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Are we Prisoners of Facebook?
A Critical View on the Social Media Giant.

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# Table of Contents

List of Figures ............................................................................................................. 4  

1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 5  

2 History of the Internet and the World Wide Web ..................................................... 7  
   2.1 Social Networks and Social Media Communication ............................................ 11  
   2.2 Growing Facebook .......................................................................................... 14  
   2.3 Usage and Settings of Facebook ...................................................................... 18  
   2.4 Data Gathering through Facebook .................................................................. 22  

3 Purpose of Social Networks .................................................................................... 25  
   3.1 Identity Construction in Social Networks ......................................................... 26  
   3.2 Friendships and Contacts ............................................................................... 30  
   3.3 Facebook and its Stimulative Nature .............................................................. 31  
   3.4 Global Network for Democracy ..................................................................... 32  

4 Drawbacks of Social Networks ............................................................................. 35  
   4.1 Cyber-Bullying on the Internet ....................................................................... 36  
   4.2 Always-On Mentality on the Internet .............................................................. 38  
   4.3 Quantification and Fake Friends .................................................................... 39  
   4.4 Appearing Fake News .................................................................................... 42  
   4.5 Filter Bubble and Selection .......................................................................... 44  
   4.6 Business Tool for Advertising ...................................................................... 46  

5 Empirical Part ........................................................................................................ 50  
   5.1 Grounded Theory Approach ......................................................................... 50  
   5.2 Guideline of Questions and Groups of Respondents ...................................... 55  
   5.3 Analysis of the Interviews ............................................................................. 62  
   5.4 Autoethnography: Method and Analysis ......................................................... 86  
   5.5 Final Thoughts ............................................................................................... 90  

6 Changes of Use and Expectations ....................................................................... 91  
   6.1 Alternative Social Networks .......................................................................... 92  
   6.2 Media Pedagogy in School ............................................................................ 95  
   6.3 Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research Questions ............................... 98  

7 Literature ............................................................................................................... 99  
   7.1 List of References .......................................................................................... 99  
   7.2 Internet Sources ............................................................................................ 103
List of Figures

Figure 1: The History of Social Networking Sites (boyd/Ellison 2008: 212)..................12
Figure 2: Home Page of Facebook (Facebook 2017).............................................18
Figure 3: News Feed on Facebook (Facebook 2017)..............................................21
Figure 4: Growing Mobile Use (Statista 2017).......................................................39
Figure 5: Categories of Friends (Facebook 2017)....................................................41
Figure 6: Number of Friends (Pew Research Center 2014).....................................41
Figure 7: Advertising in the News Feed (Facebook 2017)......................................47
Figure 8: About this Facebook Ad (Facebook 2017)..............................................48
Figure 9: Curious Facebook (Facebook 2017).........................................................48
Figure 10: Table of Categories (Own Illustration)....................................................85
Introduction

The title of this master thesis “Are we Prisoners of Facebook? A Critical View on the Social Media Giant” may sound a little exaggerated first. In fact, as Facebook with 1.94 billion of users (statista.com 2017c) is the largest Social Media network worldwide, it is obvious that many of us are drawn to it.

In the past, I was often thinking of reasons why we are drawn to Facebook, as I noticed that in my circle of friends and moreover, by myself. Thus, I assume that we are all kind of “Prisoners of Facebook”. Main research questions in this thesis will be: “what are the reasons we keep coming back to Facebook”, “why are there persons quitting with Facebook and coming back?” and “why other ones who quit don’t return?” Those are linked to the thesis title “Are we Prisoners of Facebook?”

I know members who quit and went back, and I am one of them. I also tried to unsubscribe once but I didn’t succeed, so the term “Facebook Prisoner” is suitable for me. I describe myself as a “Facebook Prisoner” and in this elaboration, I will use two empirical approaches. First, I will do an experiment of breaking out of the ties of the social network, an autoethnography. Second, I will do open-ended interviews with respondents of different usage groups of Facebook, which will be described later.

Literature is an important source of information and will be linked to empirical findings as well. For my research, I did a literature review of a mixture of journals, website articles, online newspaper articles, books and blogs. As we live in a highly fast changing world, I want to keep my findings actual. I focused on recent literature and as Facebook is a prevailing topic in the public discourse, I will cite various newspaper articles dealing with the social network. Those articles deliver a picture of the opinion which our society has of the Social Media giant and is an important foundation of my empirical part. Societal, cultural and critical perspectives will be built around theories from various authors in the following chapters.

In chapter two, I want to investigate the change of the World Wide Web. In the past, there was a change from the informational web to the social web. Furthermore, in this chapter I will include the mission of Facebook, data gathering and other technical terms to understand the functionality of the social network. I want to explain how Facebook became the leading player, as there was a rise of various Social Media platforms over the past years. Some of
them disappeared over time, some of them had temporary success and some of them experienced a breakthrough, like Facebook.

In chapter three, I will try to identify issues of identity formation and friendships on Facebook and in Social Media in general. In this chapter, I will focus on social and individual reasons of using those platforms. Reasons why we like to use Facebook as it has a stimulative nature and why it is used as a tool for delivering democracy will be carried out in this section. Followed with some drawbacks of Facebook in chapter four which can occur like cyber-mobbing, quantification of friendships, fake news and fake profiles, filter bubble and privacy issues.

In chapter five an empirical study finds its place. This part focuses on a research gap where research had been little until now – the question why people who quit with Facebook returned and if we can describe them as prisoners. Moreover, I will try to answer if passive Facebook users could be described as “Facebook Prisoners” as well. Qualitative open-ended interviews are conducted with three different types of Social Media users like passive ones, returnees and dropouts. I will conduct open-ended interviews with members of the age between 20 and 33 years of all groups. This age span I’m also part of grew up with Facebook and therefore, I’m interested in exploring reasons for the usage of the Social Media giant. I want to discover if the term “Facebook Prisoners” is suitable or not. Answers will be coded with the Grounded Theory method. Findings will be linked to literature, which I exemplified in the theoretical part. Within the second empirical approach, I will do an autoethnography of breaking out of Facebook and I will analyze my feelings during the exit. For this, I will do a diary study and code it with the Grounded Theory. I will conclude this chapter with a description of my final thoughts.

As a last part in chapter six, I will draw a conclusion of all the results and some alternatives to Facebook will be mentioned. Media pedagogy at school could teach children how those networks can be used as a tool with positive influences. In the conclusion, limitations will be mentioned as they will be important for scientists to discover in future. The thesis will be closed with the final remarks of the author.
2 History of the Internet and the World Wide Web

The first version of the Internet was called “ARPANET”, which allowed “sharing information between ‘high tech’ (a new world) universities and other research institutions”, hence it was a connecting tool for academic purposes (Briggs/Burke 2002: 308). Moreover, the Social Media giant Facebook had its main mission in connecting students at Harvard university before it was officially released in 2006. The “ARPANET” was found by the Advanced Research Project Administration, renamed “DARPA” and in the year of 1975, the network was ready to use. E-mail messages where the main purpose of use of the predecessor of today’s Internet (Briggs/Burke 2002: 308). After the ARPANET, the “Bitnet” occurred. “The Internet may be considered to have emerged in the late 1980s, as Bitnet, an experimental network funded by the US National Science Foundation, shifted from a communication medium restricted primarily to university and scientific researchers to an increasingly public accessible medium”, Burnett et al. (2010: 1) state in the handbook of Internet Studies. Briggs and Burke (2002) explain that in 1998, the Word Wide Web was invented by Tim Berners-Lee. According to its founder Lee, the Internet should be open and accessible for everyone. The Internet “becomes ever more embedded in our lives” and a “global medium”, Burnett et al. (2010: 2) support. Moreover, “the World Wide Web is more than technology, more than modems, bandwidth, computers. It is a thing made of language and of history, a Web of metaphor”, Thorburn (2003: 19) demonstrates its importance. Hence, the Internet shifted to a global accessible medium, the World Wide Web, which has a long history as well.

The Web 1.0 was the first type of the World Wide Web. Thus, the dictionary of Techopedia (2017c) claims that the Web 1.0 “was a set of static websites that were not yet providing interactive content. In Web 1.0, applications were generally proprietary.” This means that a lot of websites did exist, but had no interactive content available for its users. The Web 1.0 “was a place where people could publish all their information for others to view. It can be thought of as a library where people can acquire knowledge but cannot contribute anything in changing it”, Menon et al. (2009: 1) support. Thus, there was a need for a more interactive web in which users could participate. “There was a need for the users to interact and post their views which was not met with Web 1.0”, Menon et al. (2009: 1) express. With the Web 2.0, the introduction of social networking sites began and dyadic communication possibilities increased. Followed by the Web 2.0, the Web of the second generation. With that, the flow of one side-communication changed into the flow of mutual-sided communication.
For the Web 2.0, hyperlinks are mandatory. O’Reilly (2012: 37) explains: “as users add new content, and new sites, it is bound into the structure of the web by other users discovering the content and linking to it.” Moreover, O’Reilly (2012: 37) claims that the Web 2.0 offers a “collective purpose” and is a “web of connections”. O’Reilly (2012: 39) marks as a sign for the Web 2.0 the “network effects”, which can be linked to the rise of social networks since the introduction. Since the main purpose of the “ARPANET” was sending e-mails, it is obvious that the Internet should be mainly used as a tool for communication, which the shift to the interactive Web 2.0 fostered. According to Statista (2017d), in 2016 there was already a rise to 3.34 billion of Internet users globally.

The next generation is called Web 3.0, the web of the third generation. The “Web 3.0 was also called as Semantic Web by its founder Tim Berners Lee” (Menon et al. 2009: 3) and marks the future of the World Wide Web. In the public discourse, the change of the Internet is an often mentioned topic, especially when it comes to privacy. “There is already a lot of work going into the idea of a semantic web, which is a web where all information is categorized and stored in such a way that a computer can understand it as well as a human” (Nations 2017). “The Internet will be wherever we go”, Nations (2017) summarizes. Hence, it is not that surprising that those changes should mark our future – those are obviously already happening over time. Smart Homes, self-driving cars, Google Glass – everything is revised with improved technology features to support humans as much as possible. Since with the Web 2.0 and Google there is already a lot of data existing on the Internet, “there was a very big urgency for a Web that could automatically sort this data and display the relevant data to the user in an efficient manner” Menon et al. (2009: 3) reason. Thus, the Web 3.0 marks the future of our Internet. We will see, where those changes will lead us.

Those allegations can be connected to the term of Michel Foucault (1992) of Bentham’s prison, the Panopticon, which served as an imaginary idea and dealt with the 18th and 19th century. It is about surveillance, which is everywhere in our lives and the society knows that. Self-regulation takes place consequently in social networks and the Web 2.0, Hardt and Negri (2000) support. Therefore, the master thesis title “Are we Prisoners of Facebook?” seems to be suitable as well as the critical view on social networks in this thesis. Deleuze (1992) deals with dangers of technology in his publication “Postscript on the Societies of Control”. “The societies of control operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive dangers is jamming and whose active one is piracy and the introduction of viruses”, Deleuze (1992: 6)
expresses. Those highlight the dangers in our society shifting to technology, which the introduction of the Internet pushed ahead.

“User-generated-content” is another central element of various Social Media platforms today and a foundation of the Web 2.0, the social web. It is also prevailing on Facebook, where users can create stories to share them with their friends. Social networks support social interaction. Social interaction leads to content which is produced back and forth in an endless loop, also called “user-generated content”. Coté and Pybus (2011: 12) describe the Web 2.0 as a form of “immaterial work”, which can be linked to the term “user-generated content”. It deals with users posting pictures or information on social networks like Facebook. The authors describe this form of immaterial work as “immaterial labor 2.0”, since the Web 2.0 is defined by social activities. “Immaterial labor 2.0 explicitly situates this subjective turn within the active and ongoing construction of virtual subjectivities across social networks” (Coté/Pybus 2011: 4). With immaterial work, Coté and Pybus (2011) link the Web 2.0 users to implementations of Hardt and Negri (2000), as Facebook could be a social fabric, in which users construct themselves actively.

For executing immaterial work “there is a labor of audience management”, like managing the friends list. “This is a process of deciding with whom to share information and/or from whom to receive information. The maintenance of such a list is a necessary labor for more effectively participating in the Facebook community”, Spicer (2012: 326) explains. Spicer (2012) signifies the actions as managing self-presence of the subject on Social Media as immaterial work. As a sign for the Web 2.0 and the possibility of “immaterial work”, Dutton and Blank (2014: 40) mention “content production”, since this kind of Web allows users to actively participate in content production themselves. They describe those users as “next generation users” who own a smartphone and use it for surfing on the Internet. In this thesis, I would appoint those “next generation users”, as “active Web 2.0 users”. The users of this generation “post pictures and videos, post messages on discussion boards or forums, and post stories, poetry, or other creative work “(Dutton/Blank 2014: 42). On Facebook, a series of activities can be conducted as sharing videos, pictures or thoughts.

For the “public sphere”, Coté and Pybus (2011: 11) mention the News Feed on Facebook. There, all postings of the friend’s community converge and create the “public sphere”.
As Habermas (1990) already described publicity as a transmitter of public opinion, those allegations could be transferred to Facebook, where publicity takes place and user postings shape public opinion. Habermas (1990: 55) identifies the “public sphere”, which is the area of public opinion and observed by an authority. Postings on Facebook can be reported if they offend other users or Facebook itself. “We see Facebook as a conceptually linked space because it is intensely social and performative, inviting users to participate, to connect and hence to become ‘recognizable’ in its public sphere” Cote and Pybus (2011: 12) point out.

“Communication not only expresses but also organizes the movement of globalization”, Hardt and Negri (2000: 32) demonstrate its importance. This marks the emergence of global social networks like Facebook. In those “social fabrics” an “insignificant play of self-generating and self-generating equilibria” happens, as Hardt and Negri (2000: 34) highlight. On Facebook, the “social fabric”, differences are neutralized since not all kind of postings are allowed. If some users feel offended they can report postings to Facebook, which describes this “self-generating equilibria” (Hardt/Negri 2000). The precise procedure will be described in chapter 2.3.
2.1 Social Networks and Social Media Communication

Social networks occurred because of the shift to interactivity and the change from the original Web 1.0 to the interactive Web 2.0. For those networks, human communication is a crucial factor. Human communication typically consists of synchronous and asynchronous interaction. “While synchronous interaction comes naturally to humans, usually through conversation and body language, asynchronous interaction, whether it is cave paintings, postcards, or tweets, necessarily requires a medium to store this information across time”, Hogan and Wellman (2014: 53) support. Therefore, Social Media networks contain asynchronous communication with a medium as transmitter with storage functionality, like the medium and social networking site Facebook. As a main sign for social networks, the user must fill in a profile about himself/herself.

The contributors explain that “a profile is a snapshot of the self”, which should be a “shadow of lived experience”, contains a profile picture and usually information about the person’s “gender, relationship status, favorite movies and a self-description” (Hogan/Wellman 2014: 54). Profiles in social networks “offer a sense of individualism”, Hogan and Wellman (2014: 54) summarize. Without this profile, it is impossible to use the functions of the Social Media network and to communicate with others asynchronously.

Social Media networks are “websites and other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information and to develop social and professional contacts”, the dictionary (2017a) explains. The history of Social Media goes back to the beginnings in 1997, which has been already 20 years ago. With this introduction, numerous social networking sites appeared on the Internet. “A network is a set of nodes interrelated by dyadic ties. The nodes, or actors, can consist of any kind of entity, from individuals to collectives (e.g., organizations, countries)”, Kane et al. (2014: 276) carry out. In social networks, various actors from various networks converge and form one universal network. In the following figure, the history of those networks will be shown.
This figure was republished, commented, completed and recently updated in an online article. Since the Social Media hype already started in 1997 with the major platform “Six Degrees.com”, this was the first real social networking site with the ability to create a profile and to connect with others. Before, just “Classmates.com” existed, which was a platform to “not create profiles, but they could locate long-lost grade school chums” (digitaltrends.com 2016). The sites which were launched after “Six Degrees.com” were portals like “Asian Avenue”, “Black Planet” and “Mi Gente”, which aimed to different cultural and demographic markets. The platform “Black Planet” is still successful today with about eight million attendants per month. In 2002 “Friendster” went online, which was very popular and “promoted the idea that a rich online community can exist only between people who truly have common bonds” (digitaltrends.com 2016).

In 2003, another hype was the platform “LinkedIn”. It was still a social networking tool but aimed to make connections to business people and to find jobs. Between 2005 and today, a lot more social networking sites appeared on the Internet. “Myspace” was a very successful
platform which focused on sharing music videos, but over the years it lost its popularity and was replaced by Facebook in 2006 (digitaltrends.com 2016). “YouTube” was introduced as a tool for watching videos, to share them with others and is still very popular today. “Flickr” appeared as a tool for sharing pictures and was replaced by “Instagram” in 2010, a tool for sharing pictures with followers and friends. Boyd and Ellison (2008) state in the Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication that there are different social networks for different kind of audiences existing.

“Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities.” (boyd/Ellison 2008: 210)

Facebook was launched in 2006 by Mark Zuckerberg open for everyone, after it was just used as an internal connection tool for Harvard students. Moreover “Twitter” was created and became a key player in the Social Media market. In 2007 also Google tried to create with “Google+” its own platform. “Snapchat” was created as a tool for sending pictures (digitaltrends.com 2016).

“WhatsApp”, a messaging service, also belongs to Facebook since 2014 and was found by Jan Koum and Brain Acton (WhatsApp.com 2017). According to Miller et al. (2016: 2) this messaging service can be used for communicating with smaller groups of about 20 people. Though, Facebook is still the largest social networking site worldwide, statistics say (Roth 2016).

With the change to Social Media, also the reach of people changed. “Prior to all these technologies, there were two main ways in which people communicated using media. The first was public broadcast media such as television, radio and newspapers”, Miller et al. (2016: 2) explain. With those technologies, it is possible to communicate one-sided to a large and unknown audience. As a second type of access, media tried to ease “private communication between two people as one-to-one conversations, for example a telephone conversation. This is also called ‘dyadic’ communication”, which is fostered by those social networks (Miller et al. 2016: 2). With those developments media became the tool for delivering messages and to stay in contact, which is Facebook’s mission as well.
2.2 Growing Facebook

The company was found in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. He set the product strategy and direction for the Social Media giant, in 2006 the network was released officially. Facebook is a U.S. company and there are different US offices in different states, like in “Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Denver, Los Angeles, Menlo Park, Miami, New York, Reno, Seattle and Washington D.C”. Other international offices are existing worldwide, for example in “Auckland, Amsterdam, Berlin, Brasilia, Brussels, Dubai, Stockholm and Tokyo” (newsroom.fb.com 2017). By December 2016 Facebook had 17.048 employees (newsroom.fb.com 2017). The network turned 12 years in 2016 and this year in 2017, it will turn 13. The Pew Research Center found that during the US elections in 2016, many American people used Facebook as an information tool and as a newspaper. Also for “mental breaks” the site is used as well as a research tool for jobs (Greenwood et al. 2016). This research deals with main findings of Americans using different kinds of Social Media tools. “Nearly eight-in-ten online Americans (79%) now use Facebook, more than double the share that uses Twitter (24%), Pinterest (31%), Instagram (32%) or LinkedIn (29%)”, the research center informs in the article by Greenwood et al. (2016).

A study of Statista (2017c) deals with the active monthly Facebook users worldwide in 2016. It says that Facebook is the “most popular social network worldwide”, compared to other social networks regarding reach and active users. The social network has 1.94 billions of users and the United States, India and Brazil counted to the most prevailing countries in April 2017 (Statista.com 2017a).

Also in the public discourse Facebook is a prevailing topic. As Facebook bought other messaging services like WhatsApp, it is growing constantly. A reason for the giant to buy WhatsApp was released in a statement by the founder Mark Zuckerberg, which was published on the website of a newspaper.

“Our mission is to make the world more open and connected. We do this by building services that help people share any type of content with any group of people they want. WhatsApp will help us do this by continuing to develop a service that people around the world love to use every day.” (Zuckerberg in telegraph.co.uk. 2014).
Facebook reasoned that the Facebook Messenger service just offered chatting with friends on Facebook, whereas the WhatsApp messaging service allowed communication with friends of the users’ telephone list, which was also a reason for the purchase. Facebook not only has its users on Facebook, it has more. A newspaper article of the Guardian (2016) by Solon claims that Facebook wants to take over the world, since the company now owns WhatsApp and Instagram, so the social network will be present everywhere in the future. Founder Zuckerberg stated he wants to connect the world and warns of people turning against that connection. On the other side, there is criticism about the worldwide takeover of the social networking giant regarding monopolization, Solon (2016) expresses.

Solon (2016) warns about the aim of Facebook, which is not connecting people but commerce, “who reminds us of the hidden agenda of social networking firms: if you’re not paying, you’re the product.” The users are paying nothing – it is free to use, like it says on the homepage of Facebook. “It is free and will always be”, Facebook claims (facebook.com 2017b). The users are paying with personal data by sharing information. Oggolder (2015: 1990) names the term “sharing” as a main activity on those networks, which allows producing private data free for others. How this data is used and proceeded will be explained in the following chapter. In the public discourse, this is an often mentioned and criticized topic. A reason why Facebook wanted to buy Snapchat is the youth turning to its competitor, an article of Forbes by Bercovici (2013) claimed: “Buying Snapchat would be a different form of insurance - a somewhat more expensive one.”

