Facebook use by the Less-frequently Using Demographic
A qualitative study

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Abstract
This is a qualitative, phenomenological study of 8 people 58-73 and their use of Facebook. The data was collected through interviews and observation of participants' Facebook page and posts. The results showed that these people, who belong to a demographic that uses Facebook less frequently, are motivated to join Facebook out of a desire to communicate, out of curiosity, love of new technology and work. Their main use of Facebook is communicating and keeping in touch, especially with people who live at a great distance, which confirmed previous literature. This was followed by promoting their interests and as a news source. Diverging from previous literature where privacy was found to be a major concern, 3 out of 8 participants claimed they were not concerned at all; this was related to their having found ways to keep things they didn't want revealed off Facebook and was probably due to their technical skills. Recommendations are made for making Facebook and other social networking sites more attractive and accessible to people of this demographic.

Keywords
social media, social networking site, Facebook, people 58-73, less-frequent Facebook users, phenomenology, post-phenomenology, qualitative
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List of Abbreviations

SNS: Social Networking Site
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1 Introduction
This chapter introduces the subject of the thesis, the reasons for its choice, and the research questions.

1.1 Background
The last decade has seen an increase in the rise of social media, sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter which enable members to share information about themselves, photos and video and to connect to other members of the website (Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009). A late 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 67% of Internet users use some form of social networking site (SNS), with the percentage rising to 83% for users aged 18-29 (Duggan & Brenner, 2013).

The most popular social networking site is arguably Facebook; 67% of online adults were reported as being members in late 2012 (Duggan & Brenner, 2013), whereas in December of 2014 active monthly users were estimated to be 1.39 billion (Facebook, 2015a).

Although users over the age of 50 are still behind other age groups when it comes to using social media (Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009; Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Cornejo, Tentori & Favela, 2013), this is changing as more and more of them are joining the social media trend. The number of social media users age 50 and older doubled between 2009 and 2010 (Madden, 2010), and users 55 and older have been reported to be the fastest growing demographic on Facebook (Marketingcharts, 2009, cited in Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 243).

This trend is something positive, in my opinion, since the use of social media has many benefits for people, even people over 50. Social media can be used to sustain and strengthen social relationships, improve quality of life, enable intergenerational contact, and decrease feelings of loneliness (for example see Cornejo, Tentori & Favela, 2013; Xie, 2007, cited in Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009; Xie et al., 2012; Harley & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Boulos, Hetherington & Wheeler, 2007; Ballantyne et al., 2010). It is therefore important to understand the relationship between this “less frequently-using” demographic and social media, as well as their reasons for using them, in order to understand how to make social media more attractive for this age group and ensure their continuing and increasing participation in social networking sites.

There have been various studies of this demographic and social media, using a variety of methods. Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris (2009) and McAndrew & Jeong (2012) did quantitative studies of the differences between young and old people using social media, while Sundar et al. (2011) did a survey of both users and non-users over 55, investigating their reasons for use or non-use. On the qualitative side, Xie et al (2012) explored the perceptions of non-users aged 61-83 about social media and how to get them to learn about and use them, and Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas (2013) studied “older” (over 55) people's perceptions about social media both before and after being introduced to an SNS for the first time. Finally, the perceptions of non-users over 50 were explored in a mixed-methods study by Lüders & Brandtzæg (2014).

I believe it is of interest to qualitatively explore how and why people in their 50s and older do use social media, more specifically SNS. This has been dealt with by quantitative studies, which, consisting of mainly close-ended questions, deprive participants of the ability to speak freely and may therefore miss things that a qualitative study would reveal (Xie et al., 2012, p. 284). The qualitative studies who have dealt with this have either involved non-users or almost non-users (people who
were using social media for the first time), or people who were taught to use social media by the researchers (and sometimes social media specially designed for them), and therefore do not tell us much about people who have spent a sufficiently long period of time on social media of their own accord.

Studying technology in relation to humans is of interest in general, since from the beginning of time, technology has helped shape human experience. Verbeek (2008) writes that we would not be the human beings we are, if we didn’t use the technologies that we use. Writing is an example, without which our cultural frameworks of interpretation would be completely different. In modern culture, many of our relations with the world around us are mediated through or directed at technology. This can range from experiencing the world through a pair of glasses (technology as an extension of the human body), to reading a thermometer (technology providing a representation of reality), getting money off an ATM (human interacting with technology) or having the air conditioning work in the background (technology creating a context for our perceptions). Verbeek (2008) labels the intentionality of such experiences a “cyborg intentionality”, since it is partly constituted by technology. Bradley (2010) states that the use of ICT has changed various human qualities, such as identity and self-perception, social competence, creativity, integrity, trust, dependency, and vulnerability. Identity, for example, has acquired new bases through participation in online communities. This is due to the convergence of technologies to create a ubiquitous, embedded technology, the convergence of technology, norms/values and labour market to create globalisation, the convergence of the home, work, and public environment, and the convergence of professional, private, and citizen’s role. There can also be negative effects of this (“ICT stress”), due to information overload, demands for availability, and difficulty separating “noise” from essentials. Bradley (2010) believes that all technology should be for humans and it should improve our well-being and quality of life. He writes: “We now have a whole new chance to explore the human side of societal change taking advantage of technology to shape a good and balanced life” (Bradley, 2001 cited in Bradley, 2010, p. 189).

1.2 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to qualitatively explore how and why people of the less-frequently using demographic use Facebook, and what their experiences with it are. The research questions to be answered are the following:

- What motivates these people to join and use Facebook?
- How do these people use Facebook?
- What are their experiences with Facebook?

I hope this study will lead to a better understanding of this demographic's experiences and motivations for using Facebook, and that it can therefore be used to improve Facebook in particular and SNSs in general so that more people of this demographic will feel comfortable joining and using them. This will have benefits not only for the social media websites, but for these people and their quality of life as well, as it will help them keep in touch with the people in their life and reconnect with old friends.

1.3 Topic Justification

My reason for using a social networking site as the object of my study is that I find social media, and especially Facebook, very interesting as a phenomenon, especially since they have become so popular in recent years (as mentioned in the
Introduction. I am myself a user of Facebook almost daily, and find it a very useful tool for keeping in touch and sharing your life with other people; I therefore was interested in studying what other people think about it, what makes people use it, as well as what concerns they may have about it. I also believe that an Internet phenomenon that is adopted by so many users around the world is worthy of study and examination.

Facebook was chosen because it is the most popular social networking site, as mentioned above. This particular age group was chosen because it now forms a significant proportion of the population in the Western world (Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas, 2013, p. 45) who are, nevertheless, generally less likely to use SNS (Duggan & Brenner, 2013, p. 2). I wanted to study a group of people that are in general less likely to use SNS, in order to better understand what could encourage more of them to join. It is an age where people, while still productive, begin to see the shadow of retirement looming ahead; Facebook can help them keep in contact with their old co-workers, whom they won’t socialize with any more on a daily basis, and with friends and family that live at a distance (Baker et al., 2013).

1.4 Scope and Limitations

The study aimed to include various viewpoints, both male and female, both frequent and infrequent posters, and from various countries (see section Participants). This has been done to include as many different perspectives as possible. It was limited to a small number of participants (eight), which is however considered sufficient for a phenomenological study (Groenewald, 2004). The results are also inevitably tied to the context in which the study took place. Nevertheless, this is a characteristic of qualitative research, where generalizability is more limited than in quantitative research and particularity (the context of the specific research site) is more important (Cresswell, 2009). Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 305; 2006) noted that generalization is not the only way of arriving at knowledge.

One limitation of this study is that all participants had completed some form of tertiary education, ranging from one-year college to post-graduate studies. The results might have been different if I had included less educated people. Another limitation is that all the participants were financially well-off enough to have Internet access in their home. Most of them accessed Facebook mainly through a computer and/or smartphone or tablet; one used a smartphone almost exclusively. Accessing Facebook was therefore easy for all of them. The study has not taken into account people who have to go outside their home to access the Internet. Finally, these people were all known to me, which, on one hand was an advantage because they would be more comfortable talking to me, but could also be a limitation, since they might not want to tell certain things to a person who knows them personally.

1.5 Disposition

The rest of this document is arranged as follows:

Chapter 2 presents the Theoretical framework, with some general information about phenomenology and some phenomenological concepts that will help in discussing that data.

Chapter 3 contains a review of existing Literature on social media, talking about definitions, motives for their use, benefits of their use, and more specifically their use by people over 55. It also contains some more specific information about Facebook.
Chapter 4 presents the Methodology used. The participants are presented together with the data collection and analysis methods. Validity and reliability techniques, and ethical considerations, are also discussed.

Chapter 5 contains the Findings, arranged into the themes extracted during the data analysis.

Chapter 6 contains a Discussion of the findings with the help of the concepts presented in chapter 2, and their Discussion in the light of previous research, together with implications for Facebook and other SNSs.

Finally, chapter 7 contains the Conclusion, along with the study's contribution, reflections on the research process and ideas for further research.
2 Theoretical framework

Since I have taken a phenomenological approach in this study, I will now give a brief explanation of what phenomenology is. Besides this explanation, this chapter also contains some phenomenological concepts that will be useful in the discussion of the data, as well as an examination of what "ageing" means and the role it plays in computer use.

2.1 Phenomenology

In this section I will provide a general description of phenomenology, along with a brief description of the various schools and where I position myself in them.

Phenomenology refers to "the totality of lived experiences that belong to a single person" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 236). It concerns itself with analysing things not in their objective sense, but in terms of the full range of what they are "given" or experienced as, and in terms of the meaning that they have for the persons who experience them (Giorgi, 1997). This is based on the premise that information about objects is subjective and unreliable, and the only thing we can be certain of is how these objects present themselves to our consciousness (Groenwald, 2004). A phenomenological researcher, therefore, is concerned with “understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved” (Welman and Kruger, 1999 cited in Groenwald, 2004, p. 5).

There are various different types of phenomenology. According to Dowling (2007), for Husserl phenomenology is about understanding things as they appear in order to reach an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience. Husserl also coined the term "intentionality" of consciousness (Dowling, 2007). This means that consciousness is always directed at something (we never just think, we think of something) (Giorgi, 1997). Intentionality implies that all perceptions have meaning (Dowling, 2007); this shows that studying people’s perceptions about a phenomenon (such as Facebook) is important. In order to allow the essence of an object to emerge, Husserl proposed performing a phenomenological reduction, which means putting aside all previous knowledge and preconceptions of the object, allowing it to present itself to us in its fullness. We don't say that it is such and such, but that it presents itself as such and such. This is contrasted to the natural attitude, wherein we take things for granted (Dowling, 2007; Giorgi, 1997).

The philosophical phenomenological method contains two more steps: description and search for essences. Polkinghorne (1983 cited in Dowling, 2007, pp. 132-133), based on the work of Husserl, suggested using these steps in order to perform the aforementioned phenomenological reduction. With description, we use language to communicate to others the object exactly as it presents itself to us. Finally, in the search for essences, we use free imaginative variation to change aspects or parts of the phenomenon, while still allowing it to remain identifiable. The meaning that remains invariant throughout all the variations is the essence of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 1997; Introna & Ilharco, 2004).

According to Dowling (2007), Heidegger took an existential and hermeneutic approach to phenomenology. While he agreed with Husserl's declaration "to the things themselves", he was mainly concerned with the meaning of Being (presence in the world) and advocated interpreting basic categories of human experience rather than pure consciousness. He proposed understanding as a reciprocal activity between pre-understanding and understanding, which he called a hermeneutic circle (Dowling, 2007). Whereas Husserl's phenomenological reduction leads back to the
transcendental life of consciousness, Heidegger's phenomenological reduction leads back from the apprehension of a being to the understanding of the being of this being (Heidegger, 1982).

According to Dowling (2007), Merleau-Ponty built on the works of Husserl and Heidegger. He proposed the term "primacy of perception", which means that phenomenology should attempt to rediscover the first experience, the original awareness, using phenomenological reduction. Gadamer (according to Dowling (2007)) followed the work of Heidegger and proposed that in the process of understanding, we differentiate our fruitful prejudices that facilitate understanding from our prejudices that obstruct our understanding (Dowling, 2007).

