

PROJECT FACEBOOK HONDURAS: The Construction of the Social Reality of Honduran University Youth on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

Facebook is not only the most popular social network in present day, it is also the most visited website globally. Since its creation in 2004 its popularity has drastically increased worldwide. With its importance in society today, this study sets out to explore how Honduran university students create a social reality on Facebook, and in doing so, how they construct a virtual identity online versus the identity they present in everyday life offline. The study discusses privacy issues on Facebook, how the design of the platform limits or influences the information users can post, thus affecting the virtual identity created, how the social construct of the online global communicate cannot thrive without its users, and whether or not Facebook is an ideal community of communication. The study is carried out through the surveying of Honduran university students between the ages of 18 and 24, one of the most popular demographics of users both internationally and within Honduras, by observing and analyzing different aspects of their user profiles on Facebook.

1.1 Introduction:

Technology is advancing at a rate faster than it ever has. Today we live in a world where unlimited information is literally at our fingertips. With the click of a button, almost any question can be answered by the use of the internet. Globally close to 2 billion people are connected to the internet (The world of social media, 2011). However, the general public is no longer connecting solely to the internet, they are connecting to social networks, which is now the number one reason people go online. In particular people are logging onto Facebook, the most popular social network in existence today. Facebook is now the number one most viewed page in the world and has even surpassed Google in terms of daily traffic. This means that the world's population is more interested in social networking than anything else on the World

Wide Web. Facebook allows us to connect with an infinite amount of individuals through virtual time and space, thus allowing us to progress forward with our relationships while simultaneously acting out our everyday routines.

1.2 History of the Creation of Facebook:

Facebook was launched on February 4th, 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. The 19-year-old sophomore was studying computer science at Harvard University when he created the social network that would later become not only the most popular social networking site, but the most visited site daily on the World Wide Web.

Mark's initial goal was not to create the global phenomenon that Facebook has become today. Rather, he wanted to create a website where Harvard university students could type in the name of a classmate and find out information about that person, such as where they are from, what they are studying, their age, and other basic personal information. However, since the first day it launched, Facebook captivated students' attention and it was a sensation on the Harvard University campus. Within its first month of existence, Facebook expanded from Harvard to various other Ivy League universities around the U.S where it proved to be just as popular and had the same reaction among college students. (Facebook Facts and Figures (history and statistics).

1.3 Background Information:

When it was first launched, it was required that users had an ".edu" email address, indicating that they were university students. At the time, Facebook only had the features of the wall, profile picture, and group applications. As the Facebook team continued to advance the platform, they advanced the network also. It's popularity was rapidly increasing, and by December of 2004, the user population had reached 1 million users, which consisted of only college students. In October of 2005, it is expanded to universities abroad, maintaining its focus on University youth, which was the original target audience. As Facebook expanded overseas, simultaneously it was expanding to different age groups. In September 2005, Facebook added a high school network in which the only requirements were that users had a valid email address and are over the age of 13 (the supposed minimum age of a high school freshman). Almost exactly one year later, using the same minimum age criteria along with having a valid email, Facebook opened its doors to everyone. (Facebook Facts and Figures, 2011).

Mark Zuckerberg's motivation for creating Facebook was to connect people to their loved ones, like the slogan on the log in page of Facebook.com reads: "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life". The idea of making connections applies to everyone, and knows no specific demographics or borders. That may be an attributing reason why Facebook is the global phenomenon that it is today; because it appeals to all genders, races, ages, and cultures. It has been translated into 70 different languages, but aside from speaking (or rather typing) in different languages; we become the same virtual culture within the world of Facebook. (Facebook Statistics, 2011).

1.4 Facebook Format:

Since the birth of Facebook, Zuckerberg and his team of 500 engineers are always looking for ways to advance the design of the platform and accommodate new features and applications to appeal to users (60 Minute Facebook Story, 2011). Currently, when a user wants to log onto Facebook he/she is taken to the login page which has the logo in large letters in the domain colors of blue and white on the left part of the page. At the top right hand of the page, the user may sign in with their email address (a requirement to start a Facebook account) and a password. In the middle left part of the page is a Facebook logo that reads "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life". The right middle of the page is occupied by a place where new users can create accounts by simply putting in their name, email address, a password, gender, and birthday. The bottom left part of the page is where a user can select or change the language that their Facebook is in. The bottom right is reserved for various buttons such as: about, advertising, create a page, developers, careers, privacy terms, terms, and help.

Once the user is logged in, they are greeted by the home page, which has the news feed or "recent stories" of what other Facebook friends have posted recently in the center of the page and takes up the majority of the space. The profile picture (a photo that one has to upload) is a tiny thumbnail photo that anyone (whether they are your Facebook friend or not) may see, and is located at the top left part of the page beside your name to help identify who the user is. Below this is a section which has different options that you can click on such as favorites, groups, apps, pages, lists, and friends on chat. On the left side of the page the user can see under what is labeled the "ticker" what other users who are logged are on doing. For example their status updates, comments, or what music they are listening to. Below the ticker, Facebook will inform you whose birthday it is today and what events are going on. The bottom left is where you can "chat" with your Facebook friends in real time.