Snapchat seems to care more about privacy since the pictures expire after sending them to other users. In Snapchat’s privacy policy, the picture sending service claims that” there are three basic categories of information we collect: Information you choose to give us, information we get when you use our services and information we get from third parties” (snapchat.com 2017). For “information you choose to give to us”, the user name, password, e-mail address, phone number and date of birth are collected. For “information we get when you use our services and information we get from third parties”, usage information, content information, location information and much more information is collected. To “information we get from third parties” counts that the company can obtain information about the user from other companies operated or owned by Snapchat. Snapchat wants to act different in terms of privacy and explains “that we automatically delete the content of your Snaps (the photo and video messages that you send your friends) from our servers after we detect that a Snap has been opened by all recipients or has expired” (snapchat.com 2017).
On the contrary, in the Help Center of Facebook the network giant answers the question of “What happens to content (posts, pictures) that I delete from Facebook?” with the following statement: “We remove it from the site. Some of this information is permanently deleted from our servers; however, some things can only be deleted when you permanently delete your account” (facebook.com 2017a). The post is just removed from the site and not from the server when users delete it. This means that everything is saved. Snapchat as an opposite, deletes pictures and posts permanently. Another statement from Snapchat founder Evan Spiegel was: “There are very few people in the world who get to build a business like this, I think trading that for some short-term gain isn’t very interesting”, published in an article on a website (Fiegerman 2014). Therefore, Snapchat prevented Facebook from a worldwide takeover.

A further launch was Facebook Connect in 2008, two years after the Social Media giant went online. As a description, this tool included Facebook buttons such as the “Like Button” that are included on external websites you visit. You can comment for example on a posting or like it with the “Like Button”, but do not have to sign up on that external website. It is still possible to use tools of Facebook on other sites than Facebook as well, as explained in a blog (Overland 2010). Another service Facebook offers to message friends privately is called the Facebook Messenger. According to Statista (2017b), the messaging service had one billion monthly active users worldwide in July 2016. In the past, there were privacy concerns about this service. It is not possible to chat on the downloaded Facebook app for sending messages, the Messenger app must be downloaded as well. This earned a lot of criticism in the public discourse. As a reason for that, an online newspaper article of The Guardian (2016) assumes:

“The real reason that Facebook is pushing chat into its Messenger is to create another platform or silo from which Facebook can access you as a user. This might seem an odd decision on the surface, but viewed through the lens of a company that wants to spread its tendrils as far and wide as possible, it makes sense”. (Gibbs 2016)

In the article, Gibbs (2016) assumes that for the same reasons Facebook bought WhatsApp and Instagram, to also get those people who are not yet interested in Facebook. Since June 2015 it is possible that non-Facebook users can use the Facebook Messenger too. Therefore, Facebook targets to get information about non-users as well. “Facebook’s end goal is to reach as many people as possible by any route available”, Gibbs (2016) sums up in its contribution.
In 2030 Mark Zuckerberg wants to have five billion of Facebook users out of seven billion people worldwide (Della Cava 2016).

On the Forbes list, Facebook is on place 188 of the world’s biggest public companies (forbes.com 2016). Facebook is growing and we cannot overlook that fact. “By comparison, China's 2016 population was estimated to be 1.37 billion “, Taylor (2016) compares on the website of the World Economic Forum, as Facebook already closely has 2 billion of users. WhatsApp and Instagram are closely following Facebook; Snapchat is also on the list. The usage, settings and functions of Facebook will be explained more in detail now, to better understand the key player in the Social Media market.
2.3 Usage and Settings of Facebook

A contribution by boyd and Ellison (2008) defines Social Media sites as

“web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” (boyd/Ellison 2008: 211)

Facebook allows to create a public or semi-public profile when subscribing within the bounded system. This is the first step to take when registering to the social networking site. In the following figure, the homepage of Facebook is visible:

Figure 2: Home Page of Facebook (Facebook 2017)

Facebook focuses on the mission of connecting with others, on seeing pictures and updates of others, to share what happened in their life and to find more friends and groups to socialize. “The public display of connections is a crucial component of SNSs”, boyd and Ellison convey (2008: 213). The socialization of individuals is a main aim. Social networking sites are the tools to execute those processes of connecting and sharing. There are different types of social networking sites on the Internet. “Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities” (boyd/Ellison 2008: 210). Other sites support the connection to existing friends and acquaintances or on finding new ones, like Facebook does. I already described those different kinds of networks in a previous chapter.
After subscribing to Facebook, there are general privacy settings in which you can type in your name, contact information, e-mail address and password. Below in the security settings you can adapt your location, your used devices for logging in, set up extra security settings and use additional authentication requirements. In this field, you can also deactivate your account. Below in the privacy section, you can select the audience seeing your posts and who can contact you and find your profile. In the timeline and tagging section, you can adapt the settings who can post on your timeline (on your site) and who can see those postings. You can adjust the tagging functions; those are settings about who can tag you in pictures or postings. In the section blocking you can select users who annoy you and block them. If you put this person on the blocking list, the person can’t contact nor add you. Moreover, you can specify to block messages from persons if you don’t want to block the whole person from your profile. App invites can be blocked as well as game requests, events invitations and pages from companies. Then, companies cannot interact with you anymore (facebook.com 2017c).

There are the language settings below. Those ask, which language you want to choose and if your News Feed should be translated into another language. It also allows you to post in multiple languages. Other settings are the notification settings, which include options if you want to be notified in case of comments or messages of your friends. You can select to get notifications via e-mail too. In the mobile settings, you can verify your number in case you lost your phone. Then you can tick “lost your phone?” and log out on your phone externally to prevent strangers from using it. In the section of “public posts”, you can select settings about who can comment on your public postings. There are also settings for “apps and ads”. For advertisements, there is a setting which is, when I log into my ad settings, turned on automatically. This is a setting for “ads based on my use of websites and ads” and says “One of the ways we show you ads is based on your use of websites and apps that use Facebook's technologies. For example, if you visit travel websites, you might then see ads on Facebook for hotel deals. We call this online interest-based advertising” (facebook.com 2017c).

I saw those options just when looking through my privacy settings. It seems like Facebook included and turned on those automatically. There are ads of Amazon visible on the right section of the News Feed. I visited the Amazon online shop just a few seconds before and now, similar things I searched for appear in this ad section. In the public discourse, there is a lot of criticism about the manner of Facebook concerning privacy. It seems like that we need
to be influenced by things before we even know about those. This can be called “predictive analytics” and is about “understanding not just consumers’ shopping habits but also their personal habits, so as to more efficiently market to them”, an online article of The New York Times (2012) by Duhigg explains. It is obvious, that also Facebook uses this strategy with business advertising and users like me didn’t even recognize that.

The next setting is about ads on apps and websites of the Facebook companies and called “Audience Network”. It works similar as the previous setting. In the information part, it says:

“The Audience Network is a way for advertisers to display ads on websites and apps across devices such as computers, mobile phones and connected TVs. When companies buy ads through Facebook, they can choose to have their ads distributed in the Audience Network. We want to show ads that are relevant and useful to you. Your Facebook ad preferences can help us understand which ads would be most interesting to you. You can choose whether your Facebook ad preferences are used to show you ads on apps and websites that aren't provided by Facebook” (facebook.com 2017c).

Our preferences are used for third parties to allow them personal advertising, which is also called “online-interest based advertising” (facebook.com 2017c). Anyway, in those settings it says that even if we turn those off, we still get ads. “You’ll still see ads, but they won’t be as relevant to you”, the Social Media giant claims (facebook.com 2017c). Those ads are not as personalized and if you turn this setting off, you will receive ads based on your activities, your age, location, gender and content on Facebook you are interacting with (facebook.com 2017c). It seems that we can’t escape ads at all. The setting about “ads with my social actions” is existing as a next option. It asks if you want your friends to know, which sites you like in the News Feed. The last section is about “managing the preferences Facebook is showing ads”.

This one explains:

“We want to show you ads that you'll find relevant. That's why we have ad preferences, a tool that lets you view, add and remove preferences we created for you based on things like your profile information, actions you take on Facebook and websites and apps you use off Facebook” (facebook.com 2017c).

It suggests that if you like the hobby “cycling” on Facebook, ads from local bicycle shops will show up. In chapter 4.6 I will go deeper into the field, show how those personalized ads are
looking and give hints how to avoid them successfully. The last two setting sections contain “payments”, which deal with credit card information if you want to create ads as a business on Facebook. The last one contains “support inbox”, in which you can contact Facebook if someone is annoying you or if you want to report something. There is also a “safety center”, where you can get advices about privacy (facebook.com 2017c). You can inform yourself about how to set up your profile, how you contact your friends and how to change your settings. In the very last section you can adapt settings for “video replay” on the News Feed. After subscribing to Facebook, you can select various things that introduce you to the audience and find other users, so-called friends or acquaintances, to share your connection with. When you got friends on Facebook it is possible to see the friends list of the new friend as well. On the News Feed, you can post a status. Usually the posting section looks like that:

![Figure 3: News Feed on Facebook (Facebook 2017)](Image)

Facebook asks “What’s on your mind?” (facebook.com 2017d). You can add a picture, a video, a feeling or activity on the News Feed. You can post about everything you want and you are thinking of currently. Hence, as a critical question: “Is asking what’s on your mind not a very private issue? Is it not a thing I should know just by myself?”

Raunig (2011: 156) describes this as a desire to inform others in a public way not only about the user’s personal data, but also about himself/herself. He claims that Social Media forces its users to be virtual visible because privacy is perceived as a lack. Back then in the antiquity, privacy was a weakness of a power to act political. Publicity was perceived as a preferred good, the author concludes. Lovink (2011: 193) suggests that nowadays, anonymity should be the desirable good in our society. To wear a mask and demonstrating that it is possible to change the identity should be perceived as a chance for the subject. Nevertheless, in our political world today anonymity is restricted and we need to reveal our identities for security reasons, as also Facebook is justifying its actions for better security. In the following chapter, those strategies of the Social Media giant will be examined more carefully.
2.4 Data Gathering through Facebook

In the past, there was a lot of negative criticism about the data gathering procedure of Facebook. In an article of the BBC (2015) by Wakefield the news agency deals with data gathering of the Social Media giant, for example by using “cookies”, which is a “simple text file which can track a number of user activities”. Facebook.com (2017e) claims in its policies: “Cookies are used to store and receive identifiers and other information on computers, phones, and other devices.” Facebook services should be improved by “personalizing content, tailoring and measuring ads, and providing a safer experience”, the company claims (facebook.com 2017e).

Facebook justifies that personalized content would lead to a better and safer user experience. Those cookies can be used for authentication (you can keep logged in), for security reasons when unknown persons want to login into your account and for “advertising, insights and measurement” (facebook.com 2017e). For authentication or being kept logged in, Facebook explains: “You do not have to keep logging into Facebook and so you can more easily log into Facebook via third-party apps and websites”. Cheshire (2011) claims that therefore, “Facebook tracks you - even if you're not logged in. Its cookies don't expire when you sign out, but are altered to allow the site to keep tabs on your web activity”. This means that the social network also traces activities even when users are not logged into Facebook. As a reward, users can easily access Facebook without logging in each time again.

The research title of this thesis “Are we Prisoners of Facebook”, can be connected to those findings and arguments. It seems that we are imprisoned with constantly giving private usage data to the social networking giant, even when we not use it. Facebook aims to “use cookies to help us show ads for businesses and other organizations to people who may be interested in the products, services or causes they promote” (facebook.com 2017e). It also delivers ads to users who recently visited company’s websites or their pages on Facebook. Those cookies should help companies in identifying the success of their ad campaigns as well. The Social Media giant claims:” We use cookies to count the number of times an ad is shown and to calculate the cost of those ads. We also use cookies to measure how often people do things like click on or view ads” (facebook.com 2017e). For that, each click of the user is tracked and the costs of ad campaigns are taken down for the number of times those ads are distributed by companies. As a justification Facebook adds that those cookies serve to prevent users from seeing ads several times on different devices they use.
“Cookies can help us understand how people use the Facebook Service, analyze which parts of the Facebook Services people find most useful and engaging, and identify features that could be improved”, Facebook (2017e) further claims in its cookies policy. Cookies as well serve as an adaption and rendering tool for showing content on different screens, which leads to high usability of the page. At the same time, cookies are an instrument for businesses and companies to adapt ad campaigns to make more profit. Family companies of Facebook like Instagram also set and receive those cookies. Therefore, data is exchanged constantly between those networks. In the cookies policy of Facebook, it says that “other parties may use cookies on the Facebook Services to provide services to us and the businesses that advertise on Facebook” (facebook.com 2017e). Third parties are companies which interact on Facebook and pay the Social Media giant for delivering ads to potential future customers.

Facebook explains solutions to avoid those cookies. The network describes that you can adapt your ad preferences in the settings. “You can use your ad preferences to learn why you’re seeing a particular ad and control how we use information we collect to show you ads” (facebook.com 2017e). I already described those ad preferences settings in the previous chapter, those were the settings which where automatically turned on in my profile. Users can control at least to a part what happens to their data.

Wakefield (2015) claims in the article of the BBC that Facebook already was in a privacy breach because of the use of cookies. “A court has ruled that it is unacceptable that every time someone clicks a "like" button on a website, their browsing activity is collected, regardless of whether they are Facebook users or not” (Wakefield 2015). Facebook justified itself again for security reasons. If they would remove those cookies, users would be unsafe in the network. Facebook argued that those serve as a prevention from fake accounts or profiles being hacked (Wakefield 2015). The article of the BBC concludes, that all EU websites had to give website visitors consent that they use cookies which can be stored. “The internet has always been offered for free and, the argument goes, people would not be prepared to pay cold, hard cash for services from the likes of Facebook and Google, preferring instead to pay with their data”, Wakefield (2015) closes the report. As it says on the homepage of Facebook (2017b): “It’s free and always will be”.

23
Another form of data gathering of Facebook can be applied to the “Like Button”. If a user recognizes something which appears on Facebook, either from a user or a company, he/she can like the post with this button, which was a feature of Facebook Connect in 2008. When users like a page of a company on Facebook, they see the postings of the company in their News Feed. The article “What Facebook knows” of the MIT Technology Review (2012) by Simonite claims that the Like Button “appears on apps and websites outside of Facebook and allows people to indicate with a click that they are interested in a brand, product, or piece of digital content”. Therefore, it has a kind of stimulative nature and seems to be an “addictive invention” (Simonite 2012). Not only the Like-Button helps to identify interests of its users, Facebook also collects “information in certain apps or websites, when users listen to a song or read a news article. The information is passed along to Facebook, even if no one clicks ‘Like’”. The social network seems to have an enormous load of information of its billions of users.

This opens the question what Facebook does with all the data. In the article of the MIT by Simonite (2012), a data scientist called Cameron Marlow was interviewed. He led the data scientist team of Facebook, as described on his homepage (cameronmarlow.com 2017). Marlow claims that “advertisers and brands are a part of this network as well, so giving them some insight into how people are sharing the content they are producing is a very core part of the business model” (Simonite 2012). The article describes Facebook as a tool for understanding human behavior. “Private conversations, family photos, and records of road trips, births, marriages, and deaths all stream into the company’s servers and lodge there. Facebook has collected the most extensive data set ever assembled on human social behavior” (Simonite 2012). With giving private data to the social networking giant, Facebook “has found ingenious ways to collect data as people socialize” (Simonite 2012).

A further form of data gathering can be related to the “Open Graph”, which could be described as a huge database with all kinds of user information. “The Open Graph is Facebook’s database of user data that includes every Facebook user’s personal information from their age, to who their friends over to Facebook likes. It is also the platform that third
party apps connect to in order to pull valuable user data to help businesses target their customers more effectively” (wishpond.com 2015).

The Open Graph, Graph API, or “Open Application Programming Interfaces”, was created to “support interoperability by providing the tools to share data used to develop popular and useful Web applications, achieve seamless integration of social media services, and give rise to mutually beneficial third-party developer ecosystems that build on top of social media platforms” (Bodle 2011).

Bodle (2011) criticizes that those APIs offer advantages as well as disadvantages. Advantages could be that those tools connect people and offer new ways of socializing. Disadvantages could be that “they also provide a means for companies like Facebook to achieve market dominance, as well as undermine privacy, data security, contextual integrity, user autonomy and freedom” (Bodle 2011). The Open Graph allows those Social Plugins, those can be for example the “Like Button, Activity Feed, Recommendations, Like Box, Login Button, Facepile, Comments and Live Stream” (Overland 2010), fostered by Facebook Connect. In chapter 4.6 I will go deeper into the field of personal interest-based advertising, since this could be described as a drawback of Facebook.

3 Purpose of Social Networks

Social networks aim to serve different purposes. Those purposes seem to be positive as well as negative as I will show in the following chapters. In this chapter, positive effects of social networks will be displayed. Followed by the chapter of the drawbacks, in which I will focus on dangers of using those platforms. As social networks can be used as a tool for positively influencing the user’s self-identity, as a feedback tool from friends, as a tool for keeping up friendships and establishing ties of friendships, social networks also offer a so-called stimulative nature. The stimulative nature of social networks can be linked to the drawbacks of social networks. Social networks can serve as a tool for political democracy and journalism, but in Social Media hate speech and shitstorms often occur consequently. As there can be advantages as well as disadvantages by using social networks and particularly by using Facebook, I will further put a light on those. First, I will start with the psychological effects by using social networks as a tool for identity formation and identity construction, which is a broad topic and has been investigated by the sociologist Sherry Turkle.
3.1 Identity Construction in Social Networks

Sherry Turkle is a well-known researcher in the field of identity formation on the Internet. Turkle (1995: 9) describes in her publication “Life on the Screen – Identity in the Age of the Internet”, the cyberspace as “part of the routines of everyday life”, where users can build connections to communities and connect with different people from different contexts and nations. In cyberspace, “inventing ourselves as we go along” takes place for individuals (Turkle 1995: 10). Therefore, it could be assumed that adolescents are learning to construct and build their identity by using Facebook or other social networks, as they invent themselves through their performance on the screen and by the feedback of others. “When we step through the screen into virtual communities, we reconstruct our identities on the other side of the looking glass. This reconstruction is our cultural work in progress” Turkle explains (1995: 177). Hence, this identity performance on Facebook could be described as “cultural work in progress”, as we “invent ourselves as we go along.”

This raises the question if that constructed identity is “unitary or multiple” (Turkle 1995: 178). In the online world, identity could be handled as a complex construct. Turkle (1995: 178) hereby states: “the Internet is another element of the computer culture has contributed to thinking about identity as multiplicity.” The author takes the many selves of the individual as a guideline for acting on the Internet and in Social Media. Hence, identity in Social Media seems to be a construct of multiple selves in progress. In her empirical research, Turkle (1995) found that the online presence of individuals is different from their real-life presence, as online they pretend to be more outgoing. She claims that individuals tend to present themselves online as how they wish they would be in real-life. Therefore, social networking tools like Facebook serve as a platform of performance of identity for individuals. Turkle (1995: 179) claims that the identity construct and its perceptions changed over time. In the past century identity was perceived as “forged”, which means that identity was perceived as static and difficult to change. In today’s postmodern culture, “many more people experience identity as a set of roles that can be mixed and matched” (Turkle 1995: 180). The sociologist obtains the introduction of the Internet as a reason for the modified construction of identity.

The Internet could be a playground of identity, as adolescents can practice their representation online. In real-life, “direct experience is often messy; its meaning is never exactly clear” (Turkle 1995: 238). In the online world, there is no direct point of attack on the user. Turkle (1995: 238) explains that in the online world, “virtual experience may be so compelling that
we believe that within it we’ve achieved more than we have”. Therefore, social networks can serve as a helpful tool for the construction of the individual’s identity.

Also in Facebook users have the possibility to share pictures or postings of moments they experienced and give information about themselves to others. In real-life, individuals are used to presenting one kind of identity to others, whereas the Internet allows them to experience and to play with identity. Turkle (1995) mainly obtains those allegations to second life and multi-user-online games, where people can create one or more avatars to perform different identities on different stages or platforms. If those allegations are connected to the social networking giant Facebook, I would say it is partly true that users can perform their multiple identities as they move along in the network. As it said in the part before, Facebook tries to act against fake accounts and against people using different accounts for surfing on the network. Habermas (1990: 55) suggests that the public sphere is supervised. Facebook friends could be described as the authority, because they observe actions of others which appear on their News Feed. The ultimate authority could be Facebook, since the network can delete and block unjust postings. Since the identity performance of users depends on the watching audience, self-regulation takes place, as Hardt and Negri (2000: 34) assert.

Turkle (1995) cites the work of philosopher and sociologist Bentham, the Panopticon, an imaginary prison of the 18th century. “Prisoners would have to assume they were being observed and would therefore behave adapted to the norms that the guard would impose, if watching. Individuals learn to look at themselves through the eyes of the prison guard” (Turkle 1995: 247-248). Facebook users know that their actions in the network like sharing, liking or posting are observed by their friends. Therefore, those actions are adapted before to the watching friends can see them. Hence, it can be supposed that the presented identity on Facebook is a construct of identity, which performance depends on the watching audience. By exercising on the playground of Facebook, individuals can learn what others think about them. “But people are isolated in their reflections about their electronic personae. On the Internet, such matters are more likely to find a collective voice” Turkle (1995: 249) supports. Thus, the Internet and especially Social Media seem to be a good tool for constructing the identity of the individual by receiving collective feedback. When entering the playground of the online world in Social Media, a user creates a profile about himself/herself. Turkle (1995) tells that “Some feel an uncomfortable sense of fragmentation, some a sense of relief. Some sense the possibilities for self-discovery, even self-transformation” (Turkle 1995: 260). It
appears that the online-world could be a tool for self-discovery and identity formation. People create a version of themselves which they display online and can vary from their offline-identity. This could be identified as a flexible self. “What most characterizes the model of a flexible self is that the lines of communication between its various aspects are open. The open communication encourages an attitude of respect for the many within us and the many within others”, Turkle (1995: 261) supports.