According to Dowling (2007), van Manen proposed a fusion of the objectivist hermeneutic circle (from the part to the whole) and Heidegger's alethic hermeneutic circle (from pre-understanding to understanding). He was opposed to Husserl's view of "bracketing" (examining and putting aside one's prejudices), saying, "If we simply try to forget or ignore what we already 'know', we might find that the presupposition persistently creep back into our reflections" (van Manen, 1990 cited in Dowling, 2007, p. 138).

Ihde (2009) suggests it is time for a modern, hybrid phenomenology, which he calls postphenomenology. Postphenomenology draws on pragmatism, which says that experience is an "affair of the intercourse of a living being with its physical and social environment" (Dewey, n.d., cited in Ihde, 2009, p. 10), in order to overcome early modern epistemology and metaphysics, while at the same time keeping the rigorous style of phenomenological analysis that involves variational theory, the understanding of embodiment and human active bodily perception, and a dynamic understanding of a lifeworld as a fruitful enrichment of pragmatism. Postphenomenology recognizes that consciousness is an abstraction, and experience should take into account both the physical and the social world. It also takes into account the empirical turn of the philosophy of technology wherein philosophers turned from the classical study of technology overall and its dystopian interpretation to the newer view of technology as co-evolving with society and the examination of technologies in the plural. Within this new view, the philosopher analyses the role of technologies in social, personal, and cultural life, bringing to light the many social factors that act upon technology and realising that technologies can be the means by which consciousness itself is mediated (Ihde, 2009).

I have been inspired by these newer readings (Ihde's postphenomenology), since it deals with a "technology" (Facebook) and its role in people's lives (how they use it and how they experience it). It deals with the relationship of people with their social environment as mediated by Facebook, and also uses the concepts of embodiment and disembodiment (discussed later in section 2.1.3). Phenomenological reduction was also used to put aside my previous knowledge about Facebook in order to let meanings emerge from my data.

The reason I chose phenomenology for this study is that I wanted to understand participants' experiences with Facebook as they saw them, described in their own words. According to Bentz & Shapiro (1998, cited in Groenwald, 2004, p.13), at the root of phenomenology is "the intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms - to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself". So phenomenology seemed to be a suitable approach for me.
2.1.1 Consociates, Contemporaries, and Anonymity

A central problem of phenomenology is that of mutual knowledge, i.e. how do different people understand each other. Alfred Schütz, a student of Husserl's, suggested that this happens through individuals sharing a lifeworld; people are born in an existing lifeworld predefined by their predecessors, and through the process of socialization, they become familiar with one another and take for granted the existing social structures and definitions which eventually come to constitute their natural attitudes towards the world. These attitudes are modified when new problems appear that require new solutions, and the new lifeworld is passed on to the next generation (Zhao, 2004; Zhao, 2007).

Schütz divided the contemporaneous lifeworld into two realms: the realm of consociates and the realm of contemporaries. Consociates are people who share both a community of space and a community of time. This is case of people meeting in a "face-to-face situation", where one individual's "world within reach" (the area perceived by his/her senses) coincides with that of another. Individuals then enter a "we-relation", a prolonged period of which results in them sharing a "subjective meaning context" and getting to know each other intimately (Zhao, 2004).

Contemporaries, on the other hand, are people who share neither a community of space nor a community of time. They live at the same time as one another, but their "worlds within reach" do not coincide. People in this realm interact through a mediator within an "objective meaning context", following prescribed rules and regulations (Zhao, 2004). Their relationship is characterized as a "they-relation" (Zhao, 2007).

Zhao (2004, 2007) argues that with the advent of the Internet, the lifeworld has expanded to include the online domain, and mutual knowledge can be gained through interactions between strangers in an online environment. He proposes a third realm, that of consociated contemporaries, comprised of people who share a community of time but not a community of (physical) space. This is a case of "face-to-device" contact, where people's interactions are electronically mediated creating a situation described as "telecopresence". Their "worlds within reach" may not coincide, but their "worlds within mediated reach" do. However, it should be noted that not all people interacting online are consociated contemporaries; family members and friends chatting online are extensions of interactions between consociates, but online business transactions are interactions between contemporaries (Zhao, 2004).

These concepts are relevant for this study's discussion, because Facebook is a form of "face-to-device" communication that can either extend interactions between consociates or create interactions between "consociated contemporaries". It is therefore an example of one's lifeworld expanding thanks to the Internet.

The case of "consociated contemporaries" creates a special kind of anonymity, where people know each other without seeing each other, becoming both familiar and anonymous at the same time (Zhao, 2004). Zhao (2004) writes: "if consociates can be regarded as intimate friends and contemporaries anonymous strangers, then consociated contemporaries may be considered either intimate strangers or anonymous friends". This anonymity of the Internet can, however, create a lack of accountability, since for accountability to exist certain spatial mechanisms are necessary: the actor must be seen in order to be identified, embodiment is necessary for punishment, and closeness is necessary "for the conceptualization of the individual’s subjectivity as members of a moral community" (Pottle, 2013, p. 137).

Facebook, of course, is not completely anonymous. Members are identified by their name, which appears whenever they post. However, it is possible for people to...
give fake names or pseudonyms. Moreover, as Pottle (2013, p. 141) remarked, even identifiable individuals may act as anonymous when they are online, with the lack of shared physical space acting as a factor that lessens the sense of authority and accountability.

Mutual knowledge between "consociated contemporaries" also has some slight disadvantage over that between consociates. In a "face-to-face situation", people have access to each other’s full range of expression, including tone of voice, body language, and gestures (Pottle, 2013, p. 90). In the absence of these physical cues, mutual knowledge can be difficult to obtain and prone to errors (Zhao, 2007). However, multimedia communication can restore some of the physical cues pertaining to hearing and vision (Zhao, 2007); Facebook itself started offering voice calls in April 2011 (Swartz, 2011) and video chat in July 2011 (Chen, 2011). However, a lot of the information on Facebook (such as that on a user's page or the information appearing in one's News feed\(^1\)) does not contain physical cues, so mutual knowledge faces the restrictions of the case of "consociated contemporaries".

2.1.2 Asynchronicity

The independence of social proximity from physical proximity, which as mentioned before is central to phenomenological discussions about the spatial-temporal arrangement of the social world, is made further possible through the asynchronicity of the online environment (Adkins & Nasarczyk, 2009). This asynchronicity is not due to delay in transmission, but to a delay in response, often deliberately caused by the users themselves (Zhao, 2004; Zhao, 2006). Asynchronicity frees users from the necessity for both time and space colocation, and allows them to have more time to prepare, review, and repair their response, and also to respond at a later time that is more convenient for them, which could not happen in a synchronous communication (Adkins & Nasarczyk, 2009). Thus, if face-to-face encounters take place in the "here-and-now" zone, the Internet opens up the possibility of communication not only in the "there-and-now" zone (in synchronous messaging) but also in the "there-and-then" zone (in asynchronous messaging), which traditionally belonged to the "world-beyond-reach" (Zhao, 2006). The concept of asynchronicity is very important in Facebook, where one can asynchronously message other users or, on entering the site, one is presented with a "News feed" of one's friends' latest news and updates (these news may have been posted hours or days before the user entered the site).

2.1.3 Cyberspace and (Dis)embodiment

According to Ajana (2005), Merleau-Ponty claimed that perceiving and experiencing the world takes place through the medium of the body. Since perception can only be embodied, the production of knowledge can only exist within a corporeal reality which is itself embedded in contexts and situations. Contrary to Descartes, who believed in the supremacy of logical reason over illogical nature, Merleau-Ponty believed that the body is the medium *par excellence* for being-in-the-word and therefore can never be considered deniable, disposable, or dispensable (Ajana, 2005).

This means that even at the moment of transcendence, even in the virtuality of cyberspace, the construction of identity, subjectivity and self is not completely detached from the body, but becomes what we could call a pseudo-disembodiment, in

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\(^1\) See section Facebook's Main Features for an explanation.
that the user’s presence in cyberspace first and foremost derives its functionality and directionality from both sensory and mental data. Bukatman (1996, cited in Ajana, 2005) claimed that “Cyberspace is a celebration of spirit, as the disembodied consciousness leaps and dances with unparalleled freedom. It is a realm in which the mind is freed from bodily limitations”. However, we see that for example women’s disadvantages in society tend to be carried over to the virtual world: women are still underrepresented and subject to harassment. So we are not really disembodied in cyberspace; rather, we carry our old baggage with us (Ajana, 2005).

In the world of Facebook, identity is constructed differently from both face-to-face interactions and anonymous online interactions (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). The self presented is usually a "hoped-for, ideal self" which is highly socially desirable but which the individual hasn’t managed to embody yet in real life for a number of reasons (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010). This constructed self tends to conform more to traditional gender roles, especially for girls (Manago et al., 2008; Siibak, 2009). Although the Internet was supposed to be faceless, people still find it important to present themselves in a physically favourable manner (Siibak, 2009), and due to the visual possibilities of Facebook, they focus not only on their personal qualities but on showing how they have a desirable boyfriend or how their "crowd" is desirable (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). However, this constructed self is not necessary a "false self", because it has a real impact on individuals; the self shown on Facebook does reflect actual personality (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008; Back et al., 2010).

According to Ajana (2005), cyberspace is “a symbiotic synthesis of technology and corporeal phenomena”. Virtual tools are not external objects, but part of our phenomenological corporality, just like a blind man’s stick becomes an extension of his senses. So in cyberspace one is, effectively, “embodied in one’s disembodiment”. I believe it will be interesting to examine how Facebook, as a virtual tool, becomes an extension of one’s body and whether bodily limitations are carried over into it. This will be further discussed in Chapter 6: Discussion.

Ingold (2008) advanced the philosophical idea that we exist as embodied beings and stated that to be is not to be in place, but to be along paths. He used an analogy with the earth to illustrate this. He references Gibson (1979), who claims that creatures who live in the world are positioned at the core of an “unbounded spherical field”, consisting of two hemi-spheres: the earth and the sky. The ground has a texture that tells us what it is a surface of, like rock, sand, or soil, whereas the sky has no texture and appears as an empty void. However, when we take into account wind and weather, we see that it leaves its mark on the land, through binding medium and substances. In the weather world, Ingold (2008) writes, “there is no distinct surface separating earth and sky. Life is rather lived in a zone in which substance and medium are brought together in the constitution of beings which, in their activity, participate in weaving the textures of the land”. In the same way, a living organism contains movement and flow, like the wind; it is a bundle of lines and paths of flow, like tissues and veins. The skin, like the land where life is lived, is not “an impermeable boundary but a permeable zone of intermingling and admixture, where traces can reappear as threads and vice versa” (Ingold, 2007a cited in Ingold, 2008, p. 1806). The body, Ingold argues, is not confined or bounded but rather extends as it grows along the multiple paths of its entanglement in the textured world (Ingold, 2008). In Chapter 6: Discussion we will see where Facebook can be positioned in such a concept of the world, and how its interactions can become lines of flow that weave the texture of the online world.
2.2 Age

Since this study deals with people over 58 (people past their prime), I will explain more about the concepts of age and ageing.

When talking about ageing, one must distinguish between chronological age, which is the number of years since a person was born, and biological age, which refers to the biological events that occur across time and which progressively weaken the physiological system, eventually leading to death (Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010, p. 12). Biological age is considered a better indicator of actual ageing than chronological age (Mitnitski et al., 2002; Karasik et al., 2005). Ageing also causes changes in personality, mental functioning, and sensory and perceptual processes (psychological ageing). Finally, as people age they encounter differences in their roles and relationships with other people and social structures. This is called social ageing, and it affects not only an individual’s perceptions of who he/she is, but is also shaped "by social and cultural contexts which dictate the normative expectations about the roles, positions and behaviour of older people in society" (Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010, p. 12-13).

Emphasis has been placed on the concept of "successful ageing", which seeks to minimize the decline of physical and mental capacity in later years and to achieve high levels of social activity. This concept is mostly attributed to the work of Rowe and Kahn (1998, cited in Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010, p. 209); however, it has been criticised, among other things, for having unrealistic demands of a disease-free old age, an over-emphasis on the biomedical model, and a "western" cultural bias. A 2005 study by Schnittker found that emotions are important in health, especially after the age of 74, and it seems that for older people themselves, key indicators of "successful ageing” are also emotional development and satisfaction with life. Therefore, these factors should be taken into account. (Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010, p. 211) Religion and spirituality have also been found to be beneficial for ageing people’s health (Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010, p. 211; Reker & Wong, 1988).