The profile page is the most pertinent part of Facebook. The user's profile is where the user "introduces" themselves on Facebook by giving their personal information, such as the user is from, where they live, study and work, and their birthday. This information is located at the top center of the page, so it is clearly visible. It encompasses basic personal questions one may ask upon first meeting someone. Below that are the users photos or videos. These photos or videos may be posted by the user or tagged by others and are in order from the most recent images, thus show a graphic timeline of events. Initially photos were not a main focus of Facebook, but today this is what sets it apart from other social networks like twitter, and is one of the most popular features of Facebook. Below the photo portion of Facebook, users update their status and can write "What's on your mind" by writing a short sentence to tell the world of Facebook what you are thinking or feeling. It also contains the wall where friends can post dialect, photos, videos, and comment on these items. The wall is visible to all of your friends (depending on your Facebook privacy settings).

Other features that can be utilized on the home page is, one can send private messages to other individuals or groups, create events and invite their Facebook

friends, create pages for organizations or businesses, create common interest groups that can be private or public, and add various applications. Facebook has over nine hundred million objects users can use to interact with, and the average user is connected to 80 of these (Facebook Statistics, 2011). The Facebook team of engineers is constantly changing and bettering the features of the platform, so it is inevitable that Facebook will continue to gain popularity.

1.5 Privacy on Facebook:

Privacy has been an issue since Facebook was created, but in a virtual world where members can post extensive personal information, what exactly does privacy mean for a social network meant to connect the individual to the masses?

Facebook is privately owned by Mark Zuckerberg and his co-founders. Under the terms and conditions of the official site it states that, “You own all of the content and information you post on Facebook and you can control how it is shared through your privacy and application settings” (Facebook Statistics, 2011).

Facebook’s privacy settings allow users to monitor what they want the general public to have access to. Users can control who can see their profile, status, photos, comments, and all other posted items. One can choose to share their information with everyone, friends, friends of friends, and people within your network (like your hometown network or University network) or choose to keep all information only visible to yourself. The only information that is always available to view by the public is the user’s name, profile picture, network, and username and user ID (Facebook Data Use Policy, 2011). However, Facebook users always have the liberty to delete their profiles from Facebook.

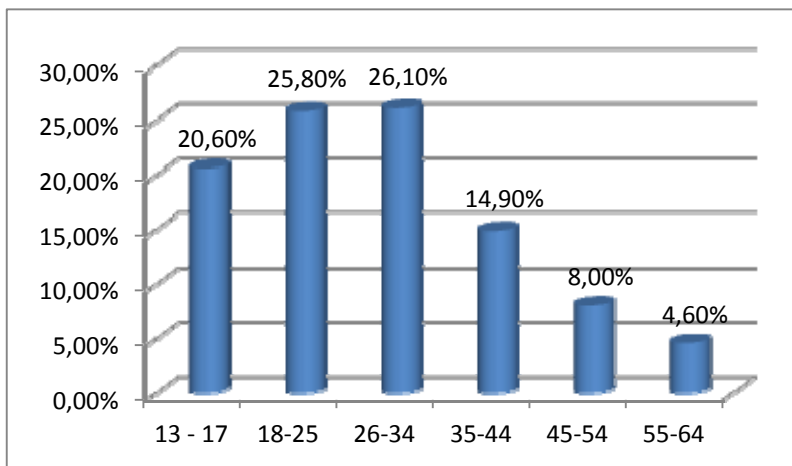
With millions of users around the world connected to the social network, Facebook faces the same dangers as any other social network. However the Facebook team emphasizes the importance of privacy and makes it known that users can “report” other users or offensive photos. Despite the well maintained privacy controls and settings the website offers, users should know there is always a risk when signing up for social networks or when using the internet.

1.6 International statistics:

Facebook to date has over 800 million users around the globe, half of whom log onto the site every day (Facebook Statistics). If Facebook were a country, it would have the third largest population in the world behind China and India (Socialnomics.com). Although it was created and initially intended for only university students within the United States, in October of 2005 Facebook began to expand to international university networks. Today it is translated in over 70 different languages and 70% of the populations of users are from outside the United States. The United States has the highest percentage of users. Facebook is represented on all five continents. (Facebook Facts and Figures).

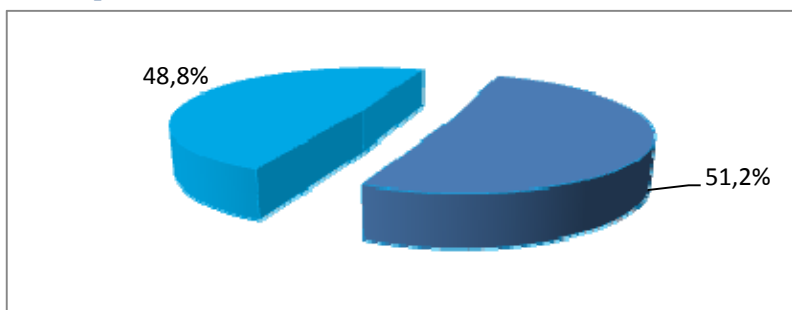
As stated previously, Facebook may be so popular because it appeals to a diverse audience. It doesn't focus on a particular age group, sex, or nationality; rather it is directed at a multicultural, diverse audience. But age demographic is dominated by users between the ages of 18 and 34 years old who may be the most popular age group to use the site due to the fact that University Youth were the original target audience. Facebook was created seven years ago when this age group was potentially studying at a university, about to enter, or just finishing, and then continued to "grow up" with Facebook. Because Facebook is a relatively new thing, we can see if it will predominantly appeal to this age demographic or if in future years, the age disbursements will even out and the gap between ages won't be as drastic. However, currently this seems to be the trend internationally (socialbakers.com, 2011).