Those allegations can be linked to Facebook because it offers an open communication with other users. By posting on the News Feed an “attitude of respect” (Turkle 1995: 261) is created, since friends can share and comment on everything which is posted. Turkle (1995) claims that for identity construction this can be very helpful. As we see the different versions of ourselves we get to know ourselves and to “know our limitations”, Turkle (1995: 261) expresses. With presenting the flexible self, “a more fluid sense of self allows a greater capacity for acknowledging diversity” (Turkle 1995: 261). For that, exercising in Social Media can be optimal for constructing self-identity and getting self-confident. “If we cultivate our awareness of what stands behind our screen personae, we are more likely to succeed in using virtual experience for personal transformation”, Turkle (1995: 269) explains. Hence, it is mandatory to use Social Media consciously. Once more, Ellison (2013: 10) states that on the Internet, people often display different identities on different platforms.

“Multiple identities are enabled in online spaces and these identities may or may not correspond to one’s offline identity. For instance, one person can create multiple accounts on different sites, or even the same site, each of which reflect a different aspect or facet of their identity.” (Ellison 2013: 10)

Those allegations can be connected to different kinds of social networks and to Turkle’s (1995) concept of multiple identities. All those presentations of ourselves flow together and define our personality and further, our identity. Turkle supports this perception in an interview. “Technology is the architect of our intimacies. Technology is the architect, in this case for this young man, of the self. If he wants to be popular on Twitter, he has to be an appealing Twitter personality” (Turkle in Mainwaring 2011). Regarding Facebook this is proper too, as when I check my News Feed and postings from my friends, I rarely see postings about bad happenings of them. Their postings rather seem to be ostentatious by using appealing pictures. I already recognize beautiful pictures from vacations, concerts, successes and happy families on Facebook. Hence, Ellison (2013: 5) supports:
“Greater control over self-presentation is also enabled by the fact that mediated communication – where we don’t see one another face-to-face – often masks or hides the physical cues to identity that are ascribed on the body, such as wrinkles that indicate age or skin tone which can indicate ethnicity”.

Ellison (2013) clarifies that mediated communication as Social Media communication is often easier for users because they can hide behind their identity and screen. Users can display the picture they want others to receive. Thus, social networks can serve as a tool for building up self-confidence and receiving feedback for constructing self-identity. Turkle sums up that users should always bear in mind that the self they present on Facebook, is just a version of their self (Turkle in Mainwaring 2011). If the self is not accepted by others, cyber-mobbing can occur, which will be explained in the next chapter. Goffman (1956) highlights that individuals always try to control what kind of impression the receiver obtains from the situation when appearing before others. On Facebook, users can control their self-representation because they decide themselves which postings they share with their friends. In the end of the interview of Mainwaring (2011), Turkle states that the Social Media behavior of users usually changes over time. “I think, as people get older, they start to say, “Ironic? Witty? Okay, that’s my Twitter self, but I’m going to invest less and know that I’m doing that for professional reasons, but that’s not me”. Facebook consists of sharing and commenting and letting others know what is liked and what is not. As a crucial point, Facebook doesn’t allow playing with multiple identities. “On some SNSs, such as Facebook, individuals are encouraged to have one profile that closely corresponds to their offline identity”, Ellison (2013: 10) embraces.

We define ourselves by the feedback of others. Thus, we get to know ourselves and Goffman (1956: 6) assumes: “Society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in a correspondingly appropriate way”. Goffman calls interaction as a form of projection of a self. A user when projecting himself/herself “automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect” (Goffman 1956: 6), as Turkle (1995: 261) describes the “attitude of respect”. On Facebook identity could be seen as flexible, depending on the observing friends of the individual, which is leading to the following chapter of friendships and contacts.
3.2 Friendships and Contacts

Social Media networks serve the main purpose of keeping up friendships or establishing ties of friendship, so-called social ties. On Facebook (2017b), the Social Media giant expresses: “People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what’s going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.” A very important transmitter of communication on social networks is called computer-mediated communication.

The dictionary of Techopedia (2017a) describes computer-mediated communication as “a process in which human data interaction occurs through one or more networked telecommunication systems”. That portrays “the Internet as a medium characterized by intense social activity” (Watt et al. 2002: 62). Watt et al. (2002) say that computer-mediated communication can support or replace face-to-face communication. It is interesting how those new technologies influence the user’s behavior of bonding ties of friendships. “New technologies tend to supplement rather than substitute for existing practices and forms of organization”, and this leads to a “rise to interesting new forms of interrelationship between the virtual and the real, and the modification of both modes of communication”, Woolgar (2002: 16-17) expresses. Those social networks serve as a transmitter or addition of communication and friendship bonds.

A study of the Pew Research Center (2015) with American adolescents using Social Media for various purposes was conducted. Lenhart (2015) claims in the article: “Beyond making new friends, social media is major way that teens interact with their existing friends. More than nine-in-ten teens (94%) say they spend time with friends on social media.” It is interesting which tools are most important for keeping up contact. “When asked to rank the ways they communicate with friends, social media sites like Facebook or Twitter are one of the top ways of communicating with friends for two-thirds (66%) of teens” Lenhart (2015) states. Therefore, Facebook is a very popular tool for keeping up contact to friends.

Castells (2005) contributes that our society changed with the rise of using technologies. He describes the concept of our society today as “networked individualism.”

“This is the emergence of networked individualism, as social structure and historical evolution induce the emergence of individualism as the dominant culture of our societies, and the new communication technologies perfectly fit into the mode of building sociability along self-
selected communication networks, on or off depending on the needs and moods of each individual. So, the network society is a society of networked individuals.” (Castells 2005: 12)

As individualism among society increased over the past, those technologies serve as a practical tool for socializing with others. Our society changed to “networked individuals”, as Castells (2005) suggests. Individuals can choose themselves which networks they use for keeping up those friendships and contacts. Though, it can be assumed that the use of networks follows a peer pressure. Networks need to be selected, which also friends of the individual like to use. Since Facebook nearly has 2 billion of users, it appears to be the communication tool for nearly everyone. Hence, the new communication technologies serve as a helpful tool for keeping up friendships. Users need to be online for keeping up those friendships, therefore those networks tend to have a simulative nature.

### 3.3 Facebook and its Stimulative Nature

For the previously mentioned reasons, it can be supposed that people are keep coming back to Facebook because of the friendships they keep there and furthermore, because of the feedback they receive there. It can be said that Facebook truly has a kind of stimulative nature, because people keep coming back again. Even if users don’t actively post, they keep coming back and observe the actions of others. This can be described as passive Facebook use, or by the term “lurking”. According to the dictionary of Techopedia (2017b), “Lurking is a slang term for when an individual reads a message board without posting or engaging with the community.” I notice that the passive use in my friends list is prevailing because a lot of them don’t post regularly. They keep coming back to Facebook, as I see that they are online.

I assume that technology shifted our world to a highly fast changing and connected world. The sociologist Castells (2005: 3) supports that: “However, technology is a necessary, albeit not sufficient condition for the emergence of a new form of social organization based on networking, that is on the diffusion of networking in all realms of activity on the basis of digital communication networks”. With the rise of technology, a society of networking emerged. Networking through Social Media platforms like Facebook became unavoidable for communication with others.

Social Media and especially Facebook with its News Feed, friends, services and tools (Like Button, event invites, comments, messaging) seem to offer the possibility to condense all
those kinds of communications and make them more practical and accessible. In real-life, we would also get back in touch with our friends. Therefore, also the Internet must have this stimulative nature since all the friends of the user are communicating there. Turkle (1995: 178) confirms that people have “needs for connection and social participation”. Even if users just “lurk” and use Facebook passively, they are still subscribed and part of it. As Miller (2011: 217) states that Facebook “seems to help us return to the kind of involvement in social networks that we believe we have lost”. Without using those networks, individuals would feel isolated and excluded. I will try to give an answer to the question why Facebook keeps us drawn to in the empirical part. I want to answer the question if we are “Prisoners of Facebook”. Not only in friendship does social participation take place, but also in the political world of Facebook, as it could be described as an important global network for democracy.

3.4 Global Network for Democracy

In this part, I will focus on positive issues regarding Facebook and democracy. In the chapter of the drawbacks, I will rather focus on negative issues which can occur consequently like fake news, filter bubble and selection. I already expressed statements of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. He said that with creating the social network Facebook, his mission was to connect the world globally. For democratic purposes this seems to be encouraging. With the rise of user-generated content and the expression of opinions, the Web 2.0 lead to a constantly collaborative exchange of news, thoughts and criticism. Newman et al. support that there is:

“potential for the Internet to open up new ways for individuals and groups to participate in the news. Fueled by the growth of powerful social networks like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, individuals are increasingly able to create, collaborate and share their own media, often to the bemusement of governments and traditional news organizations.” (2014: 135)

Social networks can be explained as “communicative instruments that formalize and inscribe a heretofore informal discourse”, Dijck (2012: 165) endorses. The contributor links this to the concept of Habermas (1990) of the public sphere. With the development of the Web 2.0 and Social Media platforms, a “new” public sphere was created. In this sphere, communicative instruments which exist on Facebook (like the possibility to share thoughts, pictures, videos and articles with other users) lead to a rise of an exchange of views. This further creates a
discourse about various topics and supports democracy. On Facebook, people assemble and can informally exchange opinions. Moreover, users can “find new and more diverse sources of information about the topics that interest them in ways that support quality journalism in local and global arenas”, Newman et al. (2014: 136) contribute.

In its principles, Facebook (2017f) states: “People should have the freedom to share whatever information they want, in any medium and any format, and have the right to connect online with anyone – any person, organization or service.” The network supports the democratic cause to share with others. The “free flow of information” should be retained and all should have the “freedom to access all of the information” published by others (facebook.com 2017f). Everyone can be a sender, no one can be excluded, for everyone there is a possibility to speak as it says in its principles. Facebook describes itself as one world which crosses boundaries and should be accessible for everyone. Thus, it can be linked to the description of a global network for democracy. In the public discourse, Social Media is often described as the extension and future of traditional journalism.

“A number of politicians are now using different social networking sites to make their online presence strong. Twitter and Facebook are the two most internationally used social sites, and different politicians use these two to stay in touch with the public. Through their official pages, they share their recent activities, stance on different matters, and encourage people to share their point of views with them.” (Baig 2014)

Those allegations can be linked to the U.S. elections 2016 between the candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Both used Social Media and especially Facebook for promoting their ideas and to inform the public about their presidential race. It offered the observing audience an insight into political actions and gave them a voice by commenting postings of the politicians and to share their opinion. In Social Media communication, the interaction works two-sided since users can give feedback to various issues the politician delivers. For one-sided communication like the publication of news in newspapers, people can rarely raise their voices. Various politicians of different parties already have profiles on Facebook. Maybe they recognized the success they could have with their Social Media presence and letting people interact. In Social Media, people can participate and speak directly to politicians without anything standing in between, which promotes global democracy.
An article by the newspaper “die Presse” (2017) by Aichinger and Kommenda deals with the right of demonstrations in Social Media networks. This right should be regulated in a new way, the Austrian justice minister Wolfgang Brandstetter fosters. The justice minister agrees that some concerns can be communicated and executed in Social Media like on Facebook. He claims that Social Media offers new possibilities to make requests and matters public. Those requests should be carried out online instead of offline. Offline demonstrations often cause blocking streets and giving offence. The contribution of Castells (2005: 12) supports the perception of global social networks as a tool for opinion formation, political decision making and democracy. Facebook could be described as “the cognitive space where people’s minds receive information and form their views by processing signals from society at large”. Thus, social networks serve as a tool for mediation between the public and institutions. “This is why the structure and dynamics of socialized communication is essential in the formation of consciousness and opinion, at the source of political decision making”, Castells support (2005: 12).

An example for shifting demonstrations from the offline into the online world was discussed recently in the Austrian politics. With creating Facebook groups of interests and requests, opinions, issues and public criticism could be made public (Aichinger/Kommenda 2017). “Social media broaden the exposure and increase its speed, with networks of friends and associates sharing the information instantly” Papic and Noonan (2011) consider. In the past, there were several happenings with people raising their voices about political injustices in countries with authoritarian regimes. Those were made public in Facebook. The authors assume:

“The role of social media in protests and revolutions has garnered considerable media attention in recent years. Current conventional wisdom has it that social networks have made regime change easier to organize and execute. An underlying assumption is that social media is making it more difficult to sustain an authoritarian regime — even for hardened autocracies like Iran and Myanmar — which could usher in a new wave of democratization around the globe.” (Papic/Noonan 2011)

Christina Schachtner researched about demonstrations on the Internet in Arabic countries and north Africa. She presents the case of a platform called “mideastyouth.com”, where adolescents described recent political happenings in countries like Syria, Egypt and Yemen. With receiving access to digital media and the Internet, grievances can be demonstrated
online, especially in those mid-east countries where political war and inequalities are prevailing. Therefore, the Internet can be an open space for democracy with displaying issues globally on a platform and increasing its reach. Schachtner (2012: 99) describes the virtual space as a possibility to move between privacy and publicity and hence, as a space for practicing discussions for issues to find solutions. In another publication, Schachtner (2009: 8) states that digital media offers and supports a cross-bordering structure and serves as a stage for global discussion.

Facebook allows everyone to post about happenings and to share them instead of keeping them secret. Though, openness could be used to full capacity and fake news could arise, as everyone can share so easily. In the following part those drawbacks will be carried out and linked to citations of the previous chapters.

4 Drawbacks of Social Networks

Social Media-opponents blame Facebook and other social networking sites as a waste of time, as a tool for exploiting privacy, as a tool for misinformation and fake news and moreover, as a tool for gathering data for businesses. The rise of fake news is currently an issue where it is hard to detect the initiators. Not only is news often faked, fake profiles also exist on the network. The introduction of the Web 2.0 with giving users the possibility to take part in sharing and commenting not only fostered advantages. In real-life bullying is a problem, often at schools or other educational facilities. Also on the Internet it is a problem, where the initiator can cover his tracks easier than offline. On the Internet, this is described as “cyber-bullying”. In times like these we also hear about the “always-on mentality” of people spending a lot of time on the Internet. It is assumed that the social status is related to the number of friends the user has, this is meant by the phrase “quantification of friendships” in this chapter. Following, the term cyber-bullying will be further explained. In the past, there were various cases published in the news and social networks blamed for.
4.1 Cyber-Bullying on the Internet

The dictionary (2017b) describes cyber-bullying as “to bully online by sending or posting mean, hurtful, or intimidating messages, usually anonymously.” Sherry Turkle dealt in her research with the issue of cyber-bullying and gives hints how to deal with it in a right way:

“Keep a little bit of distance between that Facebook self and your sense of your own self so you can have a sense of distance and irony that things that happen to you on Facebook, slights, hurts, they’re not really happening to you, they’re happening to that you that you perform. I think that is a healthy use of this medium” (Turkle in Mainwaring 2011).

If bullying on the Internet occurs, it is important that the user recognize that it is an assault on the displayed social media self, as Turkle (1995) highlights in the interview. If the performance of the individual is not accepted, he/she can possibly become a victim of cyber-bullying. For a reason of cyber-bullying, Gross (2012) claims:

“When we are face to face, we are inhibited by the presence of the other. We are inhibited from aggression by the presence of another face, another person. We're aware that we're with a human being. On the Internet, we are disinhibited from taking into full account that we are in the presence of another human being.”

In an interview Turkle explains that as we are getting older, we begin to interact in a more mature way with those social networks as Facebook. “We are going to get better at dealing with this technology in more mature and sophisticated ways” (Turkle in Mainwaring 2011). For a reason, why especially adolescents are so vulnerable on Social Media Turkle refers to the identity formation issue, since adolescents just form their self-confidence with growing up. “The most powerful thing about this technology, and the reason we’re so vulnerable to it is that it’s an identity technology. It’s a technology that offers us identity “, she concludes the interview (Turkle in Mainwaring 2011).

Another issue which can occur through cyber-bullying is called a shitstorm. A shitstorm is “a situation marked by violent controversy “, the dictionary (2017c) explains. Since this is a recent expression appearing on the Internet, literature is scarce about it. Though, it can be related to the term cyber-bullying. On the one side, there is the victim and on the other side, there is one or more bullies. Shitstorms could be described as “a course of action that would appear to lead to a good outcome, but when undertaken, leads to a situation that is utterly out
of control beyond human comprehension” (dictionary 2017d). When posting something on Social Media with a good intention this can lead to misunderstandings and massive critique of the watching audience. The issue of shitstorms could be explained as hate speech as well. This is a “speech that attacks, threatens, or insults a person or group on the basis of national origin, ethnicity, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability” (dictionary 2017e). When hate speech discrimination occurs, shitstorms can get viral very fast.

The public discourse touched upon negative happenings on the Internet. I will include several happenings reported by various newspapers about victims of cyber-bullying. An article of Daily Mail (2013) describes Facebook as the worst social networking tool in regard of bullying and claims that 19-year old boys are most endangered. “Many boys feel under pressure to demonstrate their bravado, particularly on the web, but this attitude and male deficiency in coping strategies can make them more vulnerable and open to trolling”, Gayle (2013) considers. It is dramatic that especially in this age group, those things can happen and possibly lead to suicide at worst.

A case which happened recently was published by the newspaper The Independent in 2016. “A teenager who shot herself in front of her family after cyberbullies made fun of her weight is still being mocked by fake Facebook profiles”, Broomfield (2016) reports. The female victim was 18 years old and the attacks were reported to the police. Since the bullies used fake-profiles, they couldn’t be traced. “Following Brandy's suicide, the Texas City Police Department said in a statement that it was investigating the cyber-bullying attacks. No arrests have yet been made,”, Broomfield (2016) closes the report. Another one was the case of Amanda Todd, a girl who was stalked and blackmailed by a bully. The 15-year old girl took her life in 2012, just five years ago. She was extorted from the bully by nude pictures of her, which he claimed to distribute all over the Internet. Since the bully did that with a lot more victims, he was detected and imprisoned for ten years (Standard 2017, Kurier 2017).

In all those cases, it is recognizable that the initiator not always gets detected. In the case of Amanda Todd, the bully got detected since he cyber-bullied 34 young females and five homosexual men in six different countries. Therefore, it was hard to cover his traces. Online he was active under nearly 100 different names. Facebook detected him because he had so many profiles and fake profiles are forbidden (Kurier 2017). Facebook users have the
possibility to report fake profiles. Thus, Facebook has a self-regulating aspect and tries to prevent users from those happenings. When scrolling the Internet, many more reported cases of bullied adolescents appear.

Since it is hard to detect the initiator and easy to immerse in the vastness of the Internet, the problem is intelligible. In the chapter at the end of this thesis I will mention the term media pedagogy, which could be taught at school to avoid cyber-bulling beforehand and to illuminate students about those issue, dangers and risks. As I mentioned before, Facebook doesn’t allow its users to play with multiple identities. For identity formation, this could be negative. Users only get one profile and one chance to perform their identity online. For security reasons and to avoid issues like cyberbullying, this is a crucial positive trait. Not only cyber-bullying could be an issue, but also the always-on mentality in our increasingly technologized world. It could foster negative issues like cyber-bullying, a consequence of being always connected to the Internet.

4.2 Always-On Mentality on the Internet

The “always-on mentality” is often mentioned as a characteristic of the Web 2.0 and its stimulative nature. boyd considers

“It’s about living in a world where being networked to people and information wherever and whenever you need it is just assumed. I may not be always-on the Internet as we think of it colloquially, but I’m always connected to the network. And that is what it means to be always-on.” (boyd 2012:72).

In a psychological report, Griffiths (2012) criticizes that a lot of different kinds of addictions exist: Internet addiction, mobile phone addiction and gambling addiction. Since a lot of different activities take place on Facebook, it is difficult to blame Facebook as a tool for addiction. Thus, in today’s world it is often just presumed to be part of Facebook and to be always-on. What should also be mentioned is the growing mobile use over the past. With that, it can be supposed that the rise of smartphones and therefore, the rise of use of the Facebook app, lead to the growing Facebook success. Statista (2017e) claims: “Facebook’s appeal is not only based on its social platform but also on its strong mobile integration and its mobile messaging capabilities”. Statista (2017e) informs that the number of “mobile only users” has risen in all parts of the world over the past years.
As with 2017, the daily Facebook use worldwide count 1.28 billion of active users daily. According to the full year results of 2016, the giant has currently nearly two billion of users, therefore the 1.28 daily active billion of users are in the majority. As the purpose of social networks is to keep up friendships, this can lead to quantification of friendships at the same time.

### 4.3 Quantification and Fake Friends

Online social networks allow new possibilities for managing friendships easily. With tools, friendships can be made on social networks (Kneidinger 2010: 35). On Facebook, it is possible to add someone you know as a friend and the receiver of this friend request accepts or declines the connection. With accepting the connection, both can visit the other one’s profile and see his/her postings and comment on them. After accepting the friends request, the “new friend” is visible in the friends list of the other one. The user can decide by himself/herself, with which contacts he/she wants to interact more.

Bryant et al. (2012: 10) define three types of friendships. They describe for the term friends the categories of “close friends”, “casual friends”, and “acquaintances”. The contributors describe “close friends” as “very close or best friends who interact using numerous channels of communication (e.g., face-to-face, telephone, email, Facebook).” In this type of friendship, offline contact is very important and supported by online contact via social networks or messaging services. “Casual friends” are “labeled as real friends with whom participants interact with outside of Facebook, yet lack intimacy and extreme closeness” (Bryant et al.)
Also for this type of friendship, offline contact is important but not as important as in close friendships. “Acquaintances” are “the extremely large number of people whom participants had met once or twice offline but whose interaction was primarily limited to passive Facebook use such as monitoring each other’s profile updates” (Bryant et al. 2012: 10). Bryant et al. (2012: 27) highlights that on Facebook close friends find “it more acceptable to use multiple forms of Facebook communication”, to maintain existing and close relationships with each other. Acquaintances just observe and use less forms of communication.

The sociologist Granovetter (1983) splits the categories of friends into two groups: the “close friends” and the “acquaintances”. He describes the person as “Ego”. “Ego will have a collection of close friends, most of whom are in touch with one another – a densely knit clump of social structure. Moreover, Ego will have a collection of acquaintances, few of whom know one another”, Granovetter (1983: 202) explains. Already Granovetter makes this distinction of close friends and acquaintances in his publication of 1983, where social networks didn’t even exist yet. Maybe also in real-life this differentiation exists – the society just doesn’t label those groups visible for others.