When it comes to using computers (or Facebook), people over 58 differ from younger people in that this is something new that they have to learn, not something they grew up with. It is therefore important to examine the differences in learning between these people and younger people. Bean & Laven (2003), in an article about their experience with teaching seniors to use computers, noted that older adults can learn to use computers, even at the expert level, but they require much more repetition and practice than younger users to become proficient. They are also more concerned with making mistakes. This last, however, can be an advantage, since it can motivate them to take more time to learn the new skills. Jones & Bayen (1998), in a review of studies of adults over 60 noted that people of that age group have different cognitive abilities than younger people, including slowing of cognitive processes, diminished attentional capacity and working memory, and lower ability to ignore irrelevant stimuli and thoughts. This affects their learning process. Of course, older age also has some advantages, such as wisdom and experience (Reker & Wong, 1988).

All this is relevant for this study, since the participants’ experiences with Facebook will inevitably be affected by their age and barriers it brings with it.

2.3 Conclusion

Phenomenology is about understanding a phenomenon as it presents itself to us, and by extent understanding a human experience from the point of view of the person.
experiencing it. This made it suitable for exploring how people experience Facebook. I locate my study within the newer readings of phenomenology, which examine the role technologies play in human lives. The concepts of consociates, contemporaries and "consociated contemporaries" will help differentiate Facebook relationships from their "real world" counterparts. The concept of asynchronicity will be useful since Facebook enables asynchronous communication. It will also be interesting to see how the perceived anonymity of Facebook affects users, as well as see how (dis)embodied people are in the part of cyberspace occupied by Facebook. Finally, concepts of age and ageing, and the differences between people of the less-frequently using demographic and younger people in learning, will help understand the participants' experiences with Facebook.
3 Literature Review

In this chapter I will give a review of relevant literature on social media, both in general and in relation to people of the less-frequently using demographic. I start with some definitions of social media and some information about Facebook, continue with literature on motivations for use, social media and people of the less-frequently using demographic, and benefits of use. Then I give a brief overview of phenomenological studies related to social media and/or people of the less-frequently using demographic, and how they inspired me. I end with some data on Facebook use in the countries of the participants.

3.1 Social Media

Social media is a term used to describe a collection of software that allow individuals to gather, communicate, create and exchange user generated content, and even collaborate or play (Boyd 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media is closely intertwined with Web 2.0, which is a new way of utilizing the World Wide Web as a platform where content and applications are no longer created by an individual or a company, but are continuously modified by all users collaboratively (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

What makes social media different from traditional media is the ease with which the user can change from content consumer to content creator (Shao, 2009, cited in Näkki et al., 2011, p. 19). In fact, social media systems are scaffolds for user contributions, which are essential to the system and are what brings meaning to and measures the scaffold that the designer has created (Hagen & Robertson, 2009; Hagen & Robertson, 2010).

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) classify social media into six categories: collaborative projects, such as wikis, which allow many users to jointly and simultaneously create content; blogs, which are the earliest form of social media and are websites that display date-stamped content in reverse chronological order while allowing readers to comment on the content; content communities, such as Flickr and YouTube, which allow the sharing of media between users; social networking sites, such as Facebook, which allow users to create personal profiles, invite friends to access those profiles, and send messages to each other; virtual game worlds, such as World of Warcraft, which allow users to create an avatar and interact with each other in the context of a three-dimensional online game environment; and virtual social worlds, such as Second Life, which are virtual worlds that allow members to behave more freely and "essentially live a virtual life similar to their real life".

As mentioned in the Introduction, this thesis focuses on a social networking site (Facebook). In its purest form, a SNS allows users to create a profile, form connections with other users ("friends") and view and traverse their list of friends and those made by others in the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). It may also enable the upload of content (photos, music or videos), messaging, the forming of groups and the hosting of small applications (Joinson, 2008).

The first social networking site could be said to be Sixdegrees, a site which enabled users to create profiles, list their friends, and also (from 1998 on) see their friends' "friends lists". While it attracted millions of users, it failed to become sustainable, possibly because it was ahead of its time, and closed down in 2000 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Various other SNSs emerged, with the most important one being Friendster, which launched in 2002 in order to compete with the dating site Match.com. However, as its popularity increased, it begun to encounter technical
problems, as well as the problem of people creating fake profiles ("Fakesters") in order to collapse the network graph or increase their popularity. Friendster started banning Fakesters, which together with the technical difficulties led many users to leave the site (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Boyd, 2009).

From 2003 onward, there were many new SNSs launched; some aimed at a broad audience, others (such as LinkedIn) aimed at business and professional networks, and others on people with certain interests. A significant SNS launched in 2003 was mySpace, which sought to capitalize on Friendster's alienation and rejection of certain people. It became very popular with indie-rock bands, who saw it as a way of staying in contact with fans. When teenagers started joining mySpace en masse in 2004, mySpace changed its policy to allow minors to join (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Boyd, 2009).

The subject of this thesis, Facebook, began in early 2004 as an SNS restricted to Harvard students. It later expanded to include other universities, high school students, professionals inside corporate networks, and finally, in 2006, it opened its doors to everyone and rose to become the most popular SNS in the present day. A feature that differentiated Facebook from previous SNSs was the ability for third parties to build applications that users could use to personalise their profiles and perform additional tasks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Boyd, 2009).

In this thesis I use the definitions of social media by Boyd (2009) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), and the definition of social networking sites given by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) in their classification of social media.

3.1.1 Facebook's Main Features

Facebook allows users to create a "user profile", with basic information about themselves such as birthday, gender, work and education, as well as a list of things (films, musicians, books etc.) that they like. Users can post photos or videos of themselves over time, or share photos, videos, and articles from the web. They can also post "status updates", a text of variable length that tells other people what they are feeling, doing, or their opinion on something. Each user has a "Timeline" (previously called "Wall"), a page where other users can post things for him/her to see and where his/her activity updates appear in reverse chronological order. They can also asynchronously exchange messages with other users. In addition, users can join "groups", centred around common interests, school, workplace, events, or other things, or "like" pages of celebrities, films, TV programmes, or companies, which enables them to get updates about that area of interest.

An important feature of Facebook is users' ability to add other users as "friends". Friends usually have access to all the user's profile information, in contrast to other users who have limited access; however, this depends on each user's "privacy settings". Friends are also usually the only ones allowed to exchange messages with the user and post on his/her Timeline. On entering Facebook, each user is presented with a "News Feed", which shows the latest posts and updates of the user's friends and "liked" pages, in reverse chronological order. The user can continue to go "backwards in time" on the News Feed for as long as he/she wishes, and can therefore see posts that were made earlier in time, while he/she was not logged in.

3.1.2 Facebook's Sources of Income

Since Facebook does not charge users, it makes money mainly through advertisements (O' Neill, 2010). In 2014, Facebook's total revenue was $12.47 billion, with $11.49 billion of it being from advertising (Facebook, 2015b). Self-service ads
appear on the right side of a user's page and can be set up by anyone, from large or small businesses to Facebook users who want to direct other users to their profile (O’Neill, 2010; Johnson, 2009). Engagement ads, which require user interaction, are aimed at large brand advertisers (Carlson, 2010; O’Neill, 2010). Promoted posts are posts that are targeted to fans and friends of fans, and are paid per view, in contrast to regular ads that are paid per click (Business Management Degrees, 2014?). In order to target ads, Facebook uses the information available on users’ profiles, such as gender, age, relationship status, profile keywords, or network (O’Neill, 2010; Johnson, 2009). Another, smaller source of revenue for Facebook is the sale of virtual gifts (which can be sent from one user to another) via the Facebook Gift Shop and other virtual goods (O’Neill, 2010).

3.2 Motivation

Various motives exist for using social media. Joinson (2008) did a 2-stage study of people aged 18-66 and found that the most important reasons for using Facebook were learning about and reconnecting with old friends, and keeping in touch with people, especially friends and relatives that lived at a distance. Lin & Lu (2011), in an online survey of Facebook users of all ages, found that network externalities of social media (i.e. the number of peers on them and availability of complementary resources such as "supporting tools, applications, and groups of social connections") increased their perceived usefulness and enjoyment and therefore increased their use. McAndrew & Jeong (2012, p. 2359), reviewing various studies, mention multiple motivations, such as searching for social information on others, entertainment, interaction with friends, and self-expression. Their study included people aged 18-79, with a mean age of 30.24.

Some studies have focused more particularly on the motivation of the less-frequently using demographic. Harley & Fitzpatrick (2009), in their study of a 79-year-old using YouTube to tell his life story, found social contact to be a strong motivation for “older people” to use social media. Reconnecting with people from the past, more particularly, was found to be a motive in Madden's study of people over 50 (2010). Family and peer pressure can also be a deciding factor (Sundar et al., 2011; Hartnett et al., 2013), as well as staying socially connected with family; having existing social capital made it more likely that an person over 65 would get online in Hartnett et al. (2013). Another reason for taking part in online social interactions, mentioned in Hartnett et al. (2013), was finding information about their interests or joining a community about their interests, as well as necessity (some offline communities send information online, or getting a doctor's prescription may necessitate having an email).

These studies offer important insights into reasons why people use social media, especially people of the less-frequently using demographic. Communication and finding about interests seem to be major motives. With the exception of Hartnett et al. (2013) and Harley & Fitzpatrick (2009), the above studies were quantitative. My study, being qualitative, has more in common with the last two. Harley & Fitzpatrick (2009) focused on a single user of a content community (YouTube), whereas I focus on multiple users of a social networking site. Hartnett et al.’s (2013) study is more similar to mine, consisting of interviews and workshops with people 65 and over, along with some of their family, friends, and neighbours. However, Hartnett et al. (2013) were mainly focused on 4 categories: motivation, advantages, obstacles, and risks. My study was more open, letting the interviews define the themes and categories, and therefore more detailed. By using a phenomenological lens, I allowed
the participants’ experience to present themselves throughout the data collection, instead of focusing narrowly on certain categories. I have also observed the participants’ online interactions, which offers a second source of data with which to triangulate that gleaned from interviews.

3.3 People of the Less-frequently Using Demographic and Social Media

A number of studies have focused on people of the less-frequently using demographic and their use of social media. Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris (2009), in their quantitative study of teenagers versus people over 60 found that over 60s use social networking sites less than younger people, have fewer friends, post less music and videos and receive fewer comments. They also present themselves more formally compared to teenagers. However, the friends they have tend to belong to a wider age range, whereas teenagers have mostly friends that are around their age. Joinson (2008) also found lower usage levels, number of friends and use of photographs among older-aged people, and that they are less motivated by being socially and perpetually connected than younger-aged users. McAndrew & Jeong (2012) also report fewer friends and less time spent, and that older-aged people are more likely to use social media to interact with other users directly and look at family photos. Finally, Xie et al. (2012) conducted 7 sessions with 10 non-users aged 61-83, where they tried to understand and change their perceptions of social media. What they found was that the participants had negative opinions about social media, viewing them as a ground for cyber-bullying, gossip, and controversial political opinions. Privacy was also a big concern. Xie et al. were able to get the participants to accept using a blog, which had the advantage of allowing users to read it and post comments without needing to disclose personal information. They concluded that “older people” are more likely to integrate social media in their life if they understand the technology more.

These studies offer interesting insight into differences between old and young people in the use of social media. However, with the exception of Xie et al. (2012), they focus on differences between old and young, rather than on the experience of people of the less-frequently using demographic with social media, and are all quantitative. Xie et al. (2012) offer interesting information about people 61 and over's fears regarding social media, but focused on non-users, contrary to my study which focuses on users.