Graphic No 1: Age of World Population on Facebook



Source; (socialbakers.com, 2011)

Graphic No. 2: Gender of World Population on Facebook



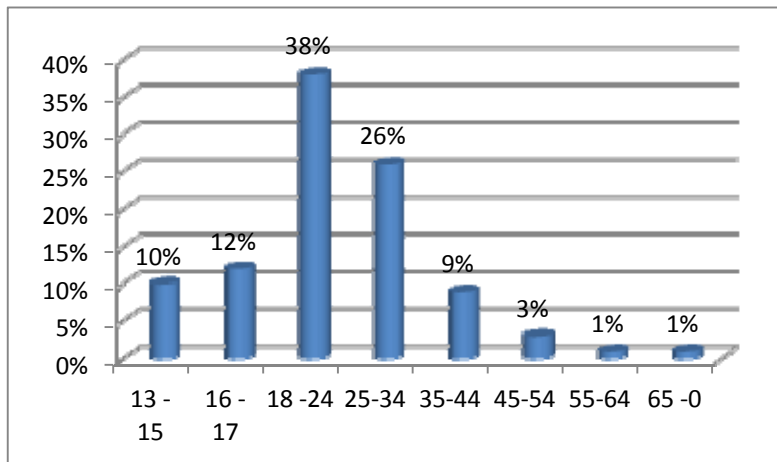
Source; (socialbakers.com, 2011).

1.7 Facebook in Honduras:

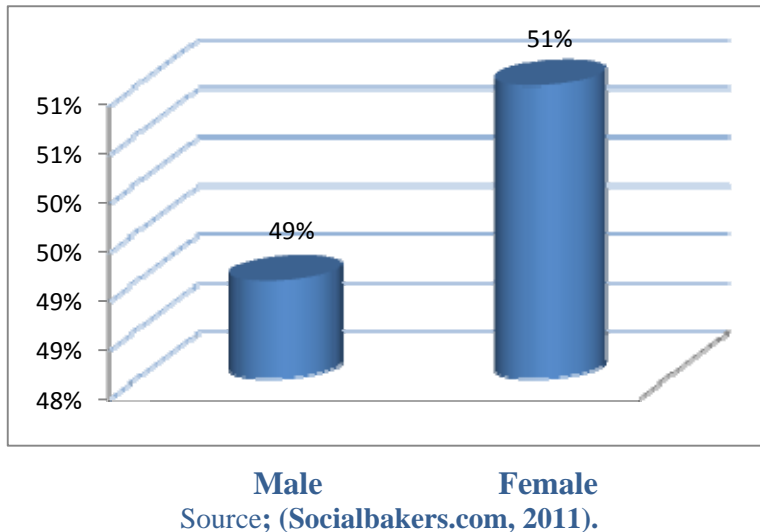
Of the 8,143,564 people populating the country, in Honduras there are 1,036,100 users on Facebook which consists of 12.97% of the population. Facebook in Honduras has grown by 178,320 users in the past six months alone. (Socialbakers.com, 2011). Facebook, although first launched in 2004, did not start to add international school networks until 2006. It was not translated into Spanish until February of 2008, two years after its creation. University students could join as of 2006, but the profile was in English. Once Facebook was translated into Spanish (among various other languages) and opened to the general public in December of 2008, Latin America embraced the social network, and its popularity grew (and is still growing) at a rapid rate. (Facebook Facts and Statistics, 2010).

When comparing the global statistics with those specifically from Honduras, it can be observed that in Honduras the group that uses Facebook the most are 18-24 year olds, whereas internationally 26-34 year olds are the most popular age group (but only by one percent). However it can be observed among both groups (Honduras and internationally) that the older groups make up a smaller percentage of users. This trend is likely to change due to its increasing popularity across all ages groups, and judging by its growth thus far, one can assume that it will continue to gain popularity in years to come.

Graphic No 3: Age of Honduran Population on Facebook



Source; (socialbakers.com, 2011).

Graphic No 4: Gender of Honduran Population Registered on Facebook

1.8 The Future of Facebook:

The expansion and advancements of Facebook seem inevitable, judging by how it has revolutionized the internet in less than a decade thus far. Society today is accustomed to a form of communication in which one can write, message, post, call, text, or email an individual or group at their own convenience. And Facebook is just that; convenient. Users can talk to an infinite amount of people any time of day or night, share photos, videos, ideas, events, or groups, and they can do it all from their phones, homes, schools or offices. Our lives are being documented in a timeline like format on the internet, and one can log on at any moment to message, chat, post, upload, share, or comment to any one of their Facebook friends about anything to contribute to the timeline. This has so far changed the way we interact, have relationships, meet people, have meetings, advertise, consume, sell, and above all, communicate. And there are no signs of the Facebook Phenomenon diminishing.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction:

Social networks, namely Facebook, is a technological advancement that has, although less than a decade old, has had an immense influence on society. One aspect that should be addressed is that Facebook causes its users to create a virtual identity in order to participate. This identity, although supposedly based on that of our everyday lives, constricts its users to present themselves freely because of the features Facebook possesses. It is therefore important to define what identity means, especially when referring to our identity in the everyday life and the identity presented on Facebook of its users.