In Facebook, it is possible to differentiate every friend the user has in an own “close friends” or “acquaintances” list. Facebook describes this in its Help Center (facebook.com 2017a). As “close friends” the social network labels: “Friends you may want to share exclusively with. You will get notifications when they post, but can turn these extra notifications off at any time”. Acquaintances are for Facebook “People you might want to share less with. You can choose to exclude these people when you post something, by choosing friends except acquaintances in the audience selector” (facebook.com 2017a). On Facebook, it is also possible to have friends in the friends list who are restricted to see the user’s postings. “This list is for people you’ve added as a friend but just don’t want to share with, like your boss. When you add someone to your restricted list, they will only be able to see your public content or posts of yours that you tag them in”, Facebook (2017a) explains. In the following figure, those options are shown. In those settings, it is possible to unfriend the person as well, that means deleting him/her from the friends list.
Granovetter (1983: 205) describes the ties to acquaintances as “weak ties”, which “are defined by infrequent contact”. He explains the “strength of weak ties”, where weak ties “provide people with access to information and resources beyond those available in their own social circle; but strong ties have greater motivation to be of assistance and are typically more easily available” (Granovetter 1983: 209). It is not surprising that weak ties mark our current society. “The number of weak ties is increased by the development of the communications system”, Granovetter (1983: 210) distinguishes. Social networks like Facebook promote its users to gather a lot of acquaintances, for observing his/her actions and for accessing information about him/her.

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center published by Smith (2014) says that on average, “half of all adult Facebook users have more than 200 friends in their network.” Researchers found that older users have less friends than younger users, who tend to quantify their friends list (Smith 2014). In the following figure, the results are visible.

**Facebook friend counts**

Median # of friends by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pew Research Center’s Internet Project survey, August 7-September 16, 2013.

Figure 6: Number of Friends (Pew Research Center 2014)
As also Miller (2011: 27) criticized the Social Media giant Facebook and its sense of friendships: “You simply can’t have both closeness and privacy (...) Either everything is more socially intense or none of it is”. This could be linked to having a lot of acquaintances in the friends list on Facebook. All those allegations lead to my hypothesis that on Facebook, users tend to quantify their friends list, for building up and maintaining their social status and for observing acquaintances. In my empirical part, I am interested if the results of the study by Pew Research Center are confirmed by my interviewees as well.

A currently often mentioned topic in the media is the term “fake news”, which seems to have risen over the past with the increased usage of social networks and the possibility of giving everyone a voice, which also Facebook fostered. Especially in the U.S. elections 2016, there was a lot of false news spread in social networks.

### 4.4 Appearing Fake News

Fake news describes “false stories that appear to be news, spread on the Internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke” (dictionary 2017f). Like shitstorms and hate speech, fake news is a new phenomenon in the virtual world. Therefore, current academic theory is rare. Newman et al. (2014) hereby state:

> “But the main issue is not whether the news is on paper or electronic, but whether the rise of the internet and related information and communication technologies, such as social media, will undermine the ability of news information to produce quality journalism on a range of important issues and hold the rich and powerful to account.” (Newman et al. 2014: 136).

For news agencies, through digitalization it became obligatory to spread news on social networks like on Facebook, to increase its reach and to support global democracy. More and more people turn to social networks for receiving real-time news. At the same time, it becomes more and more challenging to separate news from credible news agencies and disguised fake news. On Facebook, a lot of different articles spread all over the social network, get read, shared by the audience and viral, regardless if those articles are true or not. It is more than easy to create a Facebook page and publish news which get shared by others, since it is such an open platform.
In the public discourse, the problem of fake news is very current. More than a half of Americans already get their news from social networks, Adee (2016) claims in an online article. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg stated in an article published by Fortune.com (2016) that Facebook is not a media company, since it doesn’t produce any content itself. But in fact, with the rising news appearance on the social network over the past years, “Facebook is one of the largest and most powerful media companies in the world, and getting larger”, Ingram (2016) emends. Since Facebook is not a media company, the Social Media giant doesn’t have any guidelines to follow in regard of the truthfulness of the spread articles. There could be some reasons why Facebook refuses to describe itself as a media company, as Ingram (2016) asserts: “One is the risk that it might be forced to pay more attention to issues like free speech and censorship and journalistic integrity”. Another reason could be that “Tech companies are valued much more highly by investors than media companies”, Ingram (2016) concludes. Another article of businessinsider.com by D’Onfro (2016) explains that “Facebook doesn't care about news - it cares about getting people to use Facebook, and its enormous effects on the news business has been an unintended consequence.”

Concerning the rising problem of fake news, it is understandable why Facebook acts like that. If Facebook would change its interests from a technology company to a media company, more staff would be needed to engage in checking various appearing news on the platform. Stronger restrictions to the appearance of news and journalistic principles would need to be introduced and Facebook would have to obey those orders. By keeping it as an open social media platform, the right of everyone to share is prevailing and restrictions to any content are rare, because the democratic purpose should be guaranteed. Facebook should stay a global open platform for everyone, as it is the mission of founder Mark Zuckerberg.

Nevertheless, the rise of fake news needs to be limited. A recent article of Zeit.de (2017) explains that the Social Media giant now wants to sign fake news articles. Though, Facebook tries to solve the problem of fake news on its platform and tries to adapt. It should be still an open network for everyone in the future. In the public discourse this justification is often criticized. In the future, Facebook users should have the possibility to report articles they identify as fake news. The company wants to work together with fact-checking agencies, since it is often hard to identify those. Also, users can help by not sharing everything they see and thinking twice beforehand. Not only is fake news an issue in the Social Media world today but also the filter bubble. It lets users just experience one side of a viewpoint of a topic.
4.5 Filter Bubble and Selection

With the rise of social networks and the introduction of the Web 2.0, the term “filter bubble” appeared on the Internet and in various news. Since it is another recent term, literature is scarce about it. The dictionary of Techopedia (2017d) considers that a filter bubble “can cause users to get significantly less contact with contradicting viewpoints, causing the user to become intellectually isolated”. For that, Facebook (2017a) claims in its Help Center:

“The stories that show in your News Feed are influenced by your connections and activity on Facebook. This helps you to see more stories that interest you from friends you interact with the most. The number of comments and likes a post receives and what kind of story it is (ex: photo, video, status update) can also make it more likely to appear in your News Feed.”

For completing this task, the term “Facebook algorithm” is important. “It assigns each story a personalized relevancy score that’s different for each person that sees it, and puts the most relevant stories first” (Constine 2016). For this algorithm, four important points are measured by Facebook for deciding which postings are relevant to the user’s friends. First, the person who posted, is important. “The more you’ve interacted with a post’s author in the past, the more interested Facebook thinks you’ll be in their future posts” (Constine 2016). This means commenting, liking postings or visiting the other person’s profile on Facebook. The second measure is how many people interacted with the post, which means how many of the friends on Facebook clicked on it or liked it. The third measure is the type of post, “the more that you typically engage with a certain kind of post, the more Facebook will show you posts of that type”, Constine (2016) expresses. Those kinds of posts could be videos, pictures, statuses or other types of content. The fourth and last measure is the time of the posting, because “the more recently a story was posted, the more likely you are to see it” (Constine 2016).

Those are the main measures which Facebook carries out through its algorithm. “Over time as you interact with the News Feed, Facebook learns what you care about and evolves that understanding if your behavior changes”, Constine (2016) concludes. It seems like Facebook arranges what Facebook users should see in their News Feed. This can lead to the formation of a so-called “filter bubble”, where users are caught in.

“Filter bubbles are formed by the algorithms social media sites like Facebook use to decide which information to show you, based largely on your own tastes. The idea is to keep you engaged, but the result may be a worldview skewed to fit your own preferences and biases”
This could be linked to the term selection: similar things of tastes we like on the social network will appear in the News Feed. Facebook wants to keep its users on the platform. This prevents users from receiving news or information from more than one side and can be described as a filter bubble of information the user is locked in. “Over the past decade, the Internet has become an increasingly important source of news and information”, Newman et al. (2014:137) express the importance of Social Media as a news source. “With 62 per cent of Americans getting their news from social media at least occasionally, the fear is that filter bubbles could affect how you make decisions in real life”, Adee (2016) points out. In the public discourse, the filter bubble is an often mentioned issue. An article of Wired by El-Bermawy (2016) states, that also in the U.S. elections 2016 between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton the filter bubble was a case. It prevented the audience from receiving the “whole picture”.

During this time in 2016, Trump’s page had around 12 million likes while the page of Clinton “only” received around eight million likes. Trump also posted more often on Facebook (El-Bermawy 2016). Trump followers who didn’t favor nor followed Clinton never saw Clinton’s postings and similar postings of republicans on their News Feed. It could be assumed that those actions didn’t foster a balanced opinion formation for the voters. Several people in various articles argue that Trump’s success on Social Media sites like on Facebook and Twitter also lead to his presidential success. Trump fans didn’t see postings of Clinton while fans of Clinton didn’t get news of Trump, because they just didn’t want to support the opponent by liking his/her Facebook page.

“Our Facebook feeds are personalized based on past clicks and likes behavior, so we mostly consume political content that are similar to our views. Without realizing it, we develop tunnel vision. Rarely will our Facebook comfort zones expose us to opposing views, and as a result we eventually become victims to our own biases”, Adee (2016) supports.

On Facebook, users select their interests in the beginning when filling out and adapting their profile with personal interests and hobbies. From that time on, just postings of those sites they liked and of friends they interacted with often, appear in their News Feed. Unconsciously, Facebook users are caught in their own created filter bubble, which the Social Media giant supports. Social networks should be a transmitter of various opinions to various people, but it seems that there is a contradiction.
“Much social research shows that people prefer to receive information that they agree with instead of information that challenges their beliefs. This problem is compounded when social networks recommend content based on what users already like and on what people similar to them also like.” (MIT Technology Review 2013)

Taking that for Facebook, users can hardly avoid the filter bubble. For receiving all kind of postings, no interests should be announced and no actions should be undertaken, but Facebook promotes the disclosure in its settings the user should fulfill. In the following chapter I will explain how those interests are used for interest-based advertising by Facebook. Not only is the filter bubble important by showing people selective sections in their News Feed but also in regard of business advertising on Facebook, the network shows “filtered” ads as personalized ads. Facebook has become an important tool for advertising over the past years. There has been a rising shift of companies to the network.

4.6 Business Tool for Advertising

“Social Media allow firms to engage in timely and direct end-consumer contact at relatively low cost and higher levels of efficiency than can be achieved with more traditional communication tools”, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 67) argue. Social Media has become a necessity and advantage for businesses to take part in the Web 2.0. “Being able to link a particular user with their behavior across the web is extremely valuable to online sites and those that advertise on them”, Ellison (2013: 11) embraces.

A lot of criticism is found in the public discourse about the rise of business advertising on Facebook. With the rise of smartphones which mobile advertising companies settled for, the revenue of Facebook is growing constantly, as an article of Fortune.com (2015) by Griffith is highlighting. The social networks Facebook and Twitter are on the top in mobile advertising. “Both Facebook’s and Twitter’s gains in the digital display market are driven by mobile advertising”, says a study of a research company in media, Emarketer (2015). Google is right behind Facebook in ad revenues. Therefore, it is not surprising that the revenue of Facebook was rising over the past years. “By 2017, Facebook’s US mobile ad revenues will grow more than 50% from this year, totaling about $7.53 billion” (emarketer.com 2015).

A critical viewpoint underlies the mission the social network was created for. It was created to keep in contact with friends all over the world and to find new friends. It was created as a social network, not as a business network. Was there a change from a social networking tool
to a business tool? “Advertising revenue is Facebook's biggest source of income, jumping 45% this year, with mobile ad sales accounting for 78% of that”, Wakefield (2015) is supporting in an article of the BBC. In an article of Forbes, Tassi (2013) explains: “It needs to be shown just how bad the advertising angle of Facebook is getting, particularly compared to its competition. All sites on the Internet are in direct competition with each other”.

When looking at my News Feed, it is clearly visible that there are ads in and around the News Feed. Ads of competitors are appearing alternately. Based on previous liked postings, liked sites and based on the user’s interests there are personalized ads appearing in the News Feed. In my empirical part, I want to find out if my respondents recognized a rise in advertisements on Facebook. Tassi (2013) states that there are two kinds of ads existing. The first are the so-called “suggested posts”. Those are ads which Facebook makes relevant for its users because they are in their target group. Tassi (2013) considers that there is not just this kind of advertising, there is also a second one, those are the “like-based ads”. Those contain ads about everything the user liked in his past or listed as interest in his profile section. Those together form “personal interest-based ads”. Now, I’m getting interested in how my News Feed looks like. In the following figure, you can see how my News Feed looks when I visit Facebook (facebook.com 2017d).

![Figure 7: Advertising in the News Feed (Facebook 2017)](image)

After seeing this, I confirm the findings of Tassi (2013). There is a hook appearing on the right sides of the ads. There are different selections to tick. I try this at the first ad on the right site, this is an ad of the company “77 Onlineshop”. I remember that ads of this company often
appear on my News Feed. I want to know how Facebook justifies that. When I want to find out more about this ad, the following window appears:

![About This Facebook Ad](image)

**Figure 8: About this Facebook Ad (Facebook 2017)**

In my interests on Facebook, I added less information about me to protect my personal privacy. The ad I see here is a “suggested post”, as I am in the target group of the online shop. It is clearly visible that based on the information Facebook gets from my profile, I receive those ads. I am currently 25 years old and live in Austria. When I former registered, I had to give this information to Facebook. For like-based ads, I receive ads of travel agencies (as visible in the figure before), since I indicated traveling to my interests. We allow giving our data to third parties for advertising. When I log into Facebook and look at my profile, which I rarely filled with information, I get some notifications of Facebook which look like that:

![Curious Facebook](image)

**Figure 9: Curious Facebook (Facebook 2017)**

Facebook wants to find out more about me for doing more “interest-based” advertising, with delivering ads directly fitting to my interests, to increase the gains of the advertiser and further, the gains of Facebook. Based on those questions about myself, I assume that users should expose every detail about themselves to the social networking site. Since I did not include much information, I receive ads based on my location and gender, based on information that Facebook already knows about me. Facebook does that to help us to find things we need, using predictive analysis to convince us that we must get those things third parties suggest to us. It seems like if we turn those off, we would miss out some important
information. That is just a short and critical reminder to not take everything for granted that we hear from Facebook. An online article of the newspaper The Guardian states:

“Every click, every like, every comment and every connection is used to build up a rich profile of each user. Brands can then pay Facebook to target users based on their age, location, relationship status and interests. This is how Facebook makes its money – profiles of us that advertisers adore”. (Solon 2016)

Social Media has become obligatory for companies trying to reach their customers, since traditional media has become extinct over time. It is quite sad that there are visible ads of different companies in my News Feed and rarely postings of my friends. It shows again that the original aim of Mark Zuckerberg to connect people had changed its course to increased business advertising. “Facebook revealed that 30 million small business owners now have active Pages, up from 25 million at the end of 2013”, Luckerson (2014) supports. On Facebook, it is forbidden to use a pseudonym name, otherwise it would be a so-called “fake account”. Facebook does this for security reasons to avoid dangers like cyber-bullying and fake news. There could be another reason too: “Real name policies are attractive to social media companies, who recognize that being able to identify a specific user enables more targeted and relevant marketing messages”, Ellison (2013: 11) interprets. Facebook seems to prevent its users from fake accounts and serves businesses at the same time - this is advantageous and efficient twice.

“The crash will come. And Facebook - that putative transformer of worlds, which is, in reality, only an ad-driven site - will fall with everybody else”, Wolff (2012) criticizes the Social Media giant in an online article published by the MIT. “Facebook is also promoting a handful of newly released tools to help small businesses serve highly targeted ads” (Luckerson 2014). Wolff (2012) claims that Facebook wants to be the ultimate business tool to use: “And that’s Facebook’s hope, too: it wants to be a facilitator, the inevitable conduit at the center of the world’s commerce.”
5 Empirical Part
The research question in this thesis is dealing with the question if we can describe ourselves as “Prisoners of Facebook” and if yes, for which reasons. If the answer is no, I want to detect contradictions. Also in my questions to my respondents, this is a prevailing topic. As a first methodological approach, I will conduct qualitative interviews. As a second approach, I will conduct an autoethnography in which I will quit with Facebook. Both will be coded with the Grounded Theory method. After those approaches, a conclusion of the results will be drawn. In the following chapters I will describe the method, the questions to my respondents, the groups of respondents and the categories which abandoned out of their answers. Following, I will start with explaining the Grounded Theory approach.

5.1 Grounded Theory Approach
Description and Approach
The Grounded Theory is a qualitative approach. “The procedures of grounded theory are designed to develop a well-integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena under study”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 5) reason. Therefore, social practices and social phenomena are studied, as it is part of my research dealing with social networks and its interaction with individuals. It is important that a Grounded Theory “should explain as well as describe” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 5). Excerpts of my interviews with my respondents will be explained, described, analyzed, linked to the theoretical part and literature. Also, change is important when introducing the method, because social phenomena can change over time. “Phenomena are not conceived of as static but as continually changing in response to evolving conditions” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 5). Moreover, very important is that “actors are seen as having, though not always utilizing, the means of controlling their destinies by their responses to conditions” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 5). Hence, qualitative open ended interviews are important to give respondents the possibility of having control over their answers. Grounded Theory tries to uncover how “actors respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 5). For those reasons, I included questions about the change of my respondent’s Facebook behavior over time. In data collection, the possibilities of Grounded Theory are widespread and can “involve interviews and observations as well as such other sources as government documents, video tapes, newspapers, letters, and books”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 5) assume. Hence, qualitative interviews will be my approach in this first part. In my second empirical approach the autoethnography, I will do an observation and diary when quitting with Facebook. Each of
the used materials as observation, diary studies and interviews will be coded the same way when introducing the method. In Grounded Theory, it is important to be open about new possible findings in a project, therefore it is mandatory to not only focus on the theoretical part in my first chapter. Depending on the results of the interviews, topics in my concluding chapter will be adapted to those. When using this type of method “each researcher must tread a fine line between satisfying the suggested criteria and allowing procedural flexibility in the face of the inevitable contingencies of an actual research project”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 6) support.

**Theoretical Sampling**

Theoretical sampling means that “the analysis begins as soon as the first bit of data is collected”, this is important for dealing with findings in the following interviews. In my research, I first conducted two interviews and depending on the answers, I adapted the order of questions to put a deeper light on topics, issues and phenomena which were not that clear yet and still interesting to discover. “Analysis is necessary from the start because it is used to direct the next interview and observations”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 6) highlight. I soon recognized that some of my questions were not that relevant for my research. “Data will be collected on these matters throughout the research endeavor, unless the questions prove, during analysis, to be irrelevant”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 6) support. Relevant topics and answers will be introduced in the following interviews, “to capture all potentially relevant aspects of the topic as soon as they are perceived” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 6). Going deeper into relevant aspects of the topic fosters deeper insight in social phenomena. Especially Facebook seems to be a proper phenomenon.

**Coding Procedure**

The coding procedure is a “fundamental analytic process” and in Grounded Theory, there exist three types. In my empirical research, I do first open coding, which means that “events/actions/interactions are compared with others for similarities and differences” (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 12). Then, those are linked with labels which further form categories or subcategories. “In this way, conceptually similar events/actions/interactions are grouped together to form categories and subcategories”, Corbin and Strauss (2009: 12) explain. Categories can be broken down into subcategories and build the theoretical foundation. Open coding can be helpful since it “enables investigators to break through subjectivity and bias” (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 12). Followed by axial coding, further categories are developed and “categories are related to their subcategories”. Also, “all hypothetical relationships proposed
deductively during axial coding must be considered provisional until verified repeatedly against incoming data”, for evidencing hypothesis again and again (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 13). “An unsupported hypothesis must be critically evaluated to determine if it is false or if the observed events indicate a variation of the hypothesis (different conditions, indicating a different form)”, that means that an unsupported hypothesis must be evaluated in each new interview to evidence or to gather a different evidenced hypothesis out of it (Corbin/Strauss 1990).

With conducting each of the interview, concepts and categories evolve. “Each concept earns its way into the theory by repeatedly being present in interviews, documents, and observations in one form or another - or by being significantly absent”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 7) consider. Often research is biased because researchers tend to overestimate categories based on previously mentioned answers. In the case of Grounded Theory, “no matter how enamored the investigator may be of a particular concept, if its relevance to the phenomenon under question is not proven through continued scrutiny, it must be discarded” (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 7). Hence, concepts that are not part of the answers of the respondents must be discarded and not used for developing a theory of a phenomena. It is also mandatory for researchers to work with “conceptualizations of data, not the actual data per se” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 7), hence occurring incidents in the interviews are given conceptual labels. When encountered incidents mentioned by the respondents are equal to the previously conceptualized labels, they are more likely to get the same label. “In the grounded theory approach such concepts become more numerous and more abstract as the analysis continues” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 7). Therefore, concepts or labels occur with the process of conducting interviews. After that, concepts of same phenomena form categories. With developing them from quite same concepts, “categories are the "cornerstones" of a developing theory. “They provide the means by which a theory can be integrated” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 7).