3.3.1 Obstacles to use and Concerns

The biggest concern that makes people of the less-frequently using demographic hesitant to use social media seems to be privacy. As mentioned before, this issue was mentioned in Xie et al. (2012), with one of the people they studied particularly mentioning Facebook's use of users' personal information for profit ("they sell the information to other companies"). Lehtinen, Näätänen & Sarvas (2013) studied a group of over 55s both before and after being introduced to an SNS for the first time, in order to explore how to overcome negative perceptions. They found that participants felt it was unsafe to disclose personal information on the Internet due to potential for misuse and also "the risk of doing something socially unacceptable". Gibson et al. (2010) noted concerns about privacy and identity theft. Lüders & Brandtzæg (2014) found that people were concerned that their private information would be shared for commercial reasons and that they would have no control over who could access it. Hartnett et al. (2013) found that people were concerned that they would get harrassed with email and have to unsubscribe, and also were not aware of or unable to set up their privacy settings on Facebook. Nef et al. (2013) found privacy and fear of
inappropriate conduct to be major barriers. The only study where privacy was explicitly stated not to be an issue was Waycott et al. (2013), which dealt with a closed group that also met in face-to-face meetings during the study.

Lack of competence was also a barrier (Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas, 2013; Lüders & Brandtzæg, 2014; Hartnett et al., 2013), which in the case of Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas (2013) also served to make privacy concerns worse. Perceived technological complexity was also a barrier in Liu & Yang (2014), who suggested an emphasis on continued support to help seniors better identify with computer use.

Another obstacle was barriers specifically connected to decline in old age. This could take the form of physical barriers such as decreased eyesight, hearing, and hand-eye coordination (Selwyn et al., 2003), forgetting instructions or passwords, or taking longer to do something which resulted in certain websites "timing-out" (Hartnett et al., 2013).

Finally, some people found social media to be cold and narcissistic and not fulfilling their idea of friendship (Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas, 2013; Lüders & Brandtzæg, 2014). Many believed social media to be of low usefulness and couldn't see any advantage over sending an email, which they preferred (Sundar et al., 2011; Xie et al., 2012; Lüders & Brandtzæg, 2014). Selwyn et al. (2003), studying people over 60, also found that for many of them ICT technologies were seen as irrelevant and unnecessary in their lives, while Nef et al. (2013) found that for people over 55, the purpose of SNS was "difficult to grasp". A lack of social contacts on social media was also seen as a barrier (Xie et al., 2012; Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas, 2013).

These obstacles and concerned were useful to help shape my research. I was interested to see if people who did participate in social media still had these concerns and whether they were faced with these obstacles, or if (and why) they had overcome them. Since privacy seemed to be a very big concern, I decided to specifically add a question about privacy concerns to my interview questions.

3.4 Benefits of using Social Media

Many researchers have identified benefits to be derived from the use of ICTs in general and social media in particular. Use of ICTs is mentioned as improving one's connection to the outside world (White et al., 1999, cited in Selwyn et al., 2003, p. 563) and leading to better quality of life (Irizarry & Downing, 1997, cited in Selwyn et al., 2003, p. 563). Niemelä, Huotari & Kortelainen (2012), in a qualitative study involving interviews with 13 retired teachers and reading the diaries of 306 “older adults”, found that using information and media in general encourages “older adults” to stay active in life, and stated that there is potential for Web 2.0 technologies to do the same. Similar conclusions were reached by Sitti & Nuntachompoo (2013).

More specifically, for social media, researchers have mentioned the benefits of using them to enhance communication across generations and combat problems of keeping in touch due to great geographic distance or impaired mobility. In Harley & Fitzpatrick's (2009) case of a senior YouTuber, social media were found to foster intergenerational communication and combat social isolation for people with reduced mobility. Baker et al. (2013) noted the positive effects of social media on the old and the disabled, where they can be used to foster a sense of community and build social capital where geographical distance is a problem, or for telework. Gibson et al. (2010) write that social media can help maintain and extend one’s social network in the face of declining autonomy, leading to better social support. Hartnett et al. (2013) cited various advantages for online social interaction (whether via email, Skype, or SNS), including asynchronous communication, easy access to information, the ability to
overcome social isolation, and the opportunity to contribute to initiatives at a distance. Nef et al. (2013) did a review of 18 articles on SNSs and people over 55 and found that SNSs may help retain social connections for people with limited mobility, and with the younger generation. Leist (2013) states that the use of SNSs can help overcome barriers to social contact such as geographic distance, impaired mobility or time-consuming obligations such as caregiving, and therefore help overcome loneliness and enhance “feelings of control and self-efficacy”. Burke, Marlow & Lento (2010) also found that greater SNS use is associated with increased social capital and reduced loneliness, although passive content consumption (monitoring a friend’s posts as opposed to directly interacting with them on the site) was associated with increased loneliness.

Some researchers investigated the deliberate use of social media for health projects. Boulos, Hetherington & Wheeler (2007), in their study of medical and health education projects from the virtual world Second Life, found that Second Life can "be used to entertain older people and people with physical disabilities, and help them combat social isolation and loneliness". Madden (2010) found that social media can be used to provide people near retirement with a support network and bridge generational gaps. Aalbers, Baars & Rikkerk (2011) did a review of Internet-mediated interventions to change lifestyle in people aged 50 and older, and found that they can be influenced to change lifestyle via Internet. They believe that social media can also be used for this purpose, and urge for their incorporation into online lifestyle interventions.

Other researchers studied the benefits of use of social media while removing some of the obstacles for their use. Ballantyne et al. (2010) did a pilot project in which they taught people 69-85 to use an existing SNS (aimed specifically at people over 50), and found that it reduced their loneliness and increased their sense of connectivity to the outside world. Tsai et al. (2011) designed an alternative social platform that was easy to use for “older adults”, which was tested in a certain senior community and received positive feedback. They argue for its usefulness by claiming that social media can provide new ways of staying in touch with peers and family.

Cornejo, Tentori & Favela (2013) created Tlatoque, a system that shows elderly people photos and status updates by family, and tested it on two family groups. They found that the content shared on Tlatoque could help enrich family encounters by providing context for conversations. Their opinion is that social networking sites can help sustain and strengthen social relationships through the sharing of important life events. Waycott et al. (2013) designed a prototype iPad application for creating and sharing photographs and messages. Their testing of the application on a group of people in their 80s and 90s showed that it provided opportunities for self-expression and social engagement, which the participants happily embraced.

There have been some dissenting views. Sundar et al. (2011), investigating quality of life and Facebook use, found that increased Facebook use was not linked to quality of life. However, they acknowledge that this may be due to the fact that the people they surveyed had few friends on Facebook and spent little time there. Muise, Christofides & Desmarais (2009), in a study of university students, found that Facebook can increase feelings of jealousy in romantic relationships due to providing people access to information about their partner that would not otherwise be accessible. According to Krasnova et al. (2013), passive following (i.e. content consumption without active posting and participation) on Facebook can trigger feelings of envy and upward social comparison, especially since users tend to overemphasize their achievements. This may negatively affect life satisfaction in the
long run. Chou & Edge (2012) also noted that Facebook use can lead people to believe that others are happier than them and that life is unfair, especially when their Facebook friends include people they don’t know personally, which forces them to base their impressions on these people’s Facebook posts alone. Bevan, Pfyl & Barclay (2012) noted the negative emotions that can accompany being unfriended on Facebook, an act that is a form of relationship termination. Finally, Maier et al. (2012) noted that due to the large number of SNS users, the number of posts a user has to read after logging in increases rapidly, which can result in stress due to emotional exhaustion and social overload. This can make people want to discontinue SNS use.

In general, most studies agreed that social media use was beneficial, especially when one is an active participant. This was an important conclusion for me, because it assured me that encouraging people of the less-frequently using demographic to join social media would be a good thing and therefore exploring how this could be done was important. I believe this study, by exploring what motivates people of this demographic to join and use Facebook and by documenting their experiences with it (good and bad), will help in this direction.

3.5 Phenomenological studies about Social Media and/or Older People

Phenomenological studies concerning social media were difficult to find; my search yielded two results. Zingale (2013) examined social networks phenomenologically, using concepts from Kant, Arendt, Schütz, and Heidegger to argue that computerized social networks offer a great opportunity for public administrators to discover and learn about social conditions, but that they also contain significant limitations. Meek (2012) examined how Invisible Children, an NGO, raised awareness about Ugandan child soldiers using YouTube protest videos; he uses the concept of "cyberplace", arguing that it shares many characteristics with space from a phenomenological point of view and that "[t]hrough individually viewing videos, a collective social experience is produced; this culture is not rooted in a particular space, but its generation is constitutive of a situational place" (p. 1442).

The search for phenomenological studies of people of the less-frequently using demographic was more fruitful, although most of them were concerned with the effects of aging, health and quality of life, and concerned people considerably older than my participants, who ranged from 58-73. However, I was able to get inspiration from them for my analysis. While Greenhalgh et al. (2013) used Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological lens to study the lived body (the study was about how older people with assisted living needs use or don't use telehealth, and what matters to them), and Heidegger's concepts of 'potentiality', ‘being-in-the-world’ (Dasein), ‘using’, ‘making’ and 'readiness-to-hand', many other studies (Jakobsen & Sørlie, 2010; Whitehead, Howie & Lovell, 2006; Benisovich & King, 2003; Fox et al., 2007; McInnis & White, 2001; Trochcia & Janda, 2000; Borglin, Edberg & Hallberg, 2004; Leith, 2005) used a method similar to the one described in Giorgi (1997), which consists of reading the data a couple of times to get the general meaning and then reading it again and dividing it into units of meaning. It is this method that I decided to use to analyse my data (the method is described in more detail in the chapter Data Analysis).
3.6 Facebook use in the Countries of the Study’s Participants

I will now offer some brief statistics about Facebook use in the four countries that the proposed study’s participants come from (Greece, USA, England, and Australia). All statistics are taken from Allin1Social (2015).

In Greece, 40.8% of the population are Facebook users. 7.73% of those are over 55. In the USA, 57.6% of the population are Facebook users, and 18.09% of them are over 55. In England, 57.8% of the population use Facebook, and 14.44% of them are over 55. Finally, in Australia 58.5% of the population are Facebook users, with 14.56% of them being over 55.

It is clear that in all four countries, Facebook has high penetration. A non-negligible percentage of Facebook users are over 55, though in Greece this percentage is smaller than in the other countries.

All the above countries except Greece have high Internet penetration. According to Internet World Stats (2014), Internet users are 86.9% of the population in the USA, 89.8% in England, and 94.1% in Australia. In Greece Internet users are 59.9% of the population, which is moderately high but much lower than the other three countries. This may explain why Facebook has lower penetration in Greece.

3.7 Conclusions

This chapter gave a description of social media in general and Facebook in particular, together with an overview of the literature on social media and people of the less-frequently using demographic. Keeping contact with friends and family, reconnecting with old friends, entertainment and finding information about one's interests were cited as motives for use. People of this demographic tended to have fewer friends and lower usage levels than younger people, and many had concerns regarding social media, the most common one being privacy. Lack of competence and physical decline in older age were also cited as barriers. Finally, the benefits of social media were mentioned, which include encouraging "older" people to stay active in life, enhancing communication across distance or in the case of reduced mobility, and reducing loneliness. For the most part, researchers agree that using social media is beneficial for people of the less-frequently using demographic and that increasing the number of those who do so is a thing to be desired.

Regarding Facebook in particular, a description of its main features was given together with a description of its income sources, which are mainly advertisements. Statistics regarding Facebook use in the countries of the participants showed that its use is high or moderately high in all of them.

The literature review showed that the studies that have focused on people of the less-frequently using demographic who use social media have been mainly quantitative (for example Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009), or have focused on users who were taught by the researchers to use an SNS specifically designed for them (for example Ballantyne et al., 2010). A qualitative study focusing on people of the less-frequently using demographic who have used an SNS that is “for everybody”, such as Facebook, for some time, would reveal more about these people's experiences with an SNS that was not especially designed for them and how it could be made more friendly towards them. It is especially interesting to view this through a phenomenological lens, allowing the experiences of the participants to present themselves as they are from the participants' point of view.

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2 The reason for choosing these four countries is given in Chapter 4.2. Participants
4 Methodology and Method

In this chapter I will explain the research design and the strategy of inquiry. Then I will give a description of the study’s participants and how they were selected. The methods used for data collection, data analysis, and ensuring the results' validity and reliability are described. I close with a description of the ethical considerations of my study.

4.1 Research Design and Strategy of Inquiry

The study has taken a qualitative approach and the worldview it has followed is the interpretivist, more precisely the phenomenological. This is because it sought to understand individual's experiences with Facebook and interpret the meanings they attach to them. Interpretive researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand, and these interpretations cannot be from their own backgrounds, contexts, and prior understandings (Cresswell, 2009).