2.2 The Construction of the identity of Facebook Users:

The notion of “identity” as established in the Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary, is defined as “the set of characteristics of an individual or of a collective that characterizes them against the rest; the awareness that a person has to be themselves and different from the rest”. Identity implies and assumes, as it is known, the presence of the “other” which is established through a confrontational relationship that allows us to establish the differences between self and the “other”.

The theory of identity is a concept addressed by various authors in the field of sociology, and although the idea is similar, the definition of the identity of an individual changes in the aspect of who and what it is related to. Jürgen Habermas, a German sociologist, for example, explains in his book “Theory of Communicative Action II” that ““identity” is the complex property that people can acquire from a certain age. They have to start without having this property, and it is possible that they never possess it. But once they have acquired it, this property makes them “autonomous”. They can become emancipated from the influence of others; they can give its life a form and continuity that earlier, perhaps, they only possessed for external influence. They are therefore, by virtue of identity, autonomous individuals” (Habermas, 2002: 145). Henrich uses the concept of “identity” to refer to the ability of a person to act autonomously, which is a generic property of people in general. Ernst Tugendhat, a German philosopher born in the Czechoslovakia, uses the concept of “identity” to refer to the ability of a person’s identification on the basis of a reflexive relationship with themselves, as they want to be.

These sociologists define the concept of identity as “I” as a question of how to identify a particular person. Although the definitions of identity differ, the concept of “I”, in order to express oneself it is significant within all sociological, physiological, and conceptual definitions, because it is the term we use to express and identify ourselves to all others. However, we can use the concepts of “identity” to be able to understand the process of the construction of “identity” of Facebook users and thus, better understand how the reality of interaction on Facebook is constructed.

2.3 The Universalization and the Particularization of the

“Identities” of Facebook Users

The approach of universalization and particularization of “identities” of Facebook users can be described by the principles raised by George Herbert Mead, an American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist, about the construction of the ideal communication community. This definition provides an impartial, rational model as a product of the collective will. According to that ideal, Mead also outlines the model of a non-aligned communication treatment between the subjects, enabling reciprocal spaces for a spontaneous self-presentation that requires a mutual empathy. According to Mead, when analyzed carefully, the ideal community for communication involves two different utopian projections. Each one of them is modeled after moments of ritual

practices that are still fused together; the practical time and the expressive, moral moment. Both variants are the point of reference from the concept of Mead of a fully individual person.

“Let’s assume that individuals were socialized as members of an ideal community of communication; then they were acquiring an “iden-tity” that would have two complementary aspects: that of univer-salization and that of particularization; on one hand, having been developed in these ideal conditions, people would learn to orient themselves inside a universal reference frame, which is to act auto-nomously; and, on the other hand, they would learn to make use of their autonomy, which equals the rest of the moral agents to develop their subjectivity and peculiarity. Mead attributes both, autonomy and capacity of spontaneous self-fulfillment, to everyone who is in the revolutionary role as a participant in a universal discussion and who is liberated from the chains that supposedly occur in concrete social relations as pure habit. Belonging to the ideal community of communication, in terms of Hegel, is constituted as the “I” in self and the “I” like an individual” (Habermas, 2002: 139).

Assuming that Facebook is an ideal community of communication, then the acquisition of “identity” in this community would be mediated by the universalization and the particularization of the individuals that form part of it. From this point, Facebook users develop ideal conditions and mediate as a universal reference point, as in the “identities” of the people interacting in this community acquire a certain degree of auto-nomy, which allows them to be able to choose a level of spontaneous self-fulfillment, and with this, establish a pertinent relationship with the ideal community of communication giving. In relation to Facebook, the construction of the “I” that is determined as universal due to the orientations of the universal action that develop within the community. However, the predominance of “I” like the individual, functions at a level of particularization that is needed for the construction of “identity” in this community.

According to Mead the orientations of the universal actions penetrate and transcend all of the existing conventions and penetrate and allow a distance to the social roles that constitute the history of the nature of one.

“The requirement here is freedom from the conventions of given laws. Of course that such situation is possibly only when the individual appeals, so to speak, of one close community and restricted to another more comprehensive; more wide in logical meaning of include rights that are not as restrictive. One moves away from the fixed conventions, which no longer have any sense for a community in which rights have to be publicly recognized, and appeals to other individuals [...] even if this appeal is an appeal to posterity. We have here the attitude of “I” in contrast with the “Me”. To “appeal to a much wider community”, just that autonomous subject capable of oriented in its action, by universal principles. But the “I” represents not only the peculiarities of a captive moral conscience of the tradition, but also the constraints of a character that obstruct the deployment of subjectivity. Here too, the ideal communication community members become an explosive force. Non-aligned between the subject treated structures that cause guidelines of action than in a different way than the Universalist

beyond existing conventions; they tend to fill in the blanks of self-realization reciprocal: “this ability allows one to display their own peculiarities...For the individual it is possible to develop their own peculiarities...., those which identifies you” (Habermas, 2002:140).

Perhaps Facebook is a space of reciprocal self-fulfillment to the effect that it offers the opportunity for its users to present or exhibit its peculiarities. However, Facebook does not only represent the peculiarities of a captive moral conscious of the tradition, but also the coercions of a character that obstructs the deployment of the subjectivity.