**Approach in this Study**

“When a project begins, the researcher brings to it some idea of the phenomenon he or she wants to study. Based on this knowledge, groups of individuals, an organization, or community representative of that phenomenon can be selected for study”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 8) express. I also did that in my empirical interviews. With the theoretical part and the experiment of the autoethnography, I brought in some ideas to the phenomenon Facebook, which I want to study deeper. I want to gain an insight if we are “Prisoners of Facebook”. Based on my gained knowledge and research about Facebook and social networks, I select
groups of individuals of that Facebook phenomenon, which I want to study. I would classify the groups as passive ones (individuals who post very rare or not at all but are online regularly), dropouts (people who left Facebook) and returnees (people who left Facebook and returned after some time). It is important to concentrate on those groups, since they seem to have an ambivalent position concerning Facebook. Therefore, it would be interesting to find out about their attitude to Facebook. For the first group of passive Facebook users, I am interested in detecting reasons for observing rather than posting, for the quitters I want to detect reasons why they left the network giant and for the returnees, I want to gain an insight in reasons why they went back. I will start with two open-ended interviews with questions of my questionnaire, which will be displayed in the following. Depending on the received answers and further, received concepts and categories, I will then decide if I need more interviews to deepen some categories. The number of interviews is depending on the significance of the results, to develop a theory which is cohesive. In conducting my questionnaire, it is important that “all of the observations would be qualified by noting the conditions under which the phenomena occur, the action/interactional form they take, the consequences that result, and so forth” (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 9). Since I research three groups of individuals, the sampling is quite widespread. With having a very broad topic questionnaire variations are more likely to be discovered, which leads to higher generalizability of results. “The more systematic and widespread the theoretical sampling, the more completely the conditions and variations will be discovered, permitting greater generalizability, precision, and predictive capacity”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 15) highlight.

**Goals and Results**

The goal of a Grounded Theory is to “build a theoretical explanation by specifying phenomena in terms of conditions that give rise to them, how they are expressed through action/interaction, the consequences that result from them, and variations of these qualifiers” (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 9). Moreover, it is crucial to compare incidents that occurred, which form patterns for developing a theory. “Finding patterns or regularities helps to give order to the data and assist with integration (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 10). Moreover, process is important as “process analysis can mean breaking a phenomenon down into stages, phases, or steps”, which means that their answers can vary depending on the situation (Corbin/Strauss 2009: 10). Further, writing memos during the procedure of doing Grounded Theory can be helpful to keep answers and categories. “A key feature of grounded theory is not that hypotheses remain unverified, but that hypotheses (whether involving qualitative or quantitative data) are constantly revised during the research until they hold true for all of the evidence concerning
the phenomena under study, as gathered in repeated interviews, observations or documents”, Corbin and Strauss (2009: 11) support. With the total number of nine interviews, I found that answers were repeated over and over and no new phenomena were discovered.

**Core Category**

With repeating interviews and receiving answers about phenomena, a hypothesis can be evidenced. Relating to received answers of my respondents also some new hypotheses may be formed, revised and evidenced. Corbin and Strauss (1990: 11) suggest that: “The analysis of a setting must not be restricted to the conditions that bear immediately on the phenomenon of central interest. Broader conditions affecting the phenomenon may include economic conditions, cultural values, political trends, social movements, and so on.” Hence, not only the phenomenon can influence the individual’s decisions and actions, but also broader and external conditions which can vary from person to person. In my analysis, I found that a lot of different conditions were influencing my respondent’s behavior regarding Facebook.

In the last step of selective coding, “all categories are unified around a "core" category, and categories that need further explication are filled-in with descriptive detail” (Corbin/Strauss 1990: 14). Thus, one core category is developed and “represents the central phenomenon of the study”, Corbin and Strauss (1990: 14) highlight. Other categories are in relationship to the core category; diagramming can be helpful to not overlook categories. In the end when nothing new was found, I developed the core category, which marks the central phenomena of my research. If poor developed categories occur, the researcher must conduct further interviews. “If the original theory fails to account for variation uncovered through additional research, the new specifications can be used to amend the original formulation.” Thus, researchers shouldn’t be blind to receive new insights deviating from their original theory. The analysis will be carried out in Chapter 5.5 where I got some interesting insights, which deviate from my original theory and perception.
5.2 Guideline of Questions and Groups of Respondents

Attached, there is the guideline of questions which are planned to ask in the interviews. Depending on the received answers, the order and necessity of questions will vary. Below the question, I will explain what should be elevated by asking this kind of question.

1. *Why and for how long are you subscribed to Facebook, what are the main reasons?*
   Reasons why the individual registered to the social network should be identified, as well as the period the person is registered to Facebook. It should also be discovered if the person already unsubscribed.

2. *Did you ever think about unsubscribing from Facebook and if yes, why? Did you try?*
   I want to find out if and why the respondent already tried to unsubscribe. I will also try to ascertain reasons and thoughts for the decision of quitting with the social network. The group of dropouts will be asked why they unregistered. The group of returnees will be asked why they went back. The passive ones will be asked why they are still registered.

3. *How active do you use Facebook? Do you post regularly? Is Feedback important for you?*
   With raising this question, I want to find out if the person posts from time to time and how active the person uses the network. This type of question will be asked of passive Facebook users and the returnees. I will also ask if and how their posting behavior changed over the years they are subscribed.

4. *How many Facebook friends do you have and how many of them do you know personally?*
   Since it is a topic in my theoretical part, I will try to identify how many friends they have and how many of them they would describe as close friends. Especially the returnees will be asked this question and if the number of friends changed after returning. I cited a study of the Pew Research Center, which claimed that as people are getting older, they tend to have less friends on social networks. I try to detect if this is also suitable for my respondents.
5. **Do you have the feeling that Facebook changed in some ways over the years, and if yes, in which ways?**

Most of my respondents subscribed to the network at school in their puberty, therefore it would be interesting if over the years their behavior on Facebook like posting, sharing and presenting aspects of their lives changed and if yes, how.

6. **Do you see yourself as a prisoner of Facebook – do you think this description is proper?**

I will give my respondents insight in my research title and want to know what they think about it. I want to find out if my own experience of being caught, feeling like a prisoner, is something what the interviewees share or not.

7. **Do you think there is a group of persons for which Facebook is just perfect to use?**

By asking that, I would like to find out if they think there are groups of individuals like extroverts, introverts, narcissists, etc., for which Facebook is a perfect tool to express themselves or if they think it is an open platform suitable for all.

8. **How important is privacy for you?**

I would like to know how my respondents think about privacy on the Internet and especially in Social Media. It would be interesting to find out how those privacy issues influenced or currently influence their behavior on Facebook.

9. **How do you think Facebook uses and proceeds your data?**

With asking this question, it would be captivating how my interviewees think Facebook treats the privacy of its users and how they think their data is processed. Based on their answers, it would be interesting to find out if and how privacy issues influenced or currently influence their Facebook behavior.

10. **Is there anything which bothers you about Facebook itself or other Facebook users?**

This is a very interesting question because when I subscribed, I was often bothered by people sharing everything. Especially for the people who quit with Facebook this is a mandatory question, since it would have possibly lead to their decision of quitting with the Social Media giant.
11. Do you generally have a good or a negative picture about social media and why?
I want to investigate how my respondents, especially those who quit Facebook and did not return, think about Social Media in general and if their perception changed positively or negatively. In my theoretical part, Social Media is a prevailing topic and marks the future of our Internet. Therefore, this question seems to be important at this point.

12. Do you see any dangers in Facebook?
The chapter of the drawbacks of Facebook deals with dangers of Facebook use like cyber-bullying, addiction, fake news, etc. It would be interesting to find out if the interviewees see any other dangers in Facebook and if yes, which.

13. Do you rather use alternatives to Facebook and why?
This question is especially directed to the passive Facebook users, since they don’t actively post on Facebook. If they prefer alternative social networks, I would like to identify reasons for switching to them. Also for dropouts, it would be interesting if they totally dropped out of any Social Media or switched to alternative platforms.

14. Do you have the feeling that your behavior of posting and sharing on Facebook changed over the years and how?
In my theoretical part I deal with statements of Sherry Turkle, who researched about identify formation and behavior of individuals on the Internet. She stated that in adolescence, individuals tend to post more and when they become adults, the “age thing” kicks in and they deal in more mature way with those networks. This question is especially targeted to the group of passive ones. Also for the returnees, this question is important to consider because maybe, they now use Facebook differently.
Course of Action

Since I also want to detect reasons why people quit Facebook, I will also do interviews with dropouts of Facebook. Secondly, I want to detect why people quit and went back, this group will be described as returnees. The third and last group are the passive Facebook users, so-called lurks, who tend to rather observe their friends on Facebook and the News Feed, than actively post. Of each group, interviews in English will be conducted. The questions displayed and described before will be adapted individually, recorded and transcribed.

The members of those groups are all in my age group, on average around 25 years old. Since Grounded Theory is a method of conducting interviews sequentially, I finalized this paragraph after finishing my empirical part to include all relevant interview partners. The age span is between 20 and 35 years and contains eight female interview partners and one male, since I have more contact with females. I assume that there should be no relevant gender differences, since Social Media and Facebook focuses on both sex and is used by both consistently. The followed displayed names are anonymized; occupations and ages are accurate but adapted unidentifiable. Following, I want to describe all members who participated. All respondents received consent about this research project and that the interviews are taped on my mobile phone, anonymized, transferred, stored on my laptop and deleted from my mobile phone. The written anonymized transcripts are available at the author on request. The recordings remain to the author because of privacy reasons of the respondents, who want to stay anonymized and unidentifiable.
Dropouts

1. Keira, 29-years old, office worker
Keira is an acquaintance of me, a dropout of Facebook and was registered for a long time. I was always friended with her on Facebook, since I recognized that she is not part of the social network anymore. I was wondering why and when I thought about possible interviewees for the group of dropouts, Keira came into my mind. I asked her to meet up and if she wants to take part in my research, which is published in this master thesis. She was pleased, agreed and we conducted the interview in a quite empty restaurant during the week. Hence, we had privacy and nobody bothered us. Our interview lasted about 12 minutes in total.

2. Michelle, 24-years old, office worker
Michelle works in an office. I recognized that she is not part of Facebook anymore a few years ago. Back then, I didn’t ask her, because I rarely had contact with her. I know that before dropping out, she was actively using Facebook under a pseudonym name. I went to school with her and we registered at the same time around 2009. Therefore, I’m interested to detect reasons for her decision and, if and how her Facebook behavior changed over the years before she left the network. I met her in a natural setting at a river where we sat down and talked, thus, we were very relaxed. She had much to tell, hence the interview lasted about 20 minutes.

3. Rachel, 33-years old, teacher
Rachel is a teacher and was subscribed to the network for a short time. On Facebook, I recognized that when she was registered, she never posted anything and I wondered why. I know there were things going on in her life and was asking myself why she didn’t want to share. I want to find out which attitude she has regarding Facebook and if she ever thought about returning. I told her about my research in which was quite interested. I conducted the interview with her at her home place, so it was a habitual setting. The interview lasted about 10 minutes in total and she had a very negative opinion about Social Media in general. Thus, the interview was one of the shortest I conducted.
Returnees

4. Sheila, 24-years old, student and part-time staff
I registered about the same time to the social network as Sheila did. Over the years, she told me one day that she unsubscribed. A few years later she again added me as a friend and I recognized that she returned to Facebook. Now she is part of the network again for a few months. Since I am captivated in detecting reasons for her return to Facebook, I asked her if she wants to take part in my research, informed her about the course of action and she agreed. I wanted to know if and how her Facebook behavior changed after returning. We met at her home place in a habitual setting and the interview lasted about 23 minutes.

5. Emily, 23-years old, student and part-time staff
When I told Emily about my research, she told me that she quit with Facebook once but went back to the social networking giant shortly after. Thus, I asked her if she wants to take part in my interviews and she strongly agreed. Therefore, she seemed to be a very interesting interview partner and we conducted the interview in a coffee shop. We sat outside while most of the people sat inside, so we had silence and peace to talk. The interview lasted about 16 minutes.

6. Lydia, 20-years old, student and freelancer
I have contact from time to time to Lydia, a student and freelancer. I was friended with her for a long time on Facebook. I recognized that she unsubscribed because I wanted to send her a message and didn’t reach her. After some time, she returned to the network and added me again as a friend. When she wrote me that she unsubscribed, I asked her if she wants to take part in my research and explained her the course of action. I wanted to find out how she feels about being back to Facebook and want to detect reasons why she left the network back then. She was very interested and we met outside to conduct the interview. She had a lot to tell and the interview lasted about 17 minutes in total.
Passives

7. Patrick, 28-years old, student and freelancer
Of the group of passive Facebook users, I interviewed Patrick, a 28-year old student and freelancer. I have regular contact to him, asked him if he wants to do an interview with me dealing with the topic Facebook and he agreed. Before agreeing, he pointed out that he is not an active Facebook user at all, he is the opposite and never posting anything. I answered that because of this reason, I need him as an interviewee. Since he describes himself as a totally passive Facebook user, I am interested in detecting reasons for his registration to the social network. I often looked at his profile, saw that he never posted and wondered why. The interview was conducted in a natural setting with no listeners and lasted about 12 minutes in total.

8. Ashley, 35-years old, astronomy staff
We have regular contact but don’t meet often. When we chatted, I asked her if she wants to do an interview about Facebook for my master thesis. I explained her the course of action and she agreed. I was interested in interviewing her because I recognized that over the past, she posted less on Facebook. Therefore, I counted her with the passive Facebook users. We conducted the interview in a restaurant at a table shielded from other guests, therefore our privacy was not injured. Our interview lasted 11 minutes.

9. Sophia, 25-years old, student
Sophia registered at the same time to Facebook as I at school. I was interested in interviewing her, since she is currently also subscribed for 8 years. I wanted to know how she evaluates Facebook after those years and recognized that she rarely posts anything. Therefore, I asked her to do the interview and explained her my research approach. We conducted the interview in a comfortable and silent place and she had very much to tell, therefore this interview lasted the longest, about 37 minutes.

In my citations of the interviewee’s quotes in the following, I will have the initials for the group of returnees as “R”, for the group of passive users as “P” and for the group of dropouts as “D”. I will first quote the name of the respondent, then the initial of the group of respondent, followed by the number of line of the given answer.
5.3 Analysis of the Interviews

In this part of the results, I initiate main categories and subcategories which evolved out of the answers of my respondents. Headings in bold describe main categories, words in cursive subcategories.

I first focus on Sheila, since as a returnee she seems to have an ambivalent position concerning the social network. Moreover, my focus is on returnees and passive ones. With asking questions, I want to find reasons why she quit and went back. First, I am curious why she once registered, as it is the first question in my questionnaire.

Sheila, R2: "Well (laughing) I was on Facebook from 2009 to 2014 for about 4 years. In this time, I was on Facebook for connecting with friends, with relatives and then I quit in 2014 and since August 2016 I am again on Facebook." #00:01:04-2#

Main Category: Communication and Connection

This answer forms the first subcategory of “friendships” in Facebook, but since contact to relatives is included, I overall form the main category “communication and connection” out of it. For the respondents, communication and connection appeared to be important in using Facebook. Therefore, Facebook seems to be a suitable tool for keeping up connection to people. Also in its principles, Facebook states that its main mission is the possibility of connection to friends. To find out how important this connection seems to be for the other returnees to go back to Facebook, I ask Lydia. She quit and went back because of the possibility of connection with her friends on Facebook. She was forced to, because her mobile phone broke and she had no other possibility to contact her friends.

Lydia, R16: “I have been unsubscribed from Facebook for one year and then (excitement) I decided to come back because my mobile phone got broken and then I told myself that I have to go back to find my close friends (laughing).” #00:02:04-8#

Facebook is liked to be used as a tool for contacting people all over the world, as it is also the mission of Facebook with supporting global connection. As Facebook is the most widespread social network worldwide, it is most commonly used for global communication. According to Statista (2016c), Facebook with 1.94 billion of users is the “most popular social network worldwide” and “Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Facebook 2017b). I want to find out if the reason of connection also motivates the passive users to stay subscribed to Facebook. For this question the group of dropouts doesn’t seem to be a relevant, since they totally quit with the social network.
Passive user Ashley is originally from Germany but lives and works in Austria. She loves to travel in her free time and to have contact to her friends.

Ashley, P8: “(excitement) Most of the contact I have on Facebook is with my friends from Germany or to friends from America, because it is cheaper to write with them on Facebook.” #00:01:05-2#

Facebook is a free tool to use for everyone with Internet access whereas SMS and telephone calls cost, especially when communicating with people abroad. Lydia is of the same opinion and makes use of the affordances of Facebook.

Lydia, R76: "(...) I would say that I really want to keep in touch with people around the world.” #00:15:10-9#

Sophia, another passive respondent, was living abroad for a long time and there she built close friendships. In Austria, she can’t meet those people and so she uses Facebook to stay in contact with. She claims that this is a reason why she is still registered to the social network, as Facebook is the most used global network. Not only for the returnees but also for the group of passive ones, Facebook seems to be a very important tool for keeping up contact to friends globally.

Sophia, P8: “(...) And for me another very important point was to stay in contact with my Hungarian friends because back then it was too expensive to write SMS, of course nowadays there is WhatsApp as well, but Facebook is just the most widespread social network to stay in contact with those people (...).” #00:06:48-9#

Another reason for Sophia’s registration to Facebook was even named by some other interviewees when asking the first questions, which forms the second subcategory of “peer pressure”. I want to ask dropout Michelle if this was a reason why she formerly registered to Facebook. She subscribed because of school friends and “everyone wanted to be there,” as well as passive one Sophia did.

Sophia, P2: “Okay, I subscribed to Facebook when I was about (long break) 16-17 years old, I think it was 2008 or 2009, but it was at school (…) And all my classmates subscribed to it so (long break) it was a kind of a group pressure thing to subscribe to it and of course, (excitement) I was also curious about it (...).” #00:01:30-1#

Michelle, D2: “It was in 2008 and (long break) everyone wanted to be there, all my friends and my sister, we were on Myspace and StudiVZ before. Facebook offered new possibilities to post pictures and videos to share yourself and your life with others.” #00:00:45-6#

Michelle switched from other social networks to Facebook when it became popular, because her friends and sister did that too. Therefore, that they are interested in checking out new
social media platforms. Since most of my respondents registered about 2008/2009 during school time it is a kind of “group thing”, or a kind of “peer pressure”, which I will now deeper investigate with conducting further interviews. The two mentioned subcategories “friendships” and “peer pressure” are subordinated to the main category “communication and connection”, since there is a strong desire of socialization with others prevailing.

*Subcategory: Peer Pressure*

Hence, I am interested in finding out if all interviewees who registered around that time, also registered because of their former classmates at school. I ask Emily, a third returnee, who also went back because of the connection to her classmates. For her answer “communication and connection” and “peer pressure” are relevant reasons for subscribing to the network and returning to it. I already formed the hypothesis that the subscription to Facebook follows a peer pressure. Castells (2005) describes the network individualism, since individualism is the culture of our current society and those networks “perfectly fit into the mode of building sociability along self-selected communication networks.” Though, users can select networks by themselves but to communicate with friends, the same networks need to be chosen. This network could be Facebook, as already Michelle reasoned.

*Emily, R8: “I went back because of friends and because of school, all of my class were on Facebook and we had a group and they said let’s meet then and then, and I was never part of it because I didn’t know, because they just did it on Facebook and nobody told me in person. So, I was kind of left out of a lot of occasions and that was a reason why I went back to Facebook (laughing).” #00:02:34-6#

Emily moreover claimed that it was “not the best choice” (R2) to leave the network back then in school time because she missed the connection with others, felt isolated and therefore, she went back. There is a concept which can be related to the answer of Emily, which is called “FOMO”, and described as the “fear of missing out”. According to the dictionary (2017g), this is “anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on social media.”

Now I am curious to detect if further passive users like Patrick subscribed because of classmates at school.

*Patrick, P4:” There are no reasons generally (long break) (excitement), I am just subscribed because everybody was subscribed at this time and so it was a kind of peer pressure.” #00:00:48-6#
It could be assumed that “communication and connection” with “friendships” and “peer pressure” form a very strong desire of communication with others. If others of our circle of friends subscribe, we also tend to register to the social network to communicate and connect with those. Without using the same communication tool, communication wouldn’t be possible and we would feel somehow isolated. Turkle (1995: 178) supports that people have needs for “connection and social participation”. Those were also reasons returnees mentioned for going back to the social networking giant. The groups of returnees (Sheila and Lydia) and passive users (Ashley and Sophia) stated that the possibility of communication with friends is a main reason for going back or staying subscribed to Facebook. Concerning peer pressure, respondents of all usage groups replied that they registered because of peer pressure.

I am going to put a deeper light on finding out more reasons why people return to Facebook, as it deals with the question if we are “Prisoners of Facebook”. In conducting deeper interviews, it crystallized that for the same reasons the returnees go back to Facebook, the passive ones tend to stay subscribed. I put my focus on returnee Sheila, who is a passionate fan of music.

Sheila, R4: “Because I am a huge fan of music and bands and most of the groups, bands and musicians (long break) publish their news and tour dates just on Facebook (…).” #00:01:37-4 #00:01:37-3#

On Facebook, there are a lot of different interest groups, sites and communities about various issues and topics. Sheila claimed that she went back because of different groups of music and bands to inform herself, since Facebook is used as the primary tool for music bands to publish events to reach its fans. This can be related to the “FOMO” phenomenon as well. Returnee Emily mentioned that she missed out information about school things when she unregistered. Those allegations form the subcategory of “interest groups”, which seem to be important to my interviewees. I try to ascertain if those interest groups also influence the passive respondents to stay subscribed to the network, even if they don’t actively post. Passive user Ashley likes to use the network similar as returnee Sheila.
Ashley mentions music bands as well as Sheila. This one could be described as an interest group of music. There are also interest groups of health, nature, traveling, sports and many more on Facebook. It is interesting that Ashley mentions that she wants “to see what the others are doing”, which leads to my following main category of “curiosity/orientation”, which was prevailing in other answers as well and which I further want to monitor. Nevertheless, I will try to go deeper into the subcategory of “interest groups” and I am interested to ask returnee Lydia about that. She uses the network for interest groups and further for “self-help”, which forms another subcategory.

“When someone is ill or in crisis, then you know instinctively what being in a community means, the responsibilities it gives you and the hold it has on you”, Miller (2011: 25) explains in his publication “Tales of Facebook”. Lydia likes the community participation in social networks like on Facebook.