There are various benefits to taking such an approach. According to Klein & Myers (1999),

“Interpretive research can help IS researchers to understand human thought and action in social and organizational contexts; it has the potential to produce deep insights into information systems phenomena” (p. 67)

The necessity of using qualitative methods in order to understand in depth people’s use of social networking sites has also been noted in Lin & Lu (2011, p. 1159). Flyvbjerg (2006) notes that what qualitative studies lack in breadth (compared to quantitative studies) they make up in depth. It is this - contrary to what some people think - which makes them useful for falsifying theories. For example, the proposition "all swans are white" can by falsified by a single observation of a black swan. The in-depth approach of qualitative studies make them ideal for identifying "black swans", because what appears to be "white" may upon closer examination be shown to be black (Flyvbjerg, 2006). For this reason, this study used open-ended questions to allow the participants to openly share their views, revealing things that would be missed by the closed-ended questions of a quantitative survey.

Finally, the problem cannot be seen as separate from its context, in its attempt to answer "how" and "why" questions about Facebook use by people over 55 (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As Flyvbjerg (2011, pp. 302-303) says, context-dependent knowledge is essential for true in-depth learning at the expert level, and especially in social science, “[f]inal proof is hard to come by […] because of the absence of ‘hard’ theory, whereas learning [which is context-dependent] is certainly possible”. In social science there is no predictive theory , and it is likely there never will be. Social science does not produce general, context-independent theory and its contribution can therefore only be context-dependent knowledge, which is produced through qualitative studies (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

4.2 Participants

The study’s participants were 8 people aged 58-73, chosen from among my acquaintances – Facebook friends (a convenience sample). This had the advantage of easy access and people feeling more comfortable talking to me than if I was a stranger, but also had a disadvantage in that some people may not want to say certain things to a person they know personally. I thought it would be interesting to include people from more than one country, because I would have a more diverse sample.
Since my Facebook friends that belonged to the less-frequently using demographic included people from Greece, England, Australia and the USA, I decided to use participants from all these countries. Continuing for the sake of diversity, care was taken to include both men and women, people who have been on Facebook for years and people who joined in the last year, and people who post with various levels of regularity.

Initially the number of participants was 7, chosen because it was both large enough to include various point of view and small enough to be able to explore their Facebook habits in depth. The number was also in accordance with what Cresswell (1998, cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 11) and Boyd (2001, cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 11) say about up to 10 participants being sufficient for a phenomenological study. However, on contacting the potential participants to see if they would be interested to take part in the study, one of them explained that he disliked Facebook and rarely used his account, except to read messages; his wife used it instead. After some deliberation, I decided it would be interesting to examine this special case and that this man’s wife should also be included in the study. The number of participants was therefore increased to 8, a number that still served the purposes explained above.

The 8 participants were the following (names have been changed to protect confidentiality):

- Sophia, 58, Greece, retired, user since 2010
- Jim, 59, England, retired, user since 2009
- Lotus, 60, England (born in Malaysia), retired, user since 2009 (married to Jim)
- Dimitris, 61, Greece, still working, user since October 2014
- Joe, 62, Australia (born in England), still working, user since 2012
- Sam, 65, Australia, retired, user since 2007
- Mary, 65, USA, still working, user since 2012 (approx.)
- Tom, 73, USA, still working, user since 2008 (married to Mary)

The couple sharing a Facebook account (mentioned before) was Tom and Mary. As far as posting frequency goes, Sam was a very frequent poster, Jim, Joe, Lotus, and Tom and Mary were moderately frequent posters, and Dimitris and Sophia were infrequent posters.

In summary, the participants can be seen in the Table 4.1.
### Table 4.1: Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Work status</th>
<th>Posting frequency</th>
<th>User since</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotus</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>England (born in Malaysia)</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimitris</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Oct. 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2012 (approx.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Data Collection

Data was collected in two ways: firstly, through an interview where the interviewee was asked through open-ended questions to describe his/her use of and experiences with Facebook, and secondly through observation and analysis of the participants’ Facebook posts and pages.

4.3.1 Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured, which means that they occupied the middle ground between a questionnaire survey, where predetermined questions are asked in a specific order, and an interview that resembles friendly conversation with no predetermined focus (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 60). A number of questions were prepared beforehand (found in Appendix A), to be asked in whatever order came naturally at the interview (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 65), with more questions added where I thought that something needed further clarification. In designing the questions, I tried to form them in such a way that they would invite the interviewees to describe their experience and explain things from their point of view, as phenomenology demands. Occasionally I might ask for an example of something a participant said or repeat what they said in my own words to ensure I had understood correctly (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 70). Two participants contacted me after the interview via Facebook and email, telling me something they wanted to add to the interview (these were incorporated into the notes after the interview transcript). In addition, on two occasions, I contacted a participant myself to clarify something said in the interview.

The interviews were conducted via Skype between 20/3/2015 and 30/3/2015 and recorded with a program for Skype call recording. The decision to record the interviews was made for the following reasons: taking notes can be distracting for both the interviewer and the interviewee; the interviewer’s memory can never fully remember all the details of what was said and how it was said, even directly after the interview; and listening closely to everything the interviewee says can be mentally exhausting (Crang & Cook, 2007, pp. 81-82). The longest interview was 29:06 and the shortest one 8:32, with an average time of 16:13. The language of the interviews
was Greek for the Greek participants and English for the others. Regarding these last, English was the first language for all except one, but as she has been living in England for over 30 years this was not considered to be a problem.

Each participant was interviewed separately, with the exception of Tom and Mary, who were interviewed together. Jim and Lotus were interviewed individually, but each was within hearing distance (the same or an adjacent room) when the other was interviewed.

According to Crang & Cook (2007, pp. 68-69), it is important to ease into the conversation gradually, to combat both the participant’s and the researcher’s nerves. For this reason, I started the interview by asking how the participant was, and before starting on the questions I assured them that there were no right or wrong answers, and that they would not be judged on the answers they would give. After the interviews were transcribed, they were taken back to the participants to determine if they wanted to add or remove something. One participant asked that a certain section be removed, to which I agreed.

4.3.2 Observation of Posts

The examination of participants’ page and posts was used as a second source of information, in order to triangulate the data obtained from the interviews. It is a fact that what people say they do and what they actually do is not necessarily the same, with a good example being mothers in child rearing studies who reported that their children were able to dress and toilet themselves earlier than they actually could (Blomberg et al, 1993, p. 130). It was therefore important to have a second source of information besides the interviews (see also Validity and Reliability section). The participants’ page was examined once at the beginning of the study, whereas their posts were observed between 26/3/2015 and 16/4/2015.

The fact that the field of observation was in cyberspace rather than in physical space made this an interesting case. According to Leander & McKim (2003, pp. 213-214), moving an ethnography online requires that the “place” be expanded or revised to include other than the usual “physical settings”; focus must shift to the connections between the locations where participants engage in activities. They say (p. 223) that what is interesting in such a case is how the participants and the researchers “construct the Internet as a separate social space”. The boundaries of the fieldwork, in such case, can be defined by the concept of “social environment, a symbolic space created in cyberspace through programs which allow communication between two or more users” (Guimarães Jr, 2005, p. 148). In my case, the social environment was created by Facebook, the field bounded by the actions of my participants and their friends (with the focus being always on the actions of the participants).

Having the virtual space of Facebook interactions as a field of observation also offered solutions to some problems. Blomberg et al. (1993, p. 132) state it is important to conduct observations at various times of the day, as participants’ activities may be different at different times. This was accomplished thanks to Facebook’s asynchronous nature and constantly updated News feed: at various times during the day, I would log onto Facebook and examine my News feed from top to bottom for my participants’ activities. I would continue to go back in time until I reached activities I had already noted in my previous visit. Another problem solved by this asynchronous nature was one common in both online and offline observations, that of it being difficult to follow many interactions simultaneously (Guimarães Jr, 2005, p. 151).
As mentioned before, I was already a "Facebook friend" of all the participants. This solved the problem of gaining access (as a “Facebook friend”, I was able to view the participants’ page and daily posts), and also gave me a ready “role” or “identity” through which to observe their interactions (Crang & Cook, 2007, pp. 38-48). Knowing the participants beforehand also lessened the potential uneasiness they might feel, knowing that someone was observing them and that what they posted could be “written down and used in evidence against them” (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 45). However, it must be noted that what I observed was limited by the participants’ and others’ privacy settings; for example, I could not observe what they might post in groups of which I was not a member, or what they might post on a friend’s Timeline if that friend had set his Timeline to be invisible to "friends of friends". This was inevitable, although it must be noted that I share a number of "Facebook friends" with each of the participants, so I was able to observe some occasions when they commented on or "liked" friends' posts.

4.4 Data Analysis

About phenomenological analysis, Lichtman (2012) states:

“If you were following a phenomenological tradition, you would be interested in the lived experiences of the individuals. You will need to explore some of the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, and your data analysis would be facilitated if you bracketed your views. You might choose to conduct either narrative analysis or thematic analysis.” (p. 257)

I chose to do a thematic analysis, which as described in Giorgi (1997) has the following steps:

1. Each text (interview transcript) is read through one or more times, in order to obtain an overall sense of the data.
2. The text is read again, this time dividing the data into "meaning units", or topics (codes) for each segment.
3. The codes are organized into categories (themes), with their subcategories (subthemes) and interrelationships.
4. One or more main themes are identified.

This method is similar to the general qualitative analysis method described in Cresswell (2009) and Lichtman (2012, pp. 241-265). Throughout the analysis, I made sure to remain open to letting meanings emerge from the data, expected or unexpected (Giorgi, 1997). Moreover, before starting I made a list of all my preconceptions in order to make them overt and visible, thereby setting them aside so that I could focus on the description of the participants’ experience (Dowling, 2007; Giorgi, 1997).

My initial coding yielded 227 codes. After removing duplicate (differently named, but with the same meaning) and redundant codes, this number was cut down to 173 codes. These codes were sorted into 47 categories. Finally, the categories were condensed into 8 themes: Reasons for joining, Communication: "keeping in touch", Barriers and problems to use, Privacy and Facebook's ways of making money, Bad uses of Facebook, Promoting interests and job, Facebook as information source, and Improving quality of life.

The above is the method I used for the interviews. For the Facebook page and posts, I first examined the information the participants had put on their page, such as personal information, "liked" pages, photos, and groups, to see if it was consistent with what they had told me in the interviews. I then went over my notes from my period of observation, noting the frequency and type of actions (whether they were
engaging in dialogue via commenting, for example, or posting about things that interest them) and again comparing with what I was told in the interviews. In general when examining the Facebook page and posts I tried to look for patterns of behaviour (e.g. this user posts mainly about this subject or posts mainly photos) and potential deviations from what the participants had stated in the interview.

After analysing the data as described above, I used the concepts described in Chapter 2: Theoretical framework to analyse and make sense of my findings.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure that the data obtained was reliable, the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and then read through once in order to check for potential mistakes made during transcription. The codes used were constantly checked and compared, to ensure that there was no drift in their definition during the process of coding (Cresswell, 2009).

The fact that the participants were friends and acquaintances of mine made them more likely to answer freely and honestly on one hand, but on the other hand introduced the danger of various types of bias in the data obtained. To counter this threat, the following strategies to ensure validity were used, as described in Cresswell (2009):

- Two different sources of information (interviews and Facebook posts and pages) were used and triangulated in order to identify themes
- The themes extracted from the data were taken back to the participants, to check whether they felt that they accurately represented what they had said. All participants agreed that the themes were an accurate representation of what they had said.
- Before beginning the study, I wrote down my preconceptions (which were inevitable due to my background and personal experiences with Facebook), in order to make them explicit and make it possible to constantly reflect on them during the study.
- Any discrepancies in the data that run counter to the themes identified are reported
- Two peer debriefers were used to review the study and ask questions about it; this ensured that it resonated with people other than me.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants were given a consent form to read and sign before the interview and the examination of their Facebook page and posts. This form can be found in Appendix B. Before the interview took place, the participants were told that participation to the research was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time, without any explanation, if they decided that they no longer wished to participate. They were also reminded that the interview would be recorded and assured that the information gathered would only be used for the purpose of this research and would not be shared with third parties. Finally, as mentioned before, the interview transcripts were taken back to the participants to determine if they wanted to add or remove something.