2.4 The self-determination, self-fulfillment and the identity of “I” on Facebook

These two aspects of “the identity of I” (Ich – Identität) , self-determination y self-fulfillment are illustrated by Mead through properties such as “self-respect” and a “sense of superiority”. Even these sentiments reveal the implicit reference to the structure of an ideal community of communication. Facebook could be considered, based on the above assertion from the reference to Mead, an ideal community of communication because it can be used as space for its user to express their morals, ideas, opinions, political views, religious philosophies, ect. However it cannot be ideal because within the community, although virtual and acts as a global society where its user has the freedom to express themselves in the manner they choose, and create and construct an identity, possibly that is different from the identity they have constructed in real life, but Facebook governs its users through the template it offers. The construction of the “identity of I” in Facebook functions as the identity relationship with the social roles of everyday life of the individuals who interact in this virtual space, and these interactions are constructed in function as an organized biography that is characterized specifically as the edition of Facebook users profiles.

In order to understand ourselves as people as well as present an identity to others we can identify with certain characteristics of who we are such as: birth date, place of birth, family origin, marital status, nationality, religion, ect. These are commonly the criteria used to identify a person, which can generally be seen on Facebook users profile page, aiding other users to help identify and classify this particular person based on these basic facts, as well as the user to present their identity to those who may view their page on Facebook. On Facebook the users’ profiles are constructed using the following criteria: the user’s name, sex, birth year, date of birth, place of work or study, origin city, actual residence, sexual preference, relationship status, religion, nationality, political ideals, and other interesting aspects such as; favorite music, books, movies, languages one can speak, favorite sports, ect. The criteria used for the construction of identity on Facebook, however is limited to only these characteristics, whereas in everyday life people have the freedom to identify themselves with these basic facts, but they are not limited to only this information.

Finally, we can establish a clear relationship in the construction of the “identity of I” on the basis of the definition provided by Mead, which highlights two aspects,

utilizing a non-factual universal discourse reference: on the other hand, the capacity for autonomous action on the basis of universalist action guidelines and the ability to perform as yourself in a life which provides continuity assuming that you are taking responsibility for it. “The identity of I” does not exist on Facebook without the existence of the “other”. On Facebook you are never alone; the profile is a place among “friends” from different origins. The roles of the “other” that are socially accepted, appear here, strongly conditioned to construct the “identity”. The identities are built collectively or constructed with the amount of interactions one has with others.

2.5 The Design of Identity on Facebook

The participation of the communicative spaces on Facebook obviously does not occur in a vacuum. It is mediated, not only by the architecture of the social network, but also by the technological, textual and graphic design. These design guidelines enable what we can and cannot do within this space.

The design of Facebook demands the user to register with their complete name, sex, age, birthday and email address. Whether we lie or not in these fields, this design, by default, induces us to introduce ourselves on Facebook from these default demographic features, partnered to be understood and established as the “user identity”.

The objectives that we have set for ourselves, in the sense that we give to our actions, depend greatly on social imagery of the expectations generated around the common meanings that we draw upon Facebook and its promises (Vayreda, 2003). In relation to our notion as people, cyberspace feeds a number of utopias relating to the possibility of being an “other” inhabitant of a different identity (San Cornelio, 2004). These expectations and promises are creatively involved in the appropriation made by technical users of partner resources for social interactions and the presentation of themselves within cyberspace.

On Facebook we can only act on the basis of “entities” that we create from textual images (photos, videos or graphics) that represent or act for us. To make our online interactions intelligible, we understand and realize our actions in the world of Facebook, use cultural strategies that are not new, but come from our social experience from face to face interaction, as well as our experience with writing, using the telephone, radio, cinema or television (Morse, 1998).

What is surprising about the construction of identities online is the “display” of the cultural process of the construction of identity. In the physical world we tend to think of representations as forms through which we “express” through our own identity. While in cyberspace, we are witnessing the process in reverse; our identities are constructed from the representations that we have developed; as RemediosZafra stated: “In the media, the identity does not produce representations. Representations are which produce identity” (<http://www.web-side.org/remedioszafra/>). Finally, the design of the “identity on Facebook” is mediated by the profile page that represents the person and acts as a mediator between two people who do not know each other. On Facebook,

the question of authenticity is especially relevant and takes on significance to the meaning of interaction.

2.6 Conclusion of the Construction of Facebook Identities

In this chapter the construction of the identity of users who interact on Facebook has been defined by the theoretical approach based from Mead's definition, from which we can establish a clear relationship in regards to the construction of the "identity of I". The definition of Mead's theory highlights two aspects of this "identity of I": a factual reference against the universal discourse and the capacity for autonomous action on the basis of the guidelines of universalist action, and lastly the ability to fulfill oneself in a which provides continuity embracing and taking responsibility. On Facebook there is no "identity of I" without the existence of the "other". And not only this, but the profile is a social place between our "friends" from different origins. The role of the "other" and what is socially accepted appear, strongly conditioning the construction of "identity". Identities are constructed collectively or co-constructed through the interactions with "others". The construction of identities on Facebook is mediated by the existing relationship between the reality of the real world and the reality of that constructed in virtual space by a cultural context that has been developed by Facebook users.