Lydia, R28: “I really like to research for my allergies, if I’m sick and I need help, I want to get the help. So, I search for people who have the same problem, that’s why I really like groups of people with an allergy or something else. But I can even talk to my friends at the same time.” #00:04:33-7#

For one year now, Lydia suffers from an allergy. She told me in the interview that Facebook is a practical tool for informing herself about various issues and to find people with the same problem, to exchange ideas and to find help. It offers a sense of community with connection to friends at the same time. Therefore, connection and interest groups are prevailing in using Facebook, as it is the mission of the network. Socializing is prevailing in using social networking tools. Especially the introduction of the Web 2.0 fostered those possibilities of exchange. To find out if those interest groups or helping communities also keep my other two passive respondents tied to Facebook, I am going to ask further.

Sophia, P8: “Yes of course I thought about unsubscribing but not really so I thought about that ok I could do it, but actually I have never decided to do it and I have never really wanted to do it (long break). Because there are several reasons for me to stay on Facebook which are that there are study groups where people that study the same subjects share important documents or important information, it’s very common to do the group projects via Facebook, to communicate with your colleagues (…).” #00:06:48-9#
University groups or studying groups seem to be important as well, as Facebook was originally found as a communication tool for Harvard students before it was released officially in 2006. Those university groups could be described as well as “interest groups” and as groups for “self-help”. Additionally, Patrick as a further passive user is in the same situation.

Patrick, P10:" Because I never post anything or like anything or do anything on Facebook so I am a (laughing) ghost who only uses it to communicate with university people.” #00:01:35-0#

For all passive ones, Facebook seems to be an important tool for information and help in interest groups and to communicate and connect with people all over the world. Moreover, for the returnees those are relevant reasons to go back to the network. There seems to be an ambivalence regarding the prisoner perception, as the desires of being informed and up-to-date of my interviewees are satisfied at the same time when using the social network. Davis (2012: 966) supports that users tend to “experience social media with a sense of ambivalence”. Davis (2012: 966-967) says that Social Media is so anchored in our society, that people tend to have an ambivalent position concerning social networks. This is prevailing in my respondent’s answers as well as in their attitude towards Facebook, since some of them unregistered, some of them returned and some of them use it just passively.

Therefore, it is too easy to claim that those passive ones and returnees are “Prisoners of Facebook”. People have the desire to communicate with others and to participate in social interactions, as Turkle (1995) already claimed.

Returnee Lydia tells that after going back she enjoys using it.

Lydia, R30: “(laughing) (...) I think I will maybe close it again when I have my mobile phone back. (excitement). (...) But now I really like to be on Facebook because of my allergy and for some help for university stuff and to talk to some friends. #00:05:07-8#

Likewise, Lydia prefers to use Facebook for self-help, university purposes, group works and to stay in contact with friends, while she has no mobile phone. She claimed that she maybe will close Facebook again when she got her mobile phone back. I met her one month after the interview and talked with her. Lydia had her mobile phone back, but still uses Facebook. She says that she is still registered for keeping up contact to her friends all over the world, since it is the cheapest and easiest way. She doesn’t use any other social networking tools and SMS would be too expensive, therefore Facebook seems to be helpful. Hence, it can be said that connection to others and information in interest groups are mandatory for the passive ones to
stay in and for the returnees to go back to the network. Previously, I mentioned “curiosity and orientation” from the interview with Ashley, which is leading to the next main category, where those aspects of “interest groups” and “self-help” are subordinated. Those aspects serve as an orientation function in a social circle.

**Main Category: Curiosity and Orientation**

Passive user Ashley adds that she likes to look what the others are doing and to build her mind about it.

*Ashley, P4:* "Everyone who is on Facebook is posting things of his/her life, then you can look if you like that or not, but every private detail shouldn’t be there." #00:00:30-7#

She mentions that she likes to see pictures and videos of others and forms an opinion about it.

*Ashley, P39:* “mhm (negotiation) I don’t know. I like to watch videos and pictures and then I build my mind about it but I don’t comment on everything” (unintelligible).” #00:10:18-9#

According to Ashley, “not every private detail should be there”, which will be investigated later in the subcategory of “self-presentation” relating to this main category. Through curiosity, she builds her mind about happenings of her friends. First, I will try to find out more about “curiosity and orientation”. For the returnees Lydia and Sheila and for the passive ones Sophia and Patrick, interest groups are important for being up-to-date, which is related to this main category “curiosity and orientation”. Since those outcomes deal with answers of passive ones and returnees, I now focus on the dropouts. In an interview with Rachel, I got an interesting insight in reasons for her registration to the social network. Rachel says that she never posted but rather observed before she quit with the network, she was curious about her friends. When she was registered, she was a total passive Facebook user who never posted anything. Like passive user Ashley, dropout Rachel liked to observe other people’s lives, she was lurking. Curiosity takes place when she types in the names of her friends to look what they were doing. To look what they are doing serves as a kind of orientation function. This can be connected to Granovetter’s (1983: 205) weak ties, those acquaintances “provide people with access to information and resources beyond those available in their own social circle”. For all interviewed groups, Facebook is an important tool for “interest groups”, “self-help” and especially for “curiosity and orientation”.

*Rachel, D10:* “I only used it for (long break) typing in my friend’s names to look what they are doing, for nothing else”. #00:02:00-2#

*Rachel, D8:* “(...) You waste your time for watching other people’s lives. It’s not worth. #00:01:36-7#
Rachel adds that she was annoyed by people saying “how wonderful they are”, which leads to an additional subcategory of “self-presentation”, in which Ashley already claimed that some people post too many private things (P4).

Rachel, D6: “Because I am not interested, they are just saying how wonderful they are (laughing). And I’m not interested in this kind of presentation.” #00:01:06-5#

Subcategory: Self-Presentation

It seems it is a kind of orientation function to observe what others are doing. Facebook demands to post status updates, as described in the theoretical part. But as it is the case in the interview with Rachel, it seems that this self-presentation of others is not perceived as real. I’m interested to find out what my other interviewees are thinking about that issue and ask them, if there were things about other Facebook users which bothered them. I mainly focus on dropouts and find Keira, since it could be a reason why she unsubscribed. Too much information and too many postings of others lead to a decrease of her active Facebook use.

Keira, D6: “(...) (long break) because first it was good to connect with people all over the world and in the end, it was just like everyone wants to show their life on the Internet and so much information and news and it turned out to be too much for me.” #00:01:10-0#

Keira, D16: “(long break) In the beginning I used it really often and I liked to post videos from bands and music or events which I attended and of course the birthday messages to good friends on Facebook. But later, I posted really rare (long break) because there was so much information and I didn’t want to post anything anymore”. #00:02:23-6#

This marks “self-presentation”, which was too much for her that she quit with Facebook. Turkle (1995: 260) claimed that “some feel an uncomfortable sense of fragmentation, some a sense of relief”, Keira felt quite uncomfortable after some time. As another reason for leaving Facebook she mentioned privacy issues, which I will investigate in a following category. First, I will try to find out which things my other respondents bothered about Facebook users. I ask passive one Patrick, since he says that he is a totally passive Facebook user who never posts anything but looks at the News Feed from time to time. I want to find out if there are things of other Facebook users which bother him. Since this seems to be an interesting question for all usage groups, I will include as well returnee Lydia.

Patrick, P64: “(excitement) I don’t use social media actively, so no. Facebook is an interesting project but people (unintelligible) post their whole media stuff. (long break) I hate social media stuff because its only from narcissistic people and illusions. They post the lives they want and not the life they have.” #00:11:04-3#
Again, it is mentioned that people tend to post the best scenes of their lives. Returnee Lydia has that same perception as the passive one Sophia.

*Lydia, R66:* 

(…) *I think it has too much to do with self-presentation or self-performance. To share pictures of the best moment of your life and not to share the bad ones. Others could get depressed and not see any sense in their lives.*” 

#00:12:22-5#

*Sophia, P26:* 

(…) *So Facebook really becomes a social media platform with people bragging about their lives and everything, making other people envious about their lives (…).*” 

#00:21:22-1#

Therefore, exaggerated “self-presentation” and just sharing the best moments of life and others not, were bothering respondents of all interviewed groups. As Turkle (1995: 238) supported that “virtual experience may be so compelling that we believe that within it we’ve achieved more than we have”. This explains why we just share the best moments of our life and with growing up, we become more reflective and conscious about the truthfulness of those pictures. Though, I recognized during my subscription that my interviewees also posted more in the first years of their registration. Keira for example mentioned this in a citation (D16) displayed before. Therefore, I ask my interviewees if and how their behavior on Facebook changed over the years. Now I focus on Michelle, another dropout, who claimed that in the first years of her subscription she was more likely to post aspects of her life. Adolescents tend to present their identity in a positive way, as “virtual experience may be so compelling that we believe that within if we’ve achieved more than we have” (Turkle 1995: 238), until the “age thing kicks in” (Turkle in Mainwaring 2011). “Facebook is a virtual place where you discover who you are by seeing a visible objectification of yourself” (Miller 2011: 179), as dropout Michelle supports.

*Michelle, D54:* 

“(…) *Because you post to get recognized, to have contact with others, to share with others, you get Feedback, you need that, and I think it is very important and it was always important to me.*” 

#00:12:40-4#

Michelle claimed that she needed feedback of others when she registered to the network back then. She turned to the social network to receive it. “The open communication encourages an attitude of respect for the many within us and the many within others” (Turkle 1995: 261).

*Michelle, D56:* 

“I think maybe we don’t get recognized in real-life, so we go to the visual area and I felt like that too because I had some friends when I registered to Facebook but they (long break) didn’t like my music back then and so you could really find people who like it too and it was important to get recognized.” 

#00:13:30-4#
Turkle (1995: 238) expresses that “direct experience is often messy, it’s meaning is never exactly clear”, which also Michelle acknowledges in the interview. For returnee Lydia, I am interested if and how her behavior on Facebook changed after going back. Lydia tells that posting and sharing aspects of her life are too private for her now, after returning to Facebook. All those allegations lead to the following main category of “maturity and reflection”, since this is persistent in all answers of my respondents. In adolescence Lydia liked to share but her perception has changed with growing up. Therefore, the need for self-presentation seems to decrease by the increasing age.

Lydia, R30: “(...) Because I think I can share moments with my friends in real-life, I can meet them up. If not I can write a message or call them, I don’t have to be active on Facebook.” (…) #00:05:07-8#

Main Category: Maturity and Reflection

Concerning this category, I am very interested in finding out if and how the behavior of my other returnees changed after going back to the social network. Lydia reveals that her behavior on Facebook changed over the years with growing up. Also, when she went to university she was thinking more about it, had less time and less desire to share aspects of her life. When she was 13/14 years old, she posted much more than now. Turkle (1995:10) stated that identity is a kind of process in which “we go along”. Now I am interested in finding out if and how their attitude and behavior changed regarding Facebook.

Lydia, R50: “I only share things I really want to share and not like before when I always wanted to tell people and present myself on Facebook, but that’s not my personality, because I don’t need it.” #00:08:57-7#

Lydia, R52: “Maybe at the beginning when I was 13 or 14, but then it changed (…).” #00:09:20-2#

Lydia, R54: “I’m not sure, I think the conscience of people changed a bit. If you have grown up, you are student, not at school anymore, maybe you think about it and I have a lot of friends who are not on Facebook (…).” #00:10:05-4#

Lydia says that she has friends who are not on Facebook as well. Therefore, her decision to leave the network is also influenced by the perception of importance her friends share, as most of my respondents signed up to Facebook because all others were subscribed. Dropout Keira is also of the opinion that time and growing up lead to a change and decrease of self-disclosure. With growing up, identity seems to become more stabilized.

Keira, D48: “(...) because when you are younger you have more time for all these things and you need feedback, you are searching for your identity and everything. When you are getting older you work and found yourself already”. #00:10:29-9#
Returnee Sheila uses Facebook more consciously after going back, like Lydia. She says that in school, there was more time and she just didn’t reflect about her behavior.

Sheila, R32: “(long break) Why (long break) yes why (long break). I don’t know why, but I am using Facebook more consciously because I know I am on Facebook because of band news, because of this and because of that, and not because I don’t know what to do with my time”. #00:07:51-7#

I ask dropout Michelle if she recognized a difference in Facebook itself until she quit in 2013. She said it were mostly privacy issues and because it was boring in 2013. I ask her why she perceived Facebook as boring.

Michelle, D26: "Because nobody wrote anymore, I didn’t post anything and a friend of mine back then deleted her account first and so I thought that’s cool, I will do that too (…)" #00:04:40-8#

Michelle, D32: “I was 16 when I registered so maybe in the teenage years and then I think you become older and it doesn’t interest you anymore.” #00:06:57-6# #00:07:12-5#

It seems like the allegations of Sherry Turkle are true. She claims that as we are getting older, we become more self-confident and the “age thing kicks in”. Posting becomes less important and we become more conscious about it. Moreover, Michelle unsubscribed because a friend of her did that too, therefore it was again a kind of orientation on others. Also, Sheila is of the same opinion that people posted less as they were getting older.

Sheila, R18: “Well, the first time I was on Facebook it was like that many persons posted everything they did in this time. But now that goes back, they don’t post many things.” #00:04:26-4#

When asking her how her Facebook behavior changed over the past years, she answered that she uses it more consciously now. She says that she rarely posts anything now.

Sheila, R34:” mhm (affirmative) Yes. (long break) I became more experienced, I was thinking about it, more self-confident, I don’t need the feedback of other people so I also don’t post many things.” (…) #00:08:30-1#

It is interesting that interviewees of my age group mentioned the same reasons why they posted less. Since this question can be relevant for the passive ones as well, I now focus on Sophia. Passive one Sophia supports that her Facebook behavior changed a lot from adolescence until maturity. The “self-regulating aspect” is important in Social Media (Hardt/Negri 2000).

Sophia, P4:“ mhm (affirmative) Definitely it changed a lot. (excitement) It changed completely let’s say because (long break) obviously when I started to use Facebook or other social media became popular in our society, the people didn’t know that much about social networks in general, how to use them, we didn’t really know about potential dangers etc. So, we really used it just how we wanted, we posted
everything, we tried out all the quizzes and questionnaires they provided on Facebook and we were literally posting everything (laughing). You know what I mean because you were in my class, we started with it at the same time, so you literally posted everything, you said that you were going to bed, you said that you are bored, you posted and commented everything, you posted pictures and you didn’t think about any consequences because nobody knew about them and nobody told us because it was such a new thing and all potential dangers were not known until this point. #00:03:16-6#

Sophia means with potential dangers the privacy issues regarding Facebook, which forms my following subcategory, since it seems to be an important factor of influence on my respondents. She adds that especially adolescents tend to use Social Media more excessively. Moreover, she used it for bridging time at school. She mentioned privacy issues as a reason, which also lead to her decrease of active Facebook use.

Sophia, P28: “(…) that’s something where young adolescents are not that developed and they are in this process and of course this people use it even more than adults, if I talk about myself. I can’t really answer that, because I think for me of course privacy issues were a very important point and I really used it in the first year where we were at school and didn’t know about it then I used it most. And we were sitting in school and it was boring and it was fun, so it was just some time-consuming thing”.

#00:23:25-7#

In history, a lot of research was conducted about children influenced by media communication. Davison (1983) presents in his publication studies, which has been carried out to measure which effects media has on others and especially on children. Sophia’s statement deals with the “third person effect”. “In its broadest formulation, this hypothesis predicts that people tend to overestimate the influence that mass communications have on the attitudes and behavior of others”, Davison (1983: 3) explains. Moreover, “its greatest impact will not be on ‘me’ or ‘you’, but on ‘them’, the third persons” (Davison 1983: 3). As it is in the case of Sophia, “other people, we reason, do not know what we know. Therefore, they are more likely to be influenced by the media” Davison (1983: 9) reasons. Children are believed to be less experienced than adults, thus they are perceived to be influenced easier, as it is the case in Sophia’s answer.

Interviewees of all groups like Lydia and Sheila from the returnees, Keira and Michelle from the dropouts and Sophia from the passive ones claimed, that they subscribed back then at school when everybody subscribed. They stated that over the years, they posted less because they were growing up and noticed that this “self-presentation” is not always real and meaningful. At the same time, the desire to actively share aspects of their life decreased because they became more reflective, conscious and had less time. Overall, Facebook became less important for them. Also, “privacy” issues were a reason for posting less, which will be
the next subcategory of “maturity and reflection”. Since my respondents subscribed at school back then and all of them posted less over the years, they recognized that Facebook became boring. Sophia also marks that she thinks twice before she posts anything, but she rarely posts now. Sheila shifted from an active user to a dropout, then to a returnee and now, she is a passive user.

Since it is part of my questionnaire, I am curious about how much friends my returnees have after going back to Facebook, which deals with “maturity and reflection” and “privacy”. Bryant et al. (2012: 27) support that acquaintances are “the extremely large number of people whom participants had met once or twice offline”, as also Sheila is stating. Moreover, Granovetter (1983: 205) explains the “weak ties”, which provide information about acquaintances to observe, as also Bryant et al. (2012: 27) claim. Those allegations relate to the previous mentioned main category of “curiosity/orientation”, as it is also a kind of orientation function to monitor others. Sheila now only has friends and relatives in her friends list as well as Lydia. This leads to the assumption that adolescents tend to quantify their friends list by adding people they have just seen once. As they are getting older, they don’t need that kind of orientation function as “weak ties”, care more about privacy and share things directly with the desired person. As Miller (2011: 218) expresses that “these close relationships are typically the main determinant of happiness or unhappiness.”

Sheila, R52: “(excitement) That’s easy, because the last time I was on Facebook between 2009 and 2014 there were about 300 friends in my friends list. I don’t know who they were (long break) there were many I met at partying and I saw them once and then never again and so (long break) I just can say that now I have 90 friends and all of them I know personally and have no problem to contact them. And so, from the 300 there were 90 real friends.” #00:16:16-1#

Lydia, R22: “Yes it really changed because now I only have my close friends on Facebook like 25 people, who are really appreciated and I know them. But at first when I went to school I had 400 or 500 friends and it was too much for me.” #00:03:01-9#

The study of the Pew Research Center by Smith (2014) found that younger users tend to have more friends in social networks than older ones. Therefore, as we are younger we tend to quantify our friends list in social networks, which is supported by the answers of my interviewees. Moreover, the focus is on “strong ties”, those close friends who are “typically more easily available” (Granovetter 1983: 209). To conclude, as people are getting older, they overall care more about their individual “privacy”, which is elaborated below.
Subcategory: Privacy

As privacy was mentioned several times, I want to investigate how the importance of privacy of my interviewees changed over the years. This subcategory is related to “maturity and reflection”, since with growing up privacy is perceived as being more important than in adolescence. The passive user Sophia admits that over the years of her maturity, she began to think about privacy and her conscience changed. When the Social Media hype around Facebook just started, my interviewees didn’t know about potential consequences of sharing every private detail. Therefore, this category strongly relates to the category of maturity. I already displayed in the theoretical chapter how Facebook uses personal data for advertising. Since privacy was an often mentioned issue in various news regarding the Social Media giant, it is obvious that this news reached my respondents as well. Therefore, I ask all groups about this issue.

Sophia, P18: “mhmm (affirmative) Yes, that’s the next thing, I mean sometimes I’m really (long break) let’s say (long break) uncomfortable when thinking about all the things I’ve already posted on Facebook because we gave our private data to Facebook without thinking about it because we didn’t know. But the problem is we can’t (long break) change anything about that and so sometimes, I really think that we have already gave all of our private information to them without even consciously knowing it and wanting it but we can’t change that state and I think it is a huge problem. #00:13:55-9#

Dropdown Michelle didn’t know about those consequences back then at school.

Michelle, D18: “(…) but in 2008/2009 we didn’t know much about this, that Facebook takes all your data”. #00:03:40-2#

Rachel subscribed in 2012 for two years before she dropped out. She claimed that she never posted anything and just lurked. For a reason why she quit, she mentioned privacy issues. She has a negative picture about Social Media in general and doesn’t use any social media, not even WhatsApp, since it belongs to Facebook recently. I ask her how she thinks user data is proceeded. Marlow (2017) claims that advertisers are part of this network, since it gives them insight into people’s thinking and needs, as also Rachel knows (cameronmarlow.com 2017).

Rachel, D32:” (long break) Finding out everything about the users and some day they misuse the data for blackmailing its users. (excitement) For this reason I think they need the data. (long break) (excitement) Big concerns use the data to build their mind about the society and then create some things that people would like.” #00:07:19-7#

Rachel, D24:” (…) I heard that WhatsApp got bought by Facebook and I don’t want to have my data on the Internet”. #00:04:22-6#

Dropdown Keira is of the same opinion as Rachel but still uses alternatives.
Keira, D54: “(…) Especially since they bought WhatsApp and Instagram everything is connected so you become really the glass human. (…) #00:12:18-6#

Moreover, passive user Patrick cares about privacy as he never shared anything on Social Media and just uses it as a communication tool for university. He also heard that WhatsApp got bought by Facebook, but sees less dangers in using WhatsApp than in using Facebook. Patrick also prefers using WhatsApp.

Patrick, P62: “(excitement) (…). They sell your information, but on WhatsApp, what should they sell? There are no advertisements and there are no interests of people displayed, it is just messaging with a profile picture. #00:09:50-3#

Therefore, alternative social networks are now more likely to be introduced, which I want to investigate in a following subcategory relating to this main category of “maturity and reflection”. Patrick mentions ads which bothered him, which forms my next subcategory. Since “advertisement” and “privacy” relate together, I am interested in finding out if also my other interviewees recognized an increase in ads. I want to know if the increased ads on Facebook lead to a shift to alternative social networks with less ads and more anonymity, since Patrick mentioned WhatsApp. In regard of privacy issues, also returnee Lydia has her concerns, privacy is very important for her too.