The reading and analysis of the participants' Facebook page and posts also posed an ethical question. According to Gatson (2011), lurking or reading online content is a
form of participant observation\(^3\), because the researcher is already "in" the online space being examined. There is a question as to whether it is always the type of participant observation where informed consent is necessary, since it can be argued that when one posts on a public website, one expects a certain level of observation (Gatson, 2011). In general, lurking raises a host of ethical questions, since communication that takes place in public places is not necessarily public (Mörtberg et al., 2010). In this particular case there was also the problem of how to obtain consent from any other people involved in the participants' Facebook activities: if, for example, a participant posted to a friend’s Timeline, this friend was also involved in this activity and his/her consent should be obtained. After much discussion with my supervisor, it was decided that the participants would be asked to post on their Timeline on my behalf, informing their friends that I would be doing this study. The text of this post can be found in Appendix C. Then, if a friend had any questions and wished to contact me, they could give him/her my email. The participants were notified and posted the text on their Timeline. I was not contacted by any of their friends with questions.

Another concern was that if I quoted from a participant’s page, someone who became friends with me could search for the quote and see who the participant was in real life. For this reason, I did not use direct quotes from participants’ Facebook posts and made sure to only describe their activity in as general terms as possible, so that it would be difficult to connect it to real people. Also, as mentioned before, I changed the participants’ names to protect their confidentiality. It is not impossible that someone who is friends with both of us could surmise who each participant is; however, I believe that probability to be small, and being friends with both of us would be a prerequisite, as otherwise his/her access to my friends’ posts would be restricted by their privacy settings.

Finally, I would like to note that I had no conflict of interest or special interest in this study.

4.7 Conclusions

This study has taken a qualitative, phenomenological approach. The participants were 8 people chosen from my circle of Facebook friends for convenience and also for diversity. The data was collected from two sources, interviews and observation of the participants' Facebook pages and posts, and was analysed using thematic analysis. Finally, care was taken to ensure that my research remained ethical, and that the interpretation was valid and reliable.

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\(^3\) Participant observation means that the researcher becomes a full participant in the activities studied while also observing them (Blomberg et al., 1993).
5 Findings

In this section, I will present the findings from my research. I will first give a general overview of the participants' experience with Facebook and then proceed to describe the themes that my analysis yielded.

5.1 General Overview

In general, almost all participants said that their experience with Facebook was good or very good. Some did have some caveats - Mary said that although Facebook was wonderful, caution was necessary when using it, and Jim and Lotus said that although it was good for communicating, they had some privacy concerns - but the general experience was positive. The only exception was Tom, who said he had become disenchanted with Facebook due to a dislike of it pushing him to communicate and a fear of hacking and account misuse. Ironically, Tom was the only one who had two accounts: one for himself and one for a tour company he worked for.

All participants except Tom said they used it daily or almost daily, except when on holiday (Sam). Tom's use consisted mainly of monitoring; as he explained, he would get Facebook messages on his email and occasionally, if something piqued his interest, he would go on Facebook and read it. However, he said that if his wife (who was the main user of his accounts) saw something interesting on Facebook, she would tell him, and he would "hop on and see it" (but he let her answer it).

In spite of visiting (almost) every day, however, the participants did not always make contributions to Facebook. Only Sam made some contribution (post, comment or "like") every day (except one), and Dimitris was not observed making any contributions at all. However, since his interactions were mainly in a closed group to which I didn't have access, and by his own admission consisted mainly of reading others' posts, this was not surprising.

5.2 Themes

The themes extracted, as mentioned before, were the following: Reasons for joining, Communication: "keeping in touch", Barriers and problems to use, Privacy and Facebook's ways of making money, Bad uses of Facebook, Promoting interests and job, Facebook as information source, and Improving quality of life.

5.2.1 Reasons for Joining

The most popular reason for joining was communication. Love of new technology, work, and curiosity were also cited as reasons.

Dimitris, for example, was motivated to join because some old friends and relatives of his, with whom he had grown up together, had a Facebook group where they exchanged news and photos and generally communicated. These people lived at a great distance from him now, and this was a way to keep in touch and communicate with them. He said the catalyst for him joining was a picture of himself in primary school that was posted in the group, when no one could find who was the boy pictured. "And [my friends] contacted me in relation to that, phoned me and things like that, and I decided to join", he said. Joe was also motivated to join in order to keep in touch with family that lives in England and other parts of Australia, while Sam was encouraged to join by people who were already on Facebook and told him they could use it to exchange messages and pictures.
Sophia said she joined because she likes communication and new technology, and because she was curious to see what Facebook was. Tom also cited curiosity as a reason, saying "I was curious and it was the thing to do".

Jim and Lotus' main reason for joining was to keep in touch with people while travelling. Jim said:

"It was around the time when we were retiring, and we knew we were going to be travelling quite a bit, so we were looking for ways we could keep in touch with people easily, and which was not too intrusive upon them, so they didn’t have to receive a lot of letters from us or emails or phone calls or Skype conversations or whatever. They could just keep in touch with us by observing what we were doing."

(Interview with Jim, 21/3/2015 [Skype])

Lotus added that since their children were on Facebook, they would be able to see what each other was up to.

Finally, Mary said she got involved through her job at a tour company which does monthly tours of New Zealand, when they decided to use Facebook as a means for tour participants to keep in touch and exchange photos and/or videos from the tour. They created a page for each month's tour where people could post their thoughts and photos, and everyone who worked for the company became a part of it. That included her and Tom (who was already on Facebook).

5.2.2 Communication: "Keeping in Touch"

Communication was the biggest theme encountered in the analysis. All participants said that they used Facebook to a greater or lesser degree in order to keep in touch with friends and family, and the study of their posts (with the exception of Dimitris) showed that they often participated in comments and likes of their own or friends' posts. Lotus, who said she could live without Facebook, nevertheless stated that she would miss the contact with her friends, if she were to leave.

Dimitris, as mentioned before, joined a group of old friends and relatives. He said he liked checking into that group very much, because they shared old or new photos and discussed things. He mentioned getting emotional on occasion, and how he got the chance to see old photos of friends and relatives, some of whom had died before he was born. The group also fostered intergenerational communication, since members' family were also encouraged to join; for example he mentioned that his maternal uncle was a member, who was a man of 80 years of age. It was also a way of learning what was happening in people's lives, for example if someone's child graduated from university. On such occasions he would either post something or call them on the phone to congratulate them. He said it was convenient that you didn't need to reply or phone straight away, but could defer it till later.

Another thing Dimitris liked was when people posted photos of gatherings they had done together:

DIMITRIS: A cousin of mine with whom we have grown up like brothers, he is retired now, but he is a baker, and he [...] took part in a competition for the best cheese pie where many other people from the same Facebook had gone, that is they arranged a meeting, they communicated with one another, and [...] he got first prize.

RESEARCHER: Good.

DIMITRIS: And there were loads of photos, loads of comments; I wrote something too.

(Interview with Dimitris, 20/3/2015 [Skype])
These photos made Dimitris think of hosting a gathering of his own with people who lived in the same city, and posting photos to the group. So this is an example of Facebook prompting offline contact.

In general, communication and reconnecting/reminiscing were big sources of enjoyment from Facebook for Dimitris. He went on to say that he had also joined a group by some of his students, which helped him keep in touch with them, and was also thinking of joining a group by some special needs students he had worked with, for the same reasons.

Dimitris was not the only person to mention reconnecting with old friends through Facebook. Lotus and Sophia both mentioned reconnecting with old school friends, who they had lost contact with for years.

Dimitris, Lotus, Jim, Joe, Sam, and Mary all cited the advantage Facebook offers for communicating with people far away. For Dimitris, this meant friends from his hometown; for Lotus, this meant people from her home country but also people she had met while travelling. Jim and Lotus also used Facebook to keep contact with people back home while they travelled. Sam and Joe also used it to keep in touch with people they had met overseas. Joe, who was from England originally but had been living in Australia for over 40 years, also used Facebook to stay in touch with her family in England. Many of those people were nieces and nephews she had never met except through Facebook, or cousins she hadn't met since she was very young. She remarked that Facebook "seems to make the world a smaller place". Mary, on the other hand, mentioned how Facebook was used by the tour company she worked for as a good way for people who had met on the tours to keep in touch.

Other advantages of Facebook as a communication medium were its speed (according to Sam and Sophia), the fact that it is free (Sophia) and its lack of intrusiveness (Jim). Jim put it thus:

"I don’t have to send them an email, 'How are you getting on?', then they’ve got to tell me what they’re doing! On Facebook they just get in touch with me if they want."

(Interview with Jim, 21/3/2015 [Skype])

Sophia and Dimitris noted that Facebook was also a good tool for reminding people of friends’ birthdays. Tom, however, disliked this, as he found it cumbersome to reply to all the birthday wishes.

The subject of lonely people was also raised. Sophia expressed a belief that Facebook would be good for lonely people, who didn't have many friends, because joining would make them feel that they were joining a big circle of friends. Tom, however, who described himself as a loner, had a different opinion. He said that he didn't like Facebook because it pushed him into contact with lots of different people, and because he had been socially awkward as a child he was still afraid of saying the wrong thing and having everybody know it.

Another use of Facebook was to share photos from holidays. Sophia, Joe, Jim, and Lotus all did that. Joe said:

"When I was on holiday I shared lots of photos, it was a great way of keeping in contact with my children at home when I was overseas, and they were sharing the experience with me."

(Interview with Joe, 22/3/2015 [Skype])

Facebook was also a way for people to learn what their friends were interested in; Dimitris said he liked it when people posted photos of things that interested them, such as flowers or dogs, and Jim found it interesting to see what other people found interesting to share. Sam also shared things about his interests, and Sophia would
sometimes share songs. Jim also shared articles he had read which he found interesting, as did Lotus.

Finally, Facebook was used for discussion with other people by Jim and Sophia (and to a lesser extent Dimitris, in his "old friends" group). Sophia used Facebook to exchange opinions and discuss current events with friends, while Jim said he liked getting into intellectually stimulating discussions with other people. Both Jim and Sophia would comment on friends' posts.

5.2.3 Barriers and Problems to use

Another theme was problems encountered that made Facebook’s use difficult. The most common one was technical difficulties.

Lotus, Joe, Sophia, and Tom all said they had encountered technical problems with Facebook use. Lotus still had her husband put photos on her behalf, because she couldn’t understand the technical side. Joe and Sophia both said they had experienced confusion and technical problems when they started (Joe had locked herself out of her first account when she changed her email address), but claimed they had since overcome them and become very comfortable with its use.

Sophia said she learned by trial and error and by asking more experienced users. Tom also had problems because he was not “tech-savvy enough” and therefore wasn’t sure how to distinguish between sending private versus public messages.

Some participants expressed a preference for more traditional forms of communication. Lotus said she preferred meeting in person or talking on the telephone to Facebook; she also said she preferred email because she could proof-read an email repeatedly before sending, whereas with Facebook, “if I press Enter, it’s gone”. She didn't like it that people rely on machines for communication. Tom also preferred email because he considered it more private and because he could more easily control who saw what via email groups. This was related to his problems with the technical side of Facebook, mentioned above. Mary, though generally very favourable towards Facebook, still didn’t believe it would substitute face-to-face, because of the body language and expressions that you couldn’t get through electronic communication. However, she stressed that she didn’t consider Facebook to be a bad thing, just different (“a new normal way to communicate” in her words).

Mary went on to say that for young people, Facebook was the main way to communicate and it was normal, because it was what they’d learned on. On the contrary, older people had to re-learn things, which was annoying because they didn’t have the patience for it. She put it thusly:

“[T]he older you get, the less you want to be bothered with it (laughs), you want to plug-and-play, you know, I just want to sit down and bring my application up and have it work. I don’t want to have to learn how to create groups, I don’t want to have to learn, I don’t want to do that again, I went through that with email.”

