items					
-Marketplace					
-Wall					
-Messages					
-Other					
<i>This section of the questionnaire is to assess more general attitudes of Facebook</i>					
26. Approximately how long have you had your Facebook profile?					
6 months	1 year	1.5 years	2 years	2.5 years	3+ years
27. How satisfied are you with Facebook, overall?					

Not satisfied at all	Barely satisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
28. Why do you like Facebook?				
-It is how I communicate with my current friends				
-It provides a distraction from my schoolwork				
-It allows me to communicate with people from my past				
-It allows me to collect information on people I am interested in				
-It provides me with information (e.g., in groups)				
-Other				

Appendix B

Retrieved from Raacke et al., 2008

Contents of Online Questionnaire

1. How long have you been using Facebook™?
 - a) less than 1 month
 - b) less than 6 months
 - c) less than a year
 - d) more than a year
 - e) I do not use Facebook™
2. How important is it for you to look popular on Facebook™?
 - a) very important
 - b) important
 - c) somewhat important
 - d) neutral/neither
 - e) not very important
 - f) not important at all
3. Compared to other Facebook™ users, are you more popular, less popular, or about the same?
 - a. more popular
 - b. less popular
 - c. about the same
4. How popular would you consider yourself on Facebook™?
 - a) very popular
 - b) popular
 - c) somewhat popular
 - d) neutral/neither
 - e) somewhat unpopular
 - f) unpopular
 - g) very unpopular
5. How popular would you consider yourself offline?
 - a) very popular
 - b) popular
 - c) neutral/neither
 - d) unpopular
 - e) very unpopular
6. How popular were you in high school?
 - a) very popular
 - b) popular
 - c) neutral/neither
 - d) unpopular
 - e) very unpopular
7. How popular would other people consider you on Facebook™?
 - a) very popular
 - b) popular
 - c) neutral/neither
 - d) unpopular
 - e) very unpopular
8. How popular would other people consider you offline?
 - a) very popular
 - b) popular
 - c) neutral/neither
 - d) unpopular
 - e) very unpopular
9. What does it mean to you to be popular on Facebook™?
10. Do you know someone who tries to be popular on Facebook™?
 - a. yes
 - b. noIf yes, what are they like?

11. What types of people want to be popular on Facebook™?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

12. Users with friends from more schools are more popular.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neither agree nor disagree d) disagree e) strongly disagree

13. Users who have more pictures tagged by friends are more popular.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neither agree nor disagree d) disagree e) strongly disagree

14. Age differences affect who tries to look popular online.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neither agree nor disagree d) disagree e) strongly disagree

15. How outgoing are you offline?

a) Very outgoing b) Outgoing c) Neutral/Neither d) not outgoing e) not outgoing at all

16. How outgoing are you on Facebook™?

a) Very outgoing b) Outgoing c) Somewhat outgoing d) Neutral/Neither e) not outgoing
f) not outgoing at all

17. Do you think you reveal more about yourself to people you know from the Internet than to real-life (non-net) friends?

a. A lot
b. A little
c. Not very much
d. Not at all

18. Are there things your Internet friends know about you that you cannot share with real-life (non-Net) friends?

a. A lot
b. A little
c. Not very much
d. Not at all

19. Do you express more facets, or sides, of yourself and personality to friends online than you do with those in "real life"?

Never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7 All the Time

20. Would your friends and family be surprised if they were to read your Facebook™ profile or Facebook™ postings?

Not at all surprised 1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7 Extremely surprised

What would surprise your friends and family?

21. Do you ever exaggerate or make up information and put it in your profile?

- a. Often
- b. Sometimes
- c. Not very often
- d. Never

22. Have you ever purposely done something to look cool or popular on Facebook™?

- a. Often
- b. Sometimes
- c. Not very often
- d. Never

If yes, what have you done to look cool or popular?

23. Do you ever change your profile on Facebook™?

- a. no
- b. yes

If yes, what motivates you to change your profile?

24. Why do you log onto Facebook™?

BELOW IS A LIST OF STATEMENTS DEALING WITH YOUR GENERAL FEELINGS ABOUT YOURSELF. IF YOU STRONGLY AGREE, CIRCLE SA. IF YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT, CIRCLE A. IF YOU DISAGREE, CIRCLE D. IF YOU STRONGLY DISAGREE, CIRCLE SD.

	1. STRONGLY AGREE	2. AGREE	3. DISAGREE	4. STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	SA	A	D	SD
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SD
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	SA	A	D	SD

- | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| 4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 6. I take a positive attitude toward myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 9. I certainly feel useless at times. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10. At times I think I am no good at all. | SA | A | D | SD |
-

BELOW IS A LIST OF STATEMENTS DEALING WITH YOUR SOCIABILITY. IF YOU STRONGLY AGREE, CIRCLE SA. IF YOU AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT, CIRCLE A. IF YOU DISAGREE, CIRCLE D. IF YOU STRONGLY DISAGREE, CIRCLE SD.

- | | 1. STRONGLY
AGREE | 2.
AGREE | 3.
DISAGREE | 4. STRONGLY
DISAGREE |
|--|----------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. I prefer to do things alone. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 2. I almost always prefer to work and study with others rather than alone. | SA | A | D | SD |

3. I have more friends than most people.	SA	A	D	SD
4. I am very sociable.	SA	A	D	SD
5. I like to feel independent of people.	SA	A	D	SD
6. I tend to be a loner.	SA	A	D	SD
7. I prefer parties with lots of people.	SA	A	D	SD
8. I make friends very easily and quickly.	SA	A	D	SD
9. I tend to be shy.	SA	A	D	SD

- To what extent are your friends on Facebook™ friends of one another?
 - a. Nearly all are friends of one another
 - b. Most are friends of one another
 - c. Some are friends of one another
 - d. A few are friends of one another
 - a. none are friends of one another

Approximately what percentage of your friends on Facebook™ are friends of one another?

- 0–10%
- 11–20%
- 21–30%
- 31–40%
- 41–50%
- 51–60%
- 61–70%
- 71–80-%
- 81–90%
- 91–100%

Demographic Information:

- What college or university do you attend?
- What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. White
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Mexican American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino
 - e. Asian American or Pacific Islander
 - f. American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - g. Other (please specify) _____
- What is your gender?
 - a. male
 - b. female
- How old are you?
- What is your year in college?
 - a) freshman b) sophomore c) junior d) senior e) alumni: graduation year _____