Lydia, R46: “It is really important for me. Because I (long break) saw a lot of expositions about privacy and safety and I really had the feeling that it changes a lot, if you are always connected on Facebook or even on WhatsApp on your mobile phone. (excitement) It’s so important for me, I don’t want to be followed from anyone.” #00:08:27-1#

Ashley, P21: “(…) But (long break) privacy, if you post everything, is on Facebook zero (…).” #00:04:25-0#

It is interesting that passive user Ashley tries to care about her privacy by posting less and is still subscribed because of interest groups and for communication with friends abroad. Returnee Emily once quit with Facebook because of those privacy issues. She tried Twitter as an alternative but preferred Facebook.

Emily, R4: “I have quitted because we talked a lot about privacy back then at school and also about the glass human. And it was very frightening for me back then and I thought „Well why am I giving them all my data and why should I do it, I don’t have anything from it that I really need (…).” #00:01:32-7#

Emily, R28: “mhm (affirmative) Yes I think Facebook gives you the feeling that your data is secure, if they say that you can choose who sees your posts, choose which of your data is shown, but they still have the data. (excitement) They are just protecting you from other people but not from themselves.” #00:10:38-4#
Emily mentioned that Facebook is giving users the feeling that their data is secure, by giving them the option to manage their privacy settings themselves. Returnee Sheila recognized that Facebook tracks data of its users, which makes her thinking very critical. There is the “Facebook algorithm” which chooses the things the user should see, based on his personal interests and actions on Facebook (Constine 2016). Sheila feels that she is caught in this self-created filter bubble, which prevents her from receiving the “whole picture”.

Sheila, R42: “mhm (affirmative) (excitement) Yes. I also recognized that for example I just get the articles I am interested into and when I read an article about something like drugs, at the next time I look on Facebook, everything is about drugs, so it is obvious.” #00:10:56-0#

Subcategory: Advertisement

I will now put a deeper light on the perception of “advertisement” on Facebook. Returnee Lydia mentions that the first time she was subscribed, there were less ads on Facebook. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 67) argue that advertising on Social Media is much more efficient to reach its potential customers than traditional advertising. Therefore, companies are increasingly settling to Facebook as the biggest platform with most of its potential future customers. Facebook and Twitter are on top of mobile advertising (Emarketer 2015). Again, since “advertisement” and “privacy” are subcategories of the main category “maturity and reflection”, it is interesting what respondents of all groups think about it.

Lydia, R68: “mhm (affirmative) Yes you find a lot of business advertising. If you open your Facebook you will find 100 of ads that you don’t know where to begin, you are shocked at the moment. And you want to buy everything, you want to have everything someone else presents on Facebook, and that’s a danger even for young people. #00:13:14-8#

Also, Emily is bothered by ads on Facebook and says that those are annoying, she describes those ads as “terrible”.

Emily, R22: “(…) (long break) What really bothers me is that videos are interrupted because of ads, this is terrible. When I watch a video and it stops and I see something else, I never continue watching the video. (excitement) I don’t want to see this ad. It’s terrible. #00:08:46-0#

Passive user Patrick and dropouts Keira and Michelle support, that Facebook got boring because of those reasons.

Patrick, P18: “There are getting more and more adverts and less people. (long break) The companies pay for the ads so it is good for the networks (laughing) because they earn money and (long break) the community, they are online, whatever. (long break) (unintelligible) (…).” #00:02:47-3#
Patrick, P16: “(excitement) Because it is boring, it is only advertisements everywhere and that’s it.” #00:02:12-1#

Keira, D36: “Yes it changed a lot because when I subscribed in 2008 it was a platform where you just write with people and you don’t have so many things there, just writing. Then you always had this banners everywhere and the advertisement and it changed a lot. The pictures everywhere, there was too much.” #00:07:20-8#

Michelle, D72: “(long break) In the beginning there was no advertisement on Facebook I think and I am very happy that on WhatsApp there is no advertising, but it’s on YouTube, it’s on Facebook and it’s very annoying (…). #00:19:58-4#

Hence, dropout Michelle states that on WhatsApp there is no advertisement, as already passive one Patrick pointed out. Once more, alternative social networks are mentioned, which seem to be very important to use. Passive user Sophia already recognized personalized ads on Facebook, which seem to insecure her personal data privacy. Thus, for dropouts and passive Facebook users, alternatives are liked to be introduced.

Sophia, P16: “(…) I think it’s very (long break) dangerous or (long break) a danger that if you click or search for something on Google and you click on some shoes or something that you get all the advertisements. (excitement) So you can really see that there is an algorithm that really saves and tracks your data (…).” #00:12:48-4#

Sophia, P6: “(…) Of course also my posting behavior changed a lot because nowadays actually I’m not even posting anything, sometimes maybe I share some interesting newspaper articles, but I really think about it twice when I’m posting and on the other hand it’s not that interesting for me anymore.” #00:05:07-6#

Thus, Sophia cares about her privacy by posting less on the one hand and on the other hand, it is not that interesting anymore. It is interesting that again, respondents of all groups gave similar answers. They care about their privacy, are annoyed by ads and tend to switch to other networks, which seem to be “safer” concerning privacy and contain less ads. For dropouts, privacy issues were also a reason for quitting with the social networking giant. Now, reasons for using alternatives are investigated. Therefore, the subcategories “privacy”, “advertisement” and “alternatives” together form the main category of “maturity and reflection”.
Passive user Sophia admits that for those reasons she moved to other networks like to WhatsApp and Instagram. I also focus on dropouts and returnees for this question, since alternatives seem to be important for all usage groups. I am curious to detect more reasons for the shift to alternatives. Sophia likes to use Instagram for finding new workouts, so it better serves their interests than Facebook’s status updates of her friends. Thus, Instagram is an “interest based network”. For those, Fang et al. (2014) describe the networks Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Flickr, the precursor of Instagram. “In interest-based online social media networks, users can easily create and share personal content of interest, such as tweets, photos, music tracks, and videos” (Fang et al. 2014: 796). Thus, “in such interest-based social networks, users interact with each other through the content of interest” (Fang et al. 2014: 796). Sophia prefers Instagram for this reason.

Sophia, P14: “Yes I absolutely use WhatsApp as the primary tool, but I actually don’t really compare WhatsApp to Facebook even if it is social media because for me WhatsApp is a substitution to SMS, so actually I just use it to communicate and chatting with my friends, so that would be the Facebook messenger, but in this way, it is just a mean of communication for me. The other thing I really use much more now is Instagram, I prefer Instagram now. Actually, I think also because I have said I think it’s a nonsense to have status updates like on Facebook like everyone what you are doing or you feeling or suffering or happy, I don’t like these things, and that’s something which is not on Instagram (...) (excitement) I like the fitness channels very much because there are videos from famous athletes that I really like to watch and use new workouts for myself, so I really use this as a source of information.” #00:11:13-9#

Moreover, the focus is rather on “strong ties” than on “weak ties” (Granovetter 1983). Therefore, Sophia likes to use WhatsApp to communicate with people directly. This behavior changed with growing up and becoming more self-confident. For this reason, she mentions that “it is a nonsense to have status updates”, which is not on Instagram. Though, Sophia is still registered to Facebook because of university stuff and contacts to friends abroad. On Instagram, messaging is not a main activity but sharing pictures. For dropouts, I am interested to find out which channels or alternatives they use, if they use any. Michelle is of the same opinion.

Michelle, D70: “mhm (affirmative) I am very visual type of human and I love pictures and videos and on Instagram there are always pictures and videos (...).” #00:19:03-9#

Dropout Michelle tells that Facebook with its privacy issues and changes had a negative impact on her perception.
Michelle, D64:” (excitement) I think there were too much changing, the whole pages and everything always changed (...) I think it was changing in a negative way because of all of the news regarding the privacy issues.” #00:16:52-6#

Michelle thinks that the increased use of WhatsApp lead to a decrease of postings on Facebook. WhatsApp allows to contact friends privately by sending them messages as already Sophia (P14) acknowledges. After we had a talk, also dropout Keira claimed that this could be a reason.

Michelle, D30:” (long break) Maybe because WhatsApp came, (excitement) because I have WhatsApp since 2012 and I think now we had another chance to share our lives with our friends so I think Facebook lost its popularity, because everyone had it and so it wasn’t interesting anymore.” #00:06:07-3#

Returnee Sheila has the same opinion. She was writing more on Facebook when she had no WhatsApp. Now she also prefers chatting on WhatsApp with close friends, with “strong ties” since it is more personal. Identity is a procedure as Turkle (1995) claims, and my respondents became as well more mature and reflective. It shows again, that respondents tend to be curious about those alternatives and like to check out new Social Media platforms.

Sheila, R60: “mhm (negotiation) No, I was writing more at this time because there was no WhatsApp and I just was on Facebook and chatting with people and chatting with people because it was funny and I was young”. #00:17:45-3#

Sheila, R62: “mhm (affirmative) Yes, but with WhatsApp it is more personally because around 2009 when I was in high school it was just funny to write with persons and also with persons you don’t know”. #00:18:12-6#

Asking Emily what she thinks about posting on Facebook or on Instagram, she gives an interesting answer, which can be related to the subcategory of “self-presentation”.

Emily, R10:” (excitement) I never posted a lot of things actually. Only if there were other people around, if I did something with other people or if it was something which I thought was very funny, (...) I do a lot of things on Instagram (long break) but on Facebook it’s like: I don’t want my friends to judge me, I don’t want to let them see all the things I do (long break) because on Instagram there are a lot of other people I don’t know, who are just following me and which is nice if they like my pictures (...). So it’s more possible that I take a picture I like in Munich and do it on Instagram. #00:04:14-5#

Emily feels to be in the “Panopticon of Facebook”, where each of her action is observed, as Foucault (1992) considered Bentham’s Panopticon. Self-regulation takes place since personal privacy and anonymity seem to be important for Facebook users. Facebook doesn’t allow to play with identity, Instagram works differently and most of the respondents turn to it. On Instagram, it is easier to be anonymous. Most of the people there use pseudonyms. Lovink (2011: 193) supports that anonymity should be desired in our current society. Turkle (1995:
describes the “flexible self”, which is more possible to act out on Instagram. Also, returnee Emily likes to use Snapchat for sending pictures. Snapchat is treating privacy differently, as mentioned in my theoretical part. She says that Facebook use is not so popular anymore for her age group, since alternative networks emerged.

Emily, R30: “The design changed, it’s kind of mobile-only now. (long break) I think of course it changed but I can’t say if positive or negative. Negative in a way because of all the ads, positive maybe because they have to be more open about your data, because people talk about it a lot and they sue Facebook all the time. So, they kind of have to be more open when it comes to this question but it didn’t change how we use it. Maybe it’s even too old for younger ones, because I always see that they go to Snapchat and so on and that Facebook is dying. But still there are millions of people using it. Maybe Facebook is getting older.” #00:12:17-5#

Since she is a passive user and one of the millions using Facebook, I ask her about her perception of her as a “Facebook Prisoner”. She claims that she has the possibility to quit, therefore she doesn’t see herself as one. Another thing which bothers her about Facebook are the privacy issues and ads, which are not existing in alternative social networks she uses. Also, she can be more anonymous in those. Moreover, Keira likes the anonymity on Instagram, there she can have a “flexible self” (Turkle 1995). Also passive user Ashley prefers Instagram as a connection tool.

Keira, D42: “On Instagram and Twitter you can be anonymous, you don’t have to be yourself there. You can be anyone and on Instagram I like that you have the pictures and you can just add the persons you want to. (long break) On Twitter you have those little messages, I like that, it is better.” #00:08:48-1#

Ashley, P35: “(excitement) I like Instagram. There you can have better contact with people, there is no information overload, you can select your followers. I prefer Instagram as an alternative to Facebook (...).” #00:08:38-5#

Passive user Patrick likes to switch to other networks, as he recognized a lot of fake news on Facebook, which was also part of my theoretical chapter.

Patrick, P52: “(long break) mhm (negotiation) No the news feed on Facebook is like the mainstream media. On Facebook, there are many fake news and stuff that I don’t want to know, because it is always about death and killers and bad news. I look on other sites for the real facts. #00:08:37-5#

Alternative social networks are getting popular as interviewees of all groups tend to prefer networks as Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter. Not only because of privacy issues concerning Facebook, but also because of the chance of anonymity in those alternatives. There, they can have “multiple selves” and more possibilities to present themselves, like on Facebook. Also, passive users tend to switch to those alternative social networks.
Prisoner Perception

As I mentioned in my questionnaire, I also ask the respondents about their perception as prisoners. I want to find out if they share my perception. Especially I am asking the returnees this question, since they went back to the social network after quitting. Also from the passive ones it would be very interesting to hear their opinion.

When asking Sheila if she would describe herself as a “Prisoner of Facebook”, she refuses. Though, when asking again, she agrees and describes Facebook as part of our society, and we are prisoners of our society. It seems that she has an ambivalent position regarding Facebook after quitting and returning to it, as Rainie and Wellman (2012: 146) describe social networks as part of our society. Sheila as well characterizes Facebook as part of our life, so it is hard to be not part of it. It is obvious that Facebook and social networks have a strong stimulative nature. Lydia doesn’t see herself as a prisoner anymore and will maybe unsubscribe again, because she already managed it once. Also, Emily doesn’t see herself as a prisoner since she thinks people can quit if they want – it is their choice.

Sheila, R28: “(long break) mhm (negation) Well I don’t think so because I have the experience that I can be without Facebook so I also often think about unsubscribing again”. #00:06:57-9#

Sheila, R72: “mhm (affirmative) Yes but we are all a prisoner of our society and Facebook is a part of this society”. #00:20:21-7#

Lydia, R76: “laughing) Not anymore. Before maybe but now I use it differently and I would say that I really want to keep in touch with people around the world.” #00:15:10-9#

Emily, R36: “mhm (negotiation) I don’t think we are prisoners (long break) because we can free ourselves, so (long break) if you are a prisoner you don’t have freedom but you always have the freedom to quit Facebook, you always can leave and you are only a prisoner if you think that you are not free (…).” #00:15:27-5#

Though, the group of passive ones like Patrick, Sophia and Ashley still use Facebook because of interest groups. For Ashely those are music bands, for Patrick and Sophia those are university groups. Patrick always used it as just a messaging tool as well as Sophia is using it now. Patrick and Ashley don’t see themselves as prisoners and therefore, they don’t see any reason to quit. As Facebook serves as a practical tool for facilitating contact in interest groups and for self-help, the designation of “Facebook Prisoners” is not supported and my hypothesis not confirmed.
Sophia, P12: “(...) So in a way, maybe we are also already kind of prisoners, because as I have also said, I don’t feel isolated but I would miss important information and as all my study colleagues are there it is a kind of group pressure. So, in a way, I think we are prisoners”. #00:09:09-1#

Sophia, P34: “mhm (affirmative) It’s interesting to think about the Facebook passive users thing, I’m really interested if when I finished university and don’t have these sites anymore, I have to admit I think I would not delete my site because I think of especially all my friends of abroad I’m in contact on Facebook.” #00:30:03-8#

Sophia, P36: “mhm (affirmative) Yes, in a way yes. I would not lose the contact with those people so (long break). But I think my behavior changed from posting everything and using Facebook as a whole into using Facebook only as a messenger and a mean of communication.” #00:30:39-8#

Patrick, P32: “mhm (affirmative) It’s proper for some of the people there but (long break) I don’t count to this people in my opinion. Because I’m not a prisoner.” #00:04:28-9#

Patrick, P28: “(excitement) Yes but I don’t use it as a social network, I use it as a messenger.” #00:03:41-8#

Ashley, P33: “(long break) It is my decision if I have the feeling that Facebook is a danger for me, then I have to quit with Facebook. For me it’s no addiction, I check it regularly when I have time, but most of my friends are more active on Instagram now.” #00:07:59-0#

**Reflection and Results**

The results have shown that respondents are not “Prisoners of Facebook”. As Sheila claims, Facebook has become a part of our life and of our society. Since interest groups and communication with people abroad is the most practical and common on Facebook, passive users tend to stay subscribed and returnees are going back. Also, keeping up contact is very important for the passive ones and returnees, because Facebook is used most globally. Dropouts mainly quit because they were bothered by exaggerated self-presentation of others and they didn’t feel comfortable anymore. Members of all groups tend to switch to alternative social networks. Instagram is especially preferred as an alternative for being anonymous and for participating in interest-groups. The messaging service WhatsApp is liked for having contact with close friends, with “strong ties” (Granovetter 1983). Nearly all of them mentioned that their use and expectations about Facebook changed. Privacy was a very often mentioned issue. As Facebook is the biggest player on the social media market, it is hard to control everything which happens within, and my respondents criticized that. All mentioned categories form the core category of “change”.

83
Core Category: Change

This leads to the core category of change. Growing up, self-regulation, the emerge of various negative privacy news and the emerge of alternative networks fostered the dropout of Facebook, using Facebook passively or using it just for a practical tool of information in interest groups and for communication with friends abroad. Those are internal changes which are similar from individual to individual.

Change also happened in Facebook, as users claimed that the design of Facebook changed so often, people posted less, it got boring and furthermore, company ads were prevailing on the page. Since the Web 2.0 also forces companies to be active on Social Media, it seems to be a negative consequence that users are annoyed and shift to other networks. Passive respondent Sophia told me that Facebook maybe recognizes that users are more likely to shift to other networks and that they bought WhatsApp and Instagram as a reason, the tools the people of Facebook switch to. She describes those steps as “desperate steps”. Also, passive user Ashley recognized that.

Sophia, P22: “(excitement) Maybe that are desperate steps. I mean you can really see how Facebook just in the last few months tried to adapt to the new social media stuff now like implementing the stories, I mean obviously, every company if they see that they are not getting that popular anymore try everything so obviously, Facebook is trying that too. You can really see that all the features that Snapchat or Instagram have they also try to implement in Facebook (…)”. #00:17:12-7#

Ashley, P21: “(…) The founder Mark Zuckerberg always tries to make something new like the stories which is already on Instagram and not necessary on Facebook (…)”. #00:04:25-0#

As mentioned in the theoretical part, Snapchat is a popular tool among adolescents. Also, Emily likes to use it as an alternative. Facebook wanted to buy Snapchat as well, which would be another “desperate step”. Also, interviewees recognized that there was an increase of violent scenes on Facebook as well as shit storms.

Emily, R32: “(excitement) I think Facebook is for everyone (long break) so you can just observe people or you can be very active. You can hate people there very good, you can love them too. So, it’s your choice how you use that, it’s a little bit of danger because it is so free and open that people can just hate each other. It must not be your real name you are subscribed with so you can hate people really intensively there and you don’t see the reactions how they are hurt and that’s really bad. But they are doing it anyway”. #00:13:23-3#
Sheila, R50: “mhm (affirmative) Yes, for the haters. Because they have the feeling that they are hided and so they can hate, make shit storms and bully others. That’s perfect for them”. #00:14:30-1#

I ask my respondents what they would like to tell Facebook, if they could leave the network a message. Sophia has doubts in regard of fake news on Facebook. With increasing pressure on the social networking giant, Facebook tries to act against (Zeit.de 2017). Though, Facebook (2017f) wants to stay an open platform for everyone by giving everyone a voice. Hence, with giving all of them a voice, it is getting unmanageable to spot everything.

Rachel, D34: “excitement) Be more careful with violent things. (long break) Create a network with more security concerning cyber bullying and violent scenes”. #00:08:13-5#

Sophia, P44: “(...) They will have to be more severe about privacy issues, I think that’s something they have to change and have to be stricter about (...) And because of all the false fake news in Facebook, he has to think about how to handle and deal with these things in the future”. #00:36:34-7#

Keira, D52: ”I would say (long break) Dear Facebook (laughing), please respect the privacy”. #00:11:33-9#

Keira, D54: “mhm (negotiation) (...) I think it will get even worse (...) And they don’t have the control anymore because some people post violent videos and they just can’t control everything anymore. It’s dangerous. #00:12:18-6#

Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication/Connection</th>
<th>Curiosity/Orientation</th>
<th>Maturity/Reflection</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td>Interest Groups</td>
<td>Privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Pressure</td>
<td>Self-Help</td>
<td>Advertisement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Presentation</td>
<td>Alternatives</td>
</tr>
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Figure 10: Categories of the Results (Own Illustration)
5.4 Autoethnography: Method and Analysis

In the following, my second empirical approach will be analyzed and later in the chapter of “Change of Use and Expectations”, I will draw a final analysis of both empirical approaches. First, I will describe the autoethnography followed by an introduction of my personal experience with the social network. This chapter will be concluded with an analysis of my diary, evaluated in categories with the Grounded Theory approach.

Autoethnography

“Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural”, Ellis and Bochner (2000: 739) explain. Thus, personal experience serves as a basis for this approach. Those autoethnographic texts appear as short diary entries, which I conducted daily. Excerpts of those are displayed in the next chapter, linked to relevant categories and analyzed with the Grounded Theory method. As Ellis and Bochner (2000: 739) support: “Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing and social science prose.” Moreover, as “communicating humans studying humans communicating, we are inside what we are studying”. Therefore, “personal narrative” is very important for this kind of approach (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 743). Personal narratives are predominating in my diary entries, which will be presented as short personal essays in first-person voice. In autoethnographies, personal experience is mandatory to achieve understanding about interactions with the self and others.