(Interview with Mary, 23/3/2015 [Skype], emphasis hers)

Mary believed, however, that it was important for older people to keep up with the changing technology, otherwise they would be left behind. She mentioned the example of her parents, who were in their nineties but used Skype, Facetime, and had an iPad. Another problem cited by Tom and Mary was that due to Facebook’s

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4 However, it should be noted that when I asked Sophia to put the announcement that I was doing this study on her Facebook page, she asked me how to do that, which I interpret to mean that she is not yet as comfortable with its use as she said.
dynamic and fast-changing nature, if you saw something, left Facebook, and then tried to find that again later, it was very difficult.

One more problem was mentioned, this one only by one person. Dimitris said that due to his job and obligations, he had a hard time finding time to post himself. His use consisted mainly of reading what others had posted, precisely for this reason.

5.2.4 Privacy and Facebook's ways of Making Money

Since privacy was cited as a major concern in the literature, I asked a question about privacy during the interviews. A number of people said they were, indeed, concerned.

Jim was the most outspoken on this subject, saying:

"I don't want Facebook to use anything about us collectively. I know that they do, but I really don't like it. They should just leave it alone and allow people to use Facebook as they see fit. But I know that there's money involved and they all just want to become, not just multi-billionaires, but multi-multi-multi-billionaires, but in order to become multi-multi-multi-billionaires they need to use the information that they glean from us. And I think that's sinister. I just think it's awful."

(Interview with Jim, 21/3/2015 [Skype])

Jim mentioned that he has considered leaving Facebook because of this, but he continues using it because it is useful for communication, and also compared to the 7 billion of people that live on the planet, he is not very important. He also said that he and Lotus had initially kept personal information to a minimum, but had been posting more personal things lately. But he did feel that Facebook held a lot of power that was unaccountable.

Lotus was also concerned about Facebook having her private details, and about what they intended to do with them. She didn't want everyone knowing her private details. It should be noted here that Jim and Lotus had the least personal details on their Facebook pages of all the participants. Lotus said she would post if something good happened to her that she wanted to share, but that was rare. Tom and Mary, on the other hand, were more concerned with what information other users might access. Tom said that he disliked that he couldn't control who saw what he said, and preferred email as a more private option, while Mary said that she disliked that it was cumbersome to control which of the many groups they were involved in saw what. This was also related to the technical problems described in the previous section. Tom also was in the process of hiding his birthday from his Facebook page, not only because of the trouble of replying to birthday wishes (mentioned above), but also for security reasons, as it is an element of identity on secure sites.

A number of people, however, mentioned that they weren't concerned about privacy. These were Joe, Sam, Dimitris, and to a lesser extent Sophia. Joe was the most clear on this subject, claiming that she "never had been” worried about privacy because she didn’t put anything on Facebook that she didn’t want people to see. Sam was also unconcerned because he kept most of his private stuff off Facebook. He had even allowed some of his nieces to go on his account and post music videos. Dimitris had initially, for years, been very hesitant to enter Facebook because he had been very concerned about privacy, but now he claimed this had radically changed due to his learning to use Facebook, which showed him that if you are careful what you post and where, there is no danger. He didn’t self-censor in his friends’ group and didn’t feel he had posted anything he wanted to hide; he was more cautious in his students’ and special needs’ groups, but that was more out of concern for the students’ privacy
rather than his own. Finally, Sophia claimed that while she was concerned about privacy, it was not a case of her being concerned who would see her posts (“my life isn’t that important”, she said); it was more that she didn’t like sharing very private things. She would use her Facebook status to unload psychologically on occasion, comment on other people’s posts, or upload photographs, but steered clear of very personal stuff. According to her, people should be circumspect in their use of Facebook.

This last idea, that people should be cautious in their use of Facebook, was also mentioned by others. Mary said she found Facebook great, but people needed to be cautious with it; she was a former hiring manager and she said that if she looked at a potential hire’s Facebook page and saw something that might indicate he/she was not a responsible person, such as crazy partying, it would affect her decision to hire him/her. So she always told people to be careful what they post. Sam was also careful never to post anything controversial; he might occasionally talk about politics, but usually in a humorous way, and on one occasion when somebody posted a politically volatile video on his page, he hid it from his Timeline. Although he had his religious and political views listed on his page, they were put in a generic, non-provoking way. Sam said some people posted things that could be used against them in court, such as talking angrily about an ex-partner. He was also careful to imply that he was leaving somebody at home whenever he went on holiday, to prevent anyone from taking advantage of his situation. Finally, Lotus said that whenever she was in Malaysia, she was careful what she posted because there was no freedom of speech there and she could get arrested if she criticised the government.

Some people expressed a dislike for posting about personal things that was not so much due to privacy concerns as it was to the fact that they considered it annoying for other people. I have already mentioned that Sam stated he kept his private life off Facebook. Sam’s page was the most complete in personal information of all the participants, containing work, education and contact information (except for phone and email), placed he’d live, political and religious views, and "Details" (a short description of himself). However, none of his day-to-day posts during the period of observation were about his personal life. He explained that this was because he considered it annoying when people kept posting about unimportant things day after day: "I don’t get why people have to tell us I am sitting at McDonalds or silly stuff like that" (Interview with Sam, 30/3/2015 [Skype]). Sam said he would occasionally post something about his family, but for him Facebook was mostly a place to post about his interests.

Jim and Mary held similar views. Jim said posting a lot about one's personal life was "too narcissistic"; he preferred to post things he found interesting about somebody else, like an interesting article, as mentioned before. Mary disliked photo tagging because it sent notifications to all her friends, who might not be interested in the photo. Mary and Tom made only two posts to their page during the entire period of observation (although they made many comments and "likes" on other people’s posts), neither of which was related to personal life.

Finally, Facebook’s ways of making money through advertisements was criticised not only because of privacy concerns, but because of the annoyance it presented. Again, Joe was the least critical, stating that she disliked the

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5 Photo tagging is a feature whereby a user can "tag" another user in a photo he/she has uploaded. The photo will then appear on the second user's Timeline, and his/her Facebook friends will be notified about it.
advertisements but, “I figure they’ve got to pay for themselves somehow so… take the good with the bad” (Interview with Joe, 22/3/2015 [Skype]). Sophia and Lotus also said they disliked advertisements, with Lotus saying:

LOTUS: I think they have earned a lot of money already, they should pay taxes into all those countries that, you know.[...]Facebook, if they have all those different countries because they earn all those different customers, I think they should share the profit to that local country’s government.

RESEARCHER: They should pay taxes to the countries that they have members.
LOTUS: Yeah, pay taxes, yeah. Pay taxes.

(Interview with Lotus, 21/3/2015 [Skype])

Lotus acknowledged, however, that if this happened, Facebook users would probably be charged for their use of Facebook.

5.2.5 Bad uses of Facebook

Some bad uses of Facebook were mentioned and commented on by a number of participants. These were expressions of hate, hacking or account misuse, receiving spam emails because of Facebook, and Facebook being time-consuming and addictive.

Jim was very vocal about expressions of hate on Facebook, saying that it gave people "an easy forum to be nasty". He believed people said things on Facebook that they wouldn't say in a face-to-face situation, and that this was a problem affecting society in general, with people turning to Facebook instead of thinking about what made them angry and discussing it with their friends. On one hand, it was good to see how some people think, but he would rather they didn't have a forum. He was especially sensitive to expressions of misogyny:

"It’s, you know, my daughter, she’s quite active in lots of areas, usually something to do with film, and some nasty things have been written to her or about her, and it has nothing to do with what she believes in, what she stands for, it’s something to do with her being a woman and having the temerity to be doing something interesting, and standing up for herself. And that’s not good. That is not good at all." (Interview with Jim, 21/3/2015 [Skype], emphasis his)

Tom and Mary also expressed concern about the lack of control over what people can say on Facebook, with Tom saying that "uncontrolled viciousness" would be his "number one concern". Mary mentioned bullying issues and how a lot of damage can be done emotionally, and also the case of terrorist groups using Facebook to recruit people. She again stressed the necessity of being cautious with Facebook.

Regarding hacking and account misuse, Sam had had a problem with the latter when somebody posted an inappropriate picture on his page, which led to Facebook shutting it down. It took a lot of effort on his behalf to get it up again. For Tom, fear of hacking and account misuse and people posting things on his page that he didn't want were a major factor in him becoming disenchanted with Facebook.

Finally, Tom disliked that Facebook was very time-consuming and you could get "sucked in". Sam echoed that by saying that Facebook could be addictive: "You get on here, and before you know it, 2 hours are gone and you think, 'Oh my God, I have things to do’” (Interview with Sam, 30/3/2015 [Skype]). Sam also mentioned receiving spam emails, from people who had seen his page on Facebook and were trying to convince him that he had won a million dollars or that they had a business
opportunity for him, however he wasn’t very concerned about them; his solution was to simply ignore them.

5.2.6 Promoting Interests and Job

Five of the participants commented on how Facebook could be used to promote things you are interested in or your job. For Mary (and Tom, through Mary), using Facebook for her job was one of her primary purposes. She described how, when she and Tom were working tours, they would be the ones to post photos and updates on that month's Facebook page. Even when they weren’t working the current month’s tour, she would use Facebook to monitor the tour and keep up-to-date with it. Dimitris, who is a teacher, also used Facebook for his job; he had joined a group created by his students which he used to stay informed about their progress and if they were experiencing problems, so that he could intervene.

For Sam, promoting things he was interested in was a very big part of Facebook. Most of his Facebook activities and posts were about his hobby, which he described as "a part-time job". He used it to inform people about events he was organizing and later to post photos from these events. Most of his friends were also people who shared his hobby and interests, and most groups he had joined were related to this hobby. For him, Facebook was a good way of meeting other people who shared similar interests to him. He also said that when he decided to publish a book centred around his interests, he was able to find an artist through Facebook, and a publisher through a hobby-related group he found on Facebook. He said:

"I wouldn’t have met them any other way. So Facebook has helped to expand my audience, for my hobby, [...] and through Facebook I’ve found a publisher etc, and also I found a proof reader and editor, and if I didn’t have Facebook I wouldn’t have found those people existed, and I would have been trying to phonebook people. And by being on Facebook you have a wider audience there, you have contact with more people that have the skills that you're looking for."

(Interview with Sam, 30/3/2015 [skype])

Joe also used Facebook to a certain extent to promote her interests; she had created a page for their gliding club, although she admitted that due to being still in the establishment stage and little input from the committee, there hadn't been many posts on it.

5.2.7 Facebook as Information Source

Various participants mentioned using Facebook as an information source, whether that was about current events or about things that interest them.

Tom and Mary volunteered at a Cat Rescue Centre, and they used Facebook to monitor the status of the kittens brought into care or put up for adoption. Sophia, on the other hand, used it to learn news about current events. Many of the pages she had "liked" on Facebook were news-related. She said:

"I like information, even if I don't completely accept the pages I visit, I just get a general idea. That is, I, like a sieve, keep the things that interest me, the things I think are true."

(Interview with Sophia, 22/3/2015 [Skype])

Sophia also used Facebook as a way to learn about things that interested her, like food and art. For example, she had "liked" the pages of various museums, and thus got updates from them whenever they had a new exhibition or event.
Sam was another person who used Facebook to learn about events. He said that sometimes people would invite him to their events, and sometimes he would stumble upon them himself. He described how, in 2012, he travelled to Europe and found many different events related to his interests on Facebook. He then followed the web links and went to their website. Without Facebook, he said, he wouldn't have even been aware that those events were on. Sam also used Facebook to inform other people about events he was participating in. During the time I was monitoring his Facebook posts, he posted multiple times about an upcoming event. Tom and Mary were of a similar opinion, describing Facebook as "a wonderful mechanism to keep a big number of people informed about the schedules, the upcoming events, statuses and things like that" (Interview with Tom and Mary, 23/3/2015 [Skype]).

Dimitris also mentioned that some of his friends posted about current events, but contrary to the others he found this to be a bad thing. He described it as people "fooling around" and "noise":

**RESEARCHER:** When you said that they fool around with the current events that they post, what did you mean? That they post nonsense?

**DIMITRIS:** No, you see some things a bit... just current events let's say, that is you don't see something smart, you see that he hasn't actually posted, he has just found a video from YouTube or some news item etc. and he is sending it. I am a bit indifferent to this. That is, I prefer it when they upload their flowers or when they upload... that is, things that they like.