Chapter 3

3.1 Purpose of the study:

With the development of Facebook, many questions have risen about how the social network is effecting out lives. For example, how has it changed the way we think about technology, interact with people, effect businesses, even down to, does it have a psychological effect? Because the social network is relatively new, there have shockingly been very few studies done on how Facebook effects the global population despite how widely used it is. Therefore this study sets out to explore the affects Facebook has on University students here in Honduras by asking how students construct a social identity on Facebook, and more specifically how Honduran university youth interact on Facebook, and how they construct their identity online in comparison to the identity they present offline.

3.2 Population Objective:

Honduran University Youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years old who interact on Facebook and reside in the cities of Tegucigalpa or Comayagüela, from the municipal central district, Department of Francisco Morazán in Honduras. This specific age was chosen because this age group tend to be the normal age of university students, and (as seen from the graphics in Chapter 1) this age group has the highest population of Facebook users in Honduras.

3.3 Probabilistic Sample:

250 Honduran university youth who interacted on Facebook with the comprised of ages in sub-categories of 18-20 and 21-24 years old, and of both genders.

3.4 Analysis Unit:

The Facebook profile pages of the university youth that were registered on Facebook between the ages of 18 and 24 years of age, and that wished to voluntarily participate in the research project.

3.5 Procedure:

During the first stages of the study, biographical and documented information was collected. This phase lasted during the months of August through October of 2011. Because of the lack of literature and research done on social networks and Facebook, during this time sociological concepts were studied in order to gain a superior knowledge about concepts such as how media reaches the masses, concepts of identity, how communication has changed in the last decades, ect. This was realized in the Library of the National University Pedagogic of Francisco Morazán and the National Autonomy University of Honduras to gather related information about the subject studied. However, aside from the sociological concepts learned, most of the information found about Facebook itself was found on the World Wide Web. These included the few Facebook studies done that were relevant to this study, biographical information about Facebook, articles about technologies influence on today's world, and various other articles about the effects of Facebook on different aspects of society.

The second phase consisted of the creation of the profile page. A Facebook profile page was created under the name, "Jovenes Universitarios fbhn" (University Youth fbhn) and managed and observed by the research team involved. The page consisted of various graphics showing Facebook statistics or information, video clips from youtube.com with information about technology, social networks, and/ or Facebook, and information about the study.

Simultaneously during this stage of research a survey was created. The survey and asked various questions intending to gain knowledge about students' interaction on Facebook and the specific population that uses it. Basic information questions were asked, for example: Age, sex, address, subject of study, ect. As well as questions about when the user is logged onto Facebook, what aspects they like the most, ect. (To see the full survey refer to Appendix A).

The third phase corresponded to the field work, which consisted primarily of visits to the universities where there were Honduran students on the social network, Facebook. University classrooms were visited (with the permission of the professors) where the surveys were passed out to the university students present. After gathering the completed surveys from those who agreed to partake, we explained that students willing to participate in the study beyond this point would need to voluntarily add or accept our friendship request sent through Facebook. It was important to address that

no names would be revealed at any point during the study, and the information obtained through their profile pages would be used strictly for observation and statistical purposes. After surveys were passed out to 200 students, based on the name they presented on the survey as their user name on Facebook, friend solicitations were sent. This process was carried out in the two months of November and December of the year 2011 and again in February of 2012 because the students have a break for the holidays during the end of December and all of the month of January.

From the time the friend requests were sent, as individuals accepted they were put into the data system and their profiles were being observed in order to save time rather than waiting for all students to accept.

The fourth phase consisted of an analysis of information obtained from the application instrument that in this case, was the survey which was analyzed in the statistics program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 18.0. This process also included the realization of typical bibliographic record, both identified as the content of summary, and the information of a qualitative nature analyses through the Atlas ti, Version 5.0 for qualitative analysis respectively.

From the 200 surveys obtained, 14 students were not eligible to participate as a “friend” on Facebook due to their age, that they didn’t have Facebook (a surprising low percentage), or incomplete or incoherent answers. 186 students were sent friend requests on Facebook from the profile created earlier in the study. Of the 186 friend requests sent 74 accepted. What was realized at this point in the research was that many of the students shared the same name as another Facebook user, or the students could not be identified by solely the name they provided us, thus many of the students may have never received their friend request because there is a chance it was sent to someone who shared the same name. Although a number of students sent friendship requests to the profile page later on, these students were not used in the study because they were not part of the final analysis group.

It was during this phase that the profiles of the voluntary participants’ photos were observed and analyzed based on categories that included: photos of the user by themselves, with friends, with family, with pets or animals, on vacation, at events, with food, or photos downloaded from the internet, cartoons, graphics, or digitally enhanced photos. 74 students participated in the study as “friends” on Facebook, and each profile was observed in this manner, and also how often they appeared to use Facebook, how often people wrote on their walls, and in what ways they appeared to use Facebook the most, for example to upload photos, chat, write on walls of friends, ect. This process lasted from January through February of 2012. From these observations collected, data was put into a spreadsheet in SPSS for further analysis.

The fifth and final phase of the project was related to the drafting of information. This phase which was one of the most arduous processes realized in the research project due to the revision process and editing of the biography, orthography and some relevant academic and scientific criteria for the final document which took place over the course of February and March of 2012, while simultaneously collecting data.

3.6 Results:

The results are based on what information was given by the 186 students who participated in the survey portion of the study, and then the observations and analysis done by the research team when reviewing the profiles of the 74 students who accepted Facebook friend requests. All data was collected and put into SPSS for further analysis.