With conducting this autoethnography, I want to gain a deeper understanding in the consciousness of my respondents. First, I conduct open-ended interviews followed by an autoethnography with personal experience, to delve into the topic of social networks, society and the self. “Although reflexive ethnographies primarily focus on a culture or subculture, authors use their own experience in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions”, Ellis and Bochner (2000: 740) emphasize. This autoethnography could be as well described as a “reflexive ethnography”. In my diary entries, I reflect about my action and consequences of totally dropping out of Facebook. “In reflexive ethnographies, the researchers personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study” (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 740).
I conducted diary entries daily for a period of one week. I made two additional entries to show my progress and to form a qualitative product. For doing autoethnography, it is mandatory to take field notes. “Because it is impossible to collect data on everything and record all the things that are going on in the field, the researcher needs, by necessity, be selective in her writing” (Eriksson et al. 2012: 9). Thus, I conduct diary entries daily. Each time I wanted to use Facebook, I took this experience down as well as the reason I wanted to use it. In the first days of my experiment, my diary entries were quite longer because I wanted to login several times. Each evening, I collected those experiments and made a final entry of the day on my computer. In my analysis, relevant entries or parts of those are visible. Experiences which happened often form relevant categories, as it is the case in Grounded Theory. I soon recognized that my experiences form similar categories, which were analyzed in the conducted interviews with my respondents. In this approach, I first present an introduction of my attitude to Facebook, followed by an analysis of my diary entries.

**Introduction**

To begin with, I will introduce my Facebook behavior. I was subscribed to the social networking giant from 2009 to 2017 and over the years, my behavior changed from actively sharing to rather passively observing. In the end, I was just subscribed, posted less, checked the News Feed from time to time or if I got a message. As my passive respondents, I was a “lurk”. I subscribed in school when I was 17 years old. Over the years and with gaining new insights how individuals on the Internet become “glass humans”, my behavior got more conscious and reflective. I also recognized that if I posted something as an adolescent, I always wanted to have feedback. Now, I am happy about feedback of my close friends if they give it to me voluntarily. After conducting the interviews, I also understood why I only managed to unsubscribe for two days back then. I needed to know what others think about me and I wanted to see what the others are doing. I also didn’t want to lose contact to acquaintances on Facebook, to my “weak ties” (Granovetter 1983). With my shift to WhatsApp over the last years, I more focused on my “strong ties” (Granovetter 1983). Still, I was subscribed for eight years and even if I posted and used it less, I was still subscribed. Nevertheless, it was a big step for me to unsubscribe since Facebook became part of my life. Now, I will develop relevant categories out of my diary entries.
First day, Monday 1st 2017: “I just realize that my Chinese friend Summer (name anonymized) has birthday today, I posted on her wall before 1pm when I quit, but forgot to write her back if I will travel to America with her this summer. Since she doesn’t use WhatsApp and WeChat doesn’t work at my phone, I have no idea how I could contact her without Facebook. I decide to ask my American host dad from my exchange semester in the U.S., if he could ask Summer about her e-mail address. He sent it to me and I write Summer an email. Until the end of my experiment, I haven’t got an answer from her. I kind of feel isolated, annoyed, and unable to contact friends I just contact through Facebook.”

Now I understand Sophia. It seems that Facebook is a practical and common tool for reaching people all over the world, like my interviewees told me. In my exchange semester three years ago in the United States, I found a lot of friends all over the world. I had a deep friendship to Summer (name anonymized), a Chinese girl, who was also an exchange student back then. Since she rarely uses WhatsApp, I had contact with her through Facebook from time to time. Two weeks later I reached her through e-mail. Facebook is a good tool for socializing with friends and therefore, I felt isolated in the first few days of being unregistered.

Three weeks after quitting, I made an additional diary entry since I again experienced a situation, in which Facebook is just so practical to use. I often used in my studies for group works, since they are practical to conduct and organize via Facebook. My group members of a university course asked me if I don’t want to return to Facebook, since it would be easier for conducting the group work, but I refused. I didn’t want to destroy my experiment. Also, some of my respondents argued that they use Facebook for group works. On Facebook, those are more practical and presentations can be send easily. Therefore, it is a good tool for having contact in interest groups.

Sunday, 21st May 2017: “We wanted to do the group work over Facebook, but now we do it over WhatsApp, which is a little bit more difficult, since Facebook is more practical in regard of sending documents to each other. My group members kind of react strange on my decision of quitting with Facebook. I feel strange as well.”
Curiosity/Orientation/Contacts

As a tool for observing others, Facebook is very good to use. If I go online, I just tend to check the News Feed to see what the people are doing. Also for checking out other people profiles it is helpful. For developing friendships, Facebook is practical. In the earlier phase of deepening a friendship, Facebook is more likely to be used than WhatsApp. It’s just so easy to contact people there to socialize. You just need to send a friend request with one click.

Saturday, May 6th 2017: “Since a few weeks, I do an internship at a company where I already got to know a lot of people in my age group. Most of them are subscribed to Facebook, I saw their profiles before I unsubscribed. I would like to get to know them better and if I would be still on Facebook, I would just add them and chat with them, but it is not possible.”

Wednesday, May 3rd 2017: “A friend of mine told me about a new working colleague who I might know. I’m interested in checking that and want to use Facebook for searching the person, but I can’t. I realize that Facebook is very good for finding out about people you don’t know, how they look, which interests they have and where they live.”

Wednesday, May 3rd 2017: “In the morning before I get up and in the evening before I go to sleep, I have a very strong desire to check my News Feed. I want to be updated about happenings in the world, happenings in my circle of friends, and so on.”

Alternatives

Especially in the first few days the desire to go online was very strong. It was decreasing with the passing days. It is very interesting that especially in the first days of unsubscribing, I tend to use alternative social networks more often as WhatsApp and Instagram. Now I spend more time on those alternative social networks. It seems that I must compensate the loss of Facebook. Also, my interviewees turned to alternatives like WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat.

Tuesday, May 2nd 2017: “I wake up in the morning and the first thing I do is checking my phone. I open WhatsApp, after that I want to open Facebook, which is not existing in my phone anymore, therefore, I check Instagram.”

Sunday, May 21st 2017: “It is a strange feeling. In the morning when I wake up, I take my phone and at first, I check WhatsApp and Instagram. I shifted to those networks because I missed Facebook. Therefore, I spend more time on those “alternative” social networks.”
Prisoner Perception

Since I already tried to unregister and managed it just for two days back then, I felt as a “Facebook prisoner”. In the first few days of my current experiment, I didn’t even realize completely that I wasn’t part of the network anymore. I had to get used to it since it is a force of habit. Only five days later I already felt free for the first time. Now, I feel free and not observed by others. Still, when my friends talk about Facebook, I can’t take part in the conversation.

Friday, May 5th 2017: “I feel proud of being unsubscribed from Facebook. Maybe I stay unsubscribed. Everyone is subscribed, I want to be different than the crowd. It is also a nice feeling that nobody can search my profile anymore, it is a feeling of freedom, since I don’t have the feeling of being observed.

Sunday, May 21st 2017: “I feel more free than before when I was subscribed to Facebook.”

Now it is June 19th and originally, I planned to return to Facebook after my one-week experiment on May 7th. I am not part anymore of the “Panopticon of Facebook” and have the feeling that I now use my time wiser. Like Sherry Turkle mentioned, the “age thing” (Turkle in Mainwaring 2011) kicked in. From the state of today, I am sure that I won’t return. I want to extend my experiment to forever. Some of my friends react strange to my action of quitting with Facebook, some of them compliment me.

5.5 Final Thoughts

With conducting my experiment and interviews with different groups of Facebook users, I got the feeling that Facebook wants us to be prisoners. With buying alternative social networks like WhatsApp and Instagram, Facebook tries to compensate its loss of popularity and to keep its dropouts. As interviewees claimed, Facebook is getting unpopular among the age group of 25 years. The social networking giant tries to stay the global leading player of the Social Media market. My desire to check Facebook decreased from 12 times on the first day to zero today. I found that there is a strong desire for “alternative social networks”. This leads to my concluding chapter which deals with those changes, alternative social networks, media pedagogy, future research questions and final remarks.
6 Changes of Use and Expectations

With conducting empirical interviews to answer the question if we are “Prisoners of Facebook”, it turned out that people found different ways of interacting with the Social Media giant. It exposed that self-determination and autonomy are crucial points, especially regarding the selection of networks, which satisfy those individual expectations. With growing up, people become more self-reflective and tend to navigate through the “social media jungle”. Facebook turned out to be a useful tool for keeping up friendships globally and for information and communication in various interest groups, since it is such an open network for everyone. Though, Facebook seems to be perceived as too open and overcrowded by my respondents. Rainie and Wellman (2012: 124-125) describe the possibility of flexible autonomy towards social networks. “That means that people are more selective about the people with whom they relate, because they no longer can be open to ‘the community’”, as is the case in Facebook. Synchronous, too much openness in Facebook is perceived as a danger and fosters insecurities about personal privacy and furthermore, about issues like cyber-bullying, hate speech and fake news. Especially Instagram is perceived as an alternative to Facebook – it seems to be more secure in regard of those mentioned issues and offers a “flexible self” (Turkle 1995). Obviously, there has been a big change and a simultaneous shift to alternatives, which meet user expectations rather than the Social Media giant does. Therefore, it is too easy to claim that we are “Prisoners of Facebook” – referring to global communication with others, this perception can be approved. In regard of individual use, the answer can be negated.

It crystallized that status updates which prevail on Facebook are pointless, just as friends list with many acquaintances. This turned out to be too much for my respondents, they shift from “weak ties” to “strong ties” (Granovetter 1983). Moreover, “interest-based social networks” like Instagram (Fang et al. 2014: 796) are preferred, since they offer better information for personal interests. Once more personal privacy, anonymity and security are highly valued. Instagram is seized as a platform where people can be more anonymous. A very important trait of Snapchat is that privacy is treated differently than in Facebook. Again, this supports the perception that privacy is fundamental when using Social Media. WhatsApp seems to be an important transmitter of messages to close friends, but is not yet perceived as a social network by my respondents. Moreover, Twitter was mentioned by some interviewees as a substitution when quitting with Facebook. Following, Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter will be presented as alternative social networks.
6.1 Alternative Social Networks

Instagram

The service Instagram was found by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010 (Instagram.com 2017a). According to Statista (2017f), “the mainly mobile photo sharing network had reached 700 million monthly active users, up from 600 million in December 2016.” The social network focuses on the visual representation of pictures and videos, with linkages, so called “hashtags”. Some of my respondents mentioned that they prefer seeing pictures on Instagram than status updates on Facebook. “Instagram has become the home for visual storytelling for everyone from celebrities, newsrooms and brands, to teens, musicians and anyone with a creative passion”, it says in the principles of the social network (Instagram.com 2017a).

In the public discourse, the topic of Facebook’s purchase of the popular networks Instagram and WhatsApp Instagram was an often mentioned topic. Instagram belongs to Facebook since 2012. “Facebook says one of its current focuses is “cross-platform collaboration”, where it also collects and analyses users’ data from Instagram and WhatsApp – two extremely popular services that are owned by Facebook”, it claims in a recent newspaper article of the Independent by Sulleyman (2017). As a justification, Facebook again claims for security reasons and to catch terrorists by identifying possible traces. For global security, this seems to be a positive trait but not for individual data security. Still, data is exchanged between Facebook and Instagram, as it says in the Help Center of Instagram (2017b), which is connected to the Help Center of Facebook as well. “Sharing insights and information with Facebook helps us connect you with others and build a better day-to-day experience for the Instagram community”, Instagram (2017b) explains. Concerning personal data security Instagram seems to be preferred, because less personal information is shared than on Facebook. Nevertheless, the boundaries are blurring.

Hence, respondents tend to claim that on Instagram they feel more comfortable when posting aspects of their life than on Facebook. A reason could be that Facebook doesn’t offer a flexible construct of playing with identity – pseudonyms are forbidden because of security reasons (bullying, fake-profiles), and the identity displayed on Facebook should strongly relate to the offline identity, which doesn’t allow this “flexible self” (Turkle 1995). Instagram is perceived as more open and creative and as in the online world, “people are able to build a self by cycling through many selves”, Turkle emphasizes (1995: 178). On Facebook
users know that they are observed by their watching friends and “behave according to the norms that the guard would impose”. The watchmen are the community in Facebook. Turkle (1995: 247) cites Bentham’s Panopticon, users feel observed in Facebook. Respondents tend to claim that they were bothered by people posting too much private details, and therefore, they also started to post less about themselves. “Individuals learn to look at themselves through the eyes of the prison guard”, Turkle cites the allegations of Bentham’s Panopticon (1995: 248). It is not surprising that dropouts claim that after leaving Facebook, they feel free because nobody was watching them anymore. Moreover, Facebook obviously became boring for the age group of 25, which is another reason people tend to switch to alternatives such as Instagram.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp was found in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton and belongs to Facebook since 2014 (WhatsApp.com 2014). It is an instant messaging service and an alternative to SMS. WhatsApp is not seen as a social network by my interviewees but closely relates to it, since a lot of them mentioned it as an alternative. “The mobile messaging app announced more than 1.2 billion monthly active users, up from over 1 billion mobile active users in February 2016” (Statista.com 2017g). Therefore, WhatsApp is closely following Facebook.

Although WhatsApp belongs to Facebook it operates as a separate app, where the messages are encrypted and secure, the service claims. Different kinds of media can be send as texts, images, videos, voice messages, location information as well as documents. Furthermore, phone calls are possible. The mission of WhatsApp is that in future, it is possible to connect people all over the world (WhatsApp.com 2017), as it is already the prime mission of Facebook. Direct contact to the desired person is preferred and it is perceived as faster and more secure in terms of privacy for my respondents. Moreover, less private information is published in WhatsApp than on Instagram and on Facebook, interviewees recognized.
**Twitter**

Twitter was found in 2006 and its mission is “to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers” (Twitter.com 2017a). The network is growing constantly. “As of the first quarter of 2017, the microblogging service averaged at 328 million monthly active users. At the beginning of 2016, Twitter had reached 310 mobile active users per quarter”, Statista (2017h) says.

Regarding privacy, “We and our partners operate globally and use cookies, including for analytics, personalization, and ads”, the service claims (Twitter.com 2017b). Therefore, it has a similar privacy policy as Facebook and it also has a Help Center on its site. In contrast to Facebook, it wants to treat privacy as a more secure individual property of each person using the service, which is why it has recently made changes to its policy. It is “a suite of industry-leading tools to give you more access to your information and greater, more granular control over how it’s used”, Twitter explains on its website (Twitter.com 2017b). In this way, also Twitter tries to give users more control and access to information about the usage of their data. It gives users the feeling that they have control, which is very important to my respondents as well. Self-determination and autonomy about individual personal data property seem to become more important and crucial for future alternative social networks. Existing social networks need to settle for those changes. As there are more and more privacy concerns about data usage, Social Media networks are increasingly forced to adapt to user’s expectations and their desire and right of autonomy. Also, Facebook adapted and tries to give users control with offering different kind of privacy settings. Numerous negative news still tends to alienate users, make them think, and possibly switch.

For using social media consciously, it is important to know about potential consequences which can occur by using those. Most of my interviewees claimed that they just didn’t know about those privacy concerns. Teaching media pedagogy at school could help avoiding this problem. Not only teaching them about potential consequences by sharing private information, but it is also about training them about those other drawbacks.
6.2 Media Pedagogy in School

“Using social media becomes a risk to adolescents more often than most adults realize. Most risks fall into the following categories: peer-to-peer; in-appropriate content; lack of understanding of online privacy issues; and outside influences of third-party advertising groups.” (O’Keeffe et al. 2011: 801)

Over the past years, vocal criticism made clear that the subject of media pedagogy considering those issues would be important to implement in schools’ curricula. Most of the respondents and I were adolescents, attending school and not knowing anything about the potential consequences of using social networks when registering to those. Nobody knew that those data traces on the Internet are impossible to remove. Nobody knew about cyber-bullying and fake news, terms which emerged recently. I am an advocate of introducing media related subjects in school curricula, since I am a person concerned of that issue. Now, I will focus on happenings in the EU and especially in Austria in developing media teaching concepts. Followed by suggestions of topics which could be dealt within school’s curricula, leading to the chapter of conclusion of this master thesis.

Already between 2006 and 2009, the European research project “EU Kids Online” was conducted to collect and analyze media usage data of adolescents. This was important for building up a foundation to foster the secure handling of media offers. Researchers of different European countries work together, to balance cultural imbalances in the state of knowledge concerning media related issues. The emphasis is on analyzing online chances, risks and consequences of different usage groups from different cultural contexts. Minors should be protected and accompanied in the online world. New media pedagogic concepts should be developed, which deal with different kind of Social Media portals in the Web 2.0. Relevant results are transmitted to the public, politics, media regulation and to media providers. Especially a comprehensive political concept needs to be introduced, which include guidelines for safe Internet usage of adolescents. It is important to include all relevant stakeholders like teachers, pupils, headmasters, school inspectors and politicians to work together to improve media competency (Paus-Hasebrink/Ortner 2008).

In Austria, the “Grundsatzelerlass für Medienerziehung” is existing since 2012, which is a convention of introducing media related issues in school’s curricula. This recent convention annuls the previous convention of 2001. Teachers shall attend advanced trainings and workshops in media related issues, with the emphasis on the ability to train pupils about the correct use of media. Media should be as well more included in teaching lessons, to gain
practical insight in benefits and advantages of using those. There are principles for pre-school, primary schools, special schools, secondary schools, polytechnic institutes and high schools. In those principles, relevant topics and in which school subjects they should be dealt within, are introduced (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen, 2014).

The Austrian platform “mediamanual.at” with the seat in Vienna deals with researching in teaching and learning processes and is developing teaching material as well. The team of this platform is also planning annual contests, for example the “media literacy award”, where different European schools can submit creative projects which deal with the critical exposure of media related issues. This media literacy award is an order of the federal ministry of education and a jury is pricing the best projects. Moreover, this platform is offering the “media literacy week” in October 2017. There, chances, dangers and more attention to media is fostered, as well as the importance of media education. Pupils are welcomed to present their own ideas and activities to this topic. Expert conferences for schools are offered and courses about coaching media competency for teachers. Further, the platform offers a workbook for media competency with different kinds of exercises. This book offers insight in media related topics, which pupils of secondary school should know. Schools can order this book directly on the platform and try it in class. There is also a development plan in media education for schools to download. In this plan, relevant subjects and time frames are introduced as a guideline for teaching (mediamanual.at 2017). It seems that in Austria the cornerstone was laid when it comes to media education in schools’ teaching.

Saferinternet.at is an initiative of the EU with the seat in Vienna which informs children, teachers, pupils and parents about dangers on the Internet. Together with the platform “Stopline”, where children pornography and re-engagement in National Socialist activities can be reported and the platform “Rat auf Draht”, where children receive telephone help, the “Safer Internet Centre Austria” was found. Topics on the platform are cyber-mobbing, digital games, data security, smartphone and mobile phone, Internet deception, online-shopping, sexuality and the Internet, intellectual property rights, viruses and spam. In those sections, questions, answers and helpful information is accessible for everyone who is using the Internet for free. There are brochures accessible on the website for teachers, parents, adolescents and seniors (saferinternet.at 2017). Obviously, there is a lot happening in the aim of being better prepared for technological changes.
It would be crucial to teach children about those social networks and their correct use. As I and most of my interviewees went to school when social networks became popular, we just did it to bridge boring school lessons, as also my respondents claimed. Therefore, it would be important to teach children beforehand about Social Media – about the correct use, advantages, possible dangers and personal data, which produces Big Data in the future consequently. In the chapter of cyber-bullying I already introduced a statement of Sherry Turkle (1995), who appeals to always keep in mind that attacks in the online world happen to the performed self, and not directly to the individual. Adolescents are in danger when it comes to issues like cyber-bullying, as already Turkle (1995) stated. “Because of their limited capacity for self-regulation and susceptibility to peer pressure, children and adolescents are at some risk as they navigate and experiment with social media”, O’Keefe et al. (2011: 800) support.

As more and more are getting their news from Social Media, it would be important for adolescents to distinguish fake news from real news and learn about reliable news sources. Moreover, it is crucial to teach them how their data is used for business advertising. Children need a “safe space” offline as well as online, as Jenkins (2006) expresses.

“Children need a safe space within which they can master the skills they need as citizens and consumers, as they learn to parse through messages from self-interested parties and separate fact from falsehood as they begin to experiment with new forms of creative expression and community participation” (Jenkins et al. 2006: 18).
6.3 Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research Questions

This concluding chapter includes limitations for this study and future research questions, as those would be interesting in future to discover. According to this study, there is a fundamental change of perception regarding Facebook among the sample of participants between the age of 20 and 33 years. As my perception that we are “Prisoners of Facebook” was not accepted by my respondents, there are still several limitations in this study. Future researchers should interview a wider sample of participants. In the current study, only nine interviews were conducted. Another interesting point to examine deals with gender differences – it would be crucial to discover, if there are any relevant gender differences concerning the use of Facebook or other social networks. A very interesting and important issue to discover would be the question, how adolescents today perceive Facebook and how active they use it. Since this study found that people around 25 already turn to alternatives, it must be supposed that even more adolescents tend to use other social networks. Though, the possibility of social desirability bias by answers of the interviewees could be existent.

As I plead for the rising importance of alternative social networks, it would be necessary to find out how those alternative social networks should look like in future, to adapt to user expectations. According to my knowledge, this is one of the first research papers, which also tries to examine why Facebook users quit and go back to the social network. The results of the empirical interviews found a lot of different ways people interacting with the Social Media giant and suggests to differentiate the perception of prisoners. “Today individuals have more communication options than ever, and that means they have to work harder to figure out which gadget or mobile apps to use for which kind of activities”, Rainie and Wellman (2012: 146) embrace. Again, it demonstrates the importance of the introduction of media pedagogic concepts in school.

Moreover, I not only conducted interviews in the empirical research – I also undertook an autoethnography. Within the autoethnography, I managed to totally quit Facebook. I gave my right of privacy into the hands of the Social Media giant Facebook for eight years. My respondents and I can’t change the state of how we used Facebook in adolescence – but we can raise awareness about the rising importance of media pedagogy as a subject in school’s curricula. I do not say that social media is bad – I do say that it is a good thing. As Erik Qualman (goodreads.com 2017) knows:

“We don’t have a choice on whether we do social media, the question is how well we do it.”
7 Literature

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