Of the 186 students surveyed from 3 different universities located in the municipal district of Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela, 65.6% were female and 33.9% were male which follows suit with the international trend that there are generally more females in universities. 24.7% of the students were 19 years old, which represented the highest population of the age category. 80.1% of the students registered for Facebook sometime during or after the year of 2008, which is when Facebook was translated into Spanish (although since 2005 it was available internationally). Only 9.7% registered for Facebook between the years of 2005 and 2008, which means they were utilizing Facebook in English rather than their native language. 10.2% chose not to answer this question because it can be presumed that do not remember in which year they registered. When asked how much time each student spends on a Facebook a day, the majority spend more than an hour a day on Facebook, indicating that Honduran university youth spend a significant amount of time on the social network.

Other data found was that the majority of the time (70% or more in each case), the students utilize Facebook the most for the following features: chat, to communicate with friends, share photos and videos and communicate with family.

80.1% of the 186 students surveyed claimed to use their real names. However when requesting students as Facebook friends, it was difficult to identify the participants by their names because although they may be using their real names, often they would identify themselves by only their first and middle name, for example.

75.3% of young people expressed that they do not publish private data on their Facebook profiles, but when analyzing and observing their profile pages on Facebook, it was noted that the students posted information such as; the date of birth, phone number, place of residence, e-mail address, among other data that is consider personal data. 22.6% expressed that they do not post personal or private data on their Facebook profiles and 2.2% did not complete this field.

81.7% of the 186 surveyed have their privacy settings set so that only their "friends" can see their profiles. However, the concept of a friend on Facebook certainly signifies something different than how one would define a friend in the reality of everyday life because when asked if the students have people that they do not know as "friends" on Facebook 54.3% said yes. 55% of the students claim that they have more "friends" on Facebook than they do in real life. 89.2% said they have met their Facebook "friends" at least once during a face to face interaction; however this contradicts the previous question of if they had people they do not know as "friends" on Facebook. This shows that not only is the term friend obscure within the Facebook

community, but also the concept of “knowing” someone is unclear as well within the social network.

62% of the survey participants said they feel that their Facebook pages are a good representation of who they really are. This means that the majority of the university youth use Facebook to present an accurate identity of themselves to show other users.

The results and observations obtained from the product of the analysis of the "Facebook profiles" of Honduran University students that allowed us to observe their Facebook profiles for approximately three months of observation, were observed using the following criteria; analysis and reading of the wall, observation of photographs, state and content analysis, observation of the personal information in the "profiles", as well as the "friend" groups and other activities that young people perform while interacting on Facebook,

Although of the 186 students surveyed the majority were woman, 70% of the students that accepted friendship requests were men.

The highest percentage of photos tagged on the students profiles were of themselves with friends. It can be assumed based on this that Honduran university students want to identify themselves with friends.

Therefore, what can be concluded from all presented evidence is that Honduran university youth create an identity based on who they are offline by using Facebook as a virtual reality as an extension of their identity in their everyday lives offline. They utilize the social network by communicating with friends, family, peers at the university and acquaintances that they have met face to face the majority of the time.

3.8 Conclusion:

To answer how Honduran university youth construct a social reality on Facebook, one must consider the implications produced throughout the study. These include:

- The construction of identity: Facebook allows its population to create an identity separate from the identity they present in their everyday lives offline, by presenting themselves through images such as photos and videos, text, status updates, ect.
- The format of the design of Facebook by default creates certain parameters for the identity the user creates.
- Facebook creates a community where the existence of the “other” is necessary to thrive, in comparison to the reality of everyday life where this element is not necessary.
- Facebook is not an ideal community of communication, based on Mead’s theory, because it lacks certain elements that would qualify it as such.

What can be interpreted by the results found through the Honduran university students who participated in this study by accepting a Facebook friendship request, thus allowing us access to their profile for analyzing and observational purposes, is that these observations, as well as the answers that were given on the surveys show that Honduran university students utilize Facebook as a means to communicate with friends and family, post photos and videos of themselves, their friends and family, pets, food,

parties, events, vacations, ect. What can be deducted by this is that Facebook users are indeed creating an identity through the space Facebook offers by utilizing its features such as posting picture, images, and videos on their pages, communicating with chat, messages, the wall, as well as the spaces offered to comment or “like” something.

Although Honduran university students (like all Facebook users) are posting images that represent the truth, Facebook offers the liberty to be biased by editing and censoring what information is posted on the profile page, thus creating an image that is based on one’s true identity, but generally not a complete representation of the user. The limitations Facebook creates through its template only allows the user to post what the social network offers, in this case (as discussed previously), messages, photos, videos, wall posts, and various other basic information can be included in the profile page, by default. In this sense, Facebook is telling its user how to portray themselves through the template offered, and limiting their ability to express an online identity freely.

Of course the user is free to communicate how they choose, which is based on their identity offline in everyday life, but this too causes restrictions because the interaction humans have in the reality of everyday life offline is different to that online. If two people interact face to face as oppose to online, the speakers will be able to express themselves through facial expressions, body language, voice inflection, even emotional sounds, like laughter or crying, that a receiver online could be completely oblivious to.

Facebook is a convenient form of communication in our techno-logically advanced global society, because it conforms to the fast pace society we live in today by allowing its user the options of when and how they want to communicate. The user has the choice to communicate by utilizing chat, a way to communicate in real time with their “friends” on Facebook, send messages, which are private and may be read the next time the receiver of the message logs on, and the wall, which is text that is visible to everyone (or depending on the user’s privacy settings, possibly only their friends on Facebook, or only themselves (although of our 74 subjects, not one had their pages set with this specific privacy setting, which can lead to the assumption that Facebook users in fact are not overly concerned about privacy). These forms of interactions on Facebook provoke real time and delayed responses, which are convenient to both the sender and receiver, which attributes to Facebook’s popularity.

Interactions online allow one to construct a more anonymous identity, but not only that, but because the user has the ability to choose their sending and response time, as well as censor what images are portrayed on their page, they are able to construct an identity to their liking (within the guidelines the format of Facebook offers), where as in everyday life, they cannot because they are judged based on their presence.

Facebook user’s identity depends on other people to thrive, because without the idea of the “other” based on Mead’s theory, as discussed earlier, the user has no reason to communicate (which takes place between two or more people despite the form of communication; face to face, telephone, text message, through social networks, web cameras, ect), post photos or videos, write messages, wall posts, or comments. This is

contrasted in everyday life because in the reality of everyday life one can thrive as an independent functioning being, with or without the “other”.

Lastly, Mead’s theory of an ideal community of communication implies that an individual has an autonomous identity constructed through the concept of “I”, and that individual is free of given laws. Based on this theory, Facebook does not fit the profile of an ideal community of communication because the users can construct their own peculiarities to attribute to their identity, but only within the guidelines of the features presented on Facebook. Facebook users are free to express their political and religious views, personal philosophies, show their interests, and display unlimited imagery to an infinite amount of people, but they will always be governed by the limits of the platform. Also the concept of time in the community of Facebook differs from that of everyday offline interactions because the users have the freedom to send and respond to messages as they please, which defies Mead’s definition that within an ideal community of communication, communication is a ritual practice based on practical time. And finally Facebook users act autonomously within the community, but their interactions and communication is based on the “other”. Without the “other”, the idea of communication would be pointless within the social network.

3.9 Limitations of the Study:

This particular study was written to present at the National Pedagogic University of Francisco Morazán. The final product had a total of 84 pages including the graphic results of all data completed. However for the purpose of this publication, the paper was condensed, so that only the most relevant information is presented in this publication.

From the start we had planned on surveying 250 students from 5 different public and private universities in the cities of Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela in order to obtain a diverse sample. However, in the end only three universities were visited due to time restrictions, and authorities not permitting our entrance into the university. The final results are from three different universities, and 200 people were surveyed rather than 250.

Due to these problems encountered here, only 200 surveys were passed out. Of the 200 surveys given to students to complete, 186 students were eligible because they had the appropriate age between 18 and 24, were registered on Facebook, and they were willing to participate (by filling out the survey). What we had not anticipated was that after passing out the 186 surveys, that a percentage of the university students would not fulfill the age requirement we were seeking, or did not want to participate in the profile portion of the project (the students were unwilling to accept the friendship requests for privacy reasons, or various other unknown indicators.) Thus, after creating a profile page and requesting the 186 surveyed students to accept, only 74 in total actually partook; a percentage much lower than expected. Although we would have liked to have a larger percentage of students’ participation to gather a wide range of data for our statistical purposes, 74 sufficed.

An error that was encountered was during the survey portion of the study. On the survey we asked for the Facebook users' complete name or the name they use on Facebook if different. However, once in the process of sending friendship solicitations, we encountered that this was not sufficient information in order to find the students because many of the participants had the same name as another Facebook user that did not attend a university in Honduras. This made it hard to differentiate who was eligible to participate in the profile analysis portion of the study. Due to this dilemma, of the 74 people who accepted friendship solicitations from our profile, 2 were not in fact students at the universities, rather they were 2 people with the same name of a Honduran university student. This also affected the total number of Honduran University Students who participated in profile observation phase, because many of the students who were willing to participate in the survey were unidentifiable on Facebook.

Another research error was during the process of the statistical analysis. We were investigating the number of photos the University students have of themselves, with friends, with family, at events, on vacation, with pets, of food and graphics downloaded from the internet (such as of famous soccer players, cartoons, advertisements, ect). We decided to only analyze the tagged photos rather than the photos of albums because we concluded that this would be a better indication of the construction of identity because the Facebook user, although did not necessarily post the photos themselves, has control of what is posted on their profile pages under tagged photos because they have the option of removing the photo by untagging it or reporting it. The problem encountered, however, was during the analysis it was difficult to classify the photos into categories because often it was challenging to differentiate between a photo with friends, for example, and a photo with family members. We judged the photos to the best of our ability, but the statistical results were surely influenced due to this error in judgment on our part.

It was realized also that during the research and writing of this specific study Facebook had changed its format from how it had previously been to the "Timeline" version. Therefore within the six months spent researching, our data already became obsolete because this paper discusses the format of the version prior to the change.

Lastly, because the authors were from different cultural back-grounds, the United States, and Honduras occasionally ideas were not translated accurately. Although both authors are bilingual, neither has a certification in translation, so there are certain chapters translated from Spanish to English and others written in English initially. Therefore the language of the final product is not uniform.

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