(I Interview with Dimitris, 20/3/2015 [Skype])

So Dimitris was an exception in that he didn't see Facebook as an information source, and didn't want to.

### 5.2.8 Improving Quality of Life

A number of participants commented on how Facebook could improve one's quality of life. Joe described how she'd had a conversation that morning with 2 of her nieces who live far away, stating "it's just a good way to start the day". Dimitris was of the same opinion, when he said that logging in in the morning and reading news from his friends "made his day". Sam said he focuses on making his page "informative, uplifting and at times humorous". Sophia, on the other hand, described Facebook as a good way to unload psychologically when you are feeling down:

"Sometimes, when I am in an emotional state, you know how it says what state are you in, I like to write a few words about my psychological state. I write them. It is, how can I say it, a kind of unloading psychologically, at times. You are... you don't want to speak to anyone, you write a few words there. [...] Moreover, at a time when you don't feel well you can log in, pass the time with a funny video, with something... that is, you are sad, I could say you forget it with Facebook. It's lighter than reading a newspaper or a book."

(I Interview with Sophia, 22/3/2015 [Skype])

Finally, Sam described an occasion where a friend of his was depressed and possibly suicidal, and her Facebook posts and behaviour reflected that. Sam realised from her posts that she was depressed and was able, through Facebook, to contact mutual friends that lived close to her so that they could get to her house and check if she was all right. This is an example of a depressed and possibly suicidal person getting help through Facebook, and an example of how Facebook can improve quality of life.
5.3 Conclusions

All the participants except Tom visited Facebook almost daily and described their experience as mostly positive. The reasons that motivated them to join were communication, curiosity, love of new technology and work. Everyday use was motivated by and consisted of communication and keeping in touch with people, especially those at a great geographical distance, but also promoting one's interests and finding other users that share them, use in job (for Tom and Mary) and use as an information source (with the exception of Dimitris, who disliked that). Some participants also mentioned how Facebook could improve one's quality of life and make one feel better when upset. Barriers to use were technical problems, with some users preferring email or "face-to-face" meetings; however, only one person (Tom) said he rarely used Facebook because of this. The participants were split on the subject of privacy, with some stating they were unconcerned and others stating it concerned them greatly. Negative aspects of Facebook were mainly the presence of advertisements, expressions of hate on Facebook, the potential for hacking and account misuse, and the fact that it could be time-consuming and addictive.
6 Discussion

In this chapter I discuss the findings with the help of the concepts mentioned in the Theoretical framework chapter, and then discuss what they mean and how they compare to the existing literature. The concepts of consociates, consociated contemporaries, and the role of anonymity will help understand relationships via Facebook, and the concepts of asynchronicity and cyberspace and (dis)embodiment will help understand people's experiences with Facebook. Finally, the role of age in shaping people's experiences will be discussed.

6.1 The Research Questions Answered

The questions posed at the start of this research were the following:

- What motivates people of the less-frequently using demographic to join and use Facebook?
- How do people of the less-frequently using demographic use Facebook?
- What are the experiences of people of the less-frequently using demographic with Facebook?

The first question was answered with the theme "Reasons for joining". The most popular reason given for joining was communication; curiosity, love of new technology and because of work were also mentioned. Use was motivated by the desire to communicate with friends and family, work, Facebook as an avenue to promote your interests and its ability to act as a source of news and entertainment.

Regarding the second question, communication was also a major part of Facebook's use for the participants. Reconnecting with old school friends and communicating with people over long distance were especially noted. Facebook was also used as a means to promote interests and find people with similar interests, and as a way of learning about events or news.

As far as experiences are concerned (the third question), most of the participants' experiences were positive, to a greater or lesser degree. The main causes of dissatisfaction were Facebook's use of user information to make money (at times related to privacy concerns), technical problems and the use of advertisements.

6.2 Discussion of General Use

In the literature, communication is mentioned as both a major motive and a major benefit of social media use, with special mentions of intergenerational communication (Harley & Fitzpatrick, 2009; Nef et al., 2013) and communication over great geographical distance (Baker et al., 2013; Leist, 2013). It was no surprise, therefore, that almost all participants cited communication and keeping in touch with people as a reason for joining and/or a motive for using Facebook. Even Lotus, who claimed she could live without Facebook, admitted that she would miss the contact with her friends if she were to leave, while Jim, who was very outspoken about his privacy concerns, said Facebook usefulness as a communication tool prevented him from leaving. Contact with people of both the older and younger generation was mentioned by Dimitris, and 5 out of 8 participants mentioned the advantage of using Facebook to communicate with people far away. To this Jim, Sophia, and Dimitris added discussing things with friends. Dimitris, Lotus, and Sophia mentioned reconnecting with people from their past, which had been found to be a motive in Madden (2010).

In general, communication across geographical distance seems to play an important role in accepting Facebook and finding it useful. Dimitris, Joe, and Lotus all currently lived in a different place from where they grew up and used Facebook to
communicate and reconnect with people from their hometown or homeland. For Jim and Lotus the factor of geographical distance played an important role in their decision to join in the first place; they joined because they were going to travel and wanted to keep in touch with people back home. This is also helped by the asynchronicity of Facebook (see Facebook's Main Features), which as I described in the Theoretical framework chapter enables the independence of social proximity from physical proximity. If you want to communicate with someone who lives in a completely different time zone from where you are, as was the case for Joe and Lotus' homelands, but also when you are travelling around the world, it is advantageous to be able to leave a message or post something and know that people will see it in their own time. Even when you are in the same time zone as your friends and family, asynchronicity has advantages. Dimitris, for example, said he uses the asynchronous nature of Facebook to make contact at a later time of his own convenience, either through posting or through the more traditional method of telephoning.

Schütz's (1932/1967, cited in Zhao, 2004, p. 93) concept of consociates and Zhao's (2004; 2007) concept of consociated contemporaries offer an interesting lens through which to view Facebook communication. As a reminder, consociates are people who share a community of both time and space and are considered "intimate friends", whereas consociated contemporaries share a community of time without sharing a community of space and are considered "intimate strangers or anonymous friends". For all the participants except Tom, Facebook was used as a means to extend the consociates relationship, enabling them to keep in touch with family and friends that lived far away. Joe's remark that Facebook makes the world a smaller place is a concrete example of how, thanks to technology, the lifeworld has expanded from the "world within reach" to the "world within mediated reach" (Zhao, 2004; 2007).

In its purest form, the consociated contemporaries relationship was only evidenced in Sam, who said he used Facebook to meet people (strangers) with common interests. However, there were some cases where certain participants' Facebook relationships did not fit exactly either the consociates realm or the consociated contemporaries realm. Joe, Lotus, and Sam all said they used Facebook to keep in touch with people they had met while travelling, and Tom and Mary said they kept in touch with people who went on the tours they guided. There is also the example of Joe's nephews and nieces in England, who she met through Facebook but has never met in real life. If, as Zhao (2004) said, consociates are intimate friends and consociated contemporaries intimate strangers or anonymous friends, how shall we categorize such a relationship? They are not intimate strangers or anonymous friends, because they know each other, but neither are they intimate friends, because they haven't known each other for very long. I would argue that this can be seen in two ways: first, as an example of people who started a tentative consociates relationship (when they met) which did not blossom into a full consociates relationship (due to the short period of time they spent together), but which may become one through these people's continued relationship through Facebook. Second, as a variation of the consociated contemporaries relationship, where people know each other slightly (so they are not strangers) at the start of the relationship, but whom Facebook enables to get to know each better and become intimate without interacting further offline.

As stated before, mutual knowledge between consociated contemporaries can be made more difficult due to the absence of physical cues such as body language (Pottle, 2013; Zhao, 2007). This view was echoed by Mary, who said Facebook would never substitute face-to-face for precisely this reason. Although Facebook now offers voice calls and video chat, these can only be used for synchronous communication;
asynchronous communication, which takes place through user posts and messages, by necessity lacks physical cues. Of course, asynchronous communication has other advantages, as mentioned earlier. And while Facebook may never substitute face-to-face (and I, for one, would never wish it to), it can be very useful in situations where face-to-face is impossible, such as people separated by a distance. In such cases, people cannot of course achieve the same kind of mutual knowledge that they would through a genuine consociates (face-to-face) relationship, but they can achieve a greater degree of mutual knowledge than they would if they did not use Facebook at all.

It is clear, however, that the virtual tools can act as an extension of the body, as Ajana (2005) mentioned. We see from the research how many participants used Facebook to stay in touch with people over long distances, using it as an extension of their corporeal ability to communicate. Joe even used it to communicate with people she had never met before, like her nieces and nephews in England, while Sam used it to meet new people that shared his interests. Ingold's (2008) theory is also relevant. Ingold (2008) claimed that when one considers the world as consisting of two hemispheres, earth and sky, life is actually lived in the zone where the two are brought together and mixed due to wind and weather. In the same way, an organism is a bundle of lines of flow and movement. So to be is not to be in place, but to be along paths. Similarly, we see how the body extends along the paths created through Facebook interactions, where the users weave the textures of reality through their posting activities. Through the movement created by posting and interacting, we transcend the normal boundaries of the body to communicate with people we couldn’t communicate with before. A parallel between the world as described by Ingold (2008) and the world affected by Facebook can be seen in the Table 6.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The world described by Ingold</th>
<th>The world affected by Facebook</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Corporeal world (embodied)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>World of consciousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Facebook (embodied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paths</td>
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<td>Texture</td>
<td>The content of Facebook, as</td>
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<td>created by the users</td>
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Table 6.1: A parallel between the world described by Ingold (2008) and the world affected by Facebook

A number of participants also mentioned how Facebook improved their life, making them feel good at the start of the day or forget their problems when they felt sad. The implications of this is that there are indeed benefits to using Facebook, both for communication and by extension for better quality of life, as has been mentioned in the literature review. Since communication is an important factor for joining and using Facebook, it should be a major point in any promotional campaign the company engages in. Reconnecting with old friends, which was also found to be a factor, should be made easier, for example through adding hometown, school, and year of birth as search parameters. Finally, the fact that curiosity plays a part in people of the less-frequently using demographic joining Facebook means that the more "buzz" there is around Facebook, the more people are likely to want to join. It is therefore
important for Facebook (and other SNSs) to keep their company name relevant and in the news.

Hartnett et al. (2013) found that for many people over 65, a motive for online social interactions was finding information or joining a community about their interests. This was found to be the case for Sam, whose use of Facebook centred mainly around his interests, not only in what he posted, but in the friends he sought out.

As far as the self presented on Facebook goes, Sam can be seen as a good example of presenting both a "hoped-for" and a "true" self. He stated that he tried to make his page humorous and uplifting, which is a case of presenting an "ideal, hoped-for" self, but his page also reflected his "true" self, through the many posts about his interests. Other participants expressed a concern for what other people would think of their posts; Tom was worried that he might say the wrong thing and have everyone know it, while Jim said he didn't post much personal stuff because he thought it was too narcissistic (i.e. he didn't think people would be interested in it). However, you could still see some of their "true" self reflected in their posts and pages (through their "Liked pages", the articles Jim posted, or the tour-related videos Tom and Mary posted). So even though the participants were not obsessed with their image, you could see that to some degree it did concern them, while they still let some of their "real" self shine through.

Regarding privacy, many of the articles from the literature mentioned privacy concerns. I was therefore surprised when three participants mentioned they were not concerned about it at all, or very little. Of those three, Joe's and Sam's way of dealing with privacy was to simply not post things they didn't want people to know; anything they wanted to keep private they didn't post, so they were not concerned. Dimitris was very worried before joining Facebook, but upon joining the site and getting to know it better he realised, as he said, that if you are careful what you post and where, there is no danger, and his fear evaporated. A fourth participant (Sophia) mentioned that she was concerned, but not because she was worried who would see; I got the impression that for her, it was more of a dislike for publishing private things for everyone to see. Again, she dealt with this by simply not publishing things she didn't want people to know. It seemed that this was the general way for avoiding privacy worries among the aforementioned people; they had found a way to manage what they posted so as to avoid privacy concerns. It should be noted that these people either reported no problems with the technical side of Facebook (Sam and Dimitris), or said that they had overcome the initial problems they encountered (Joe and to a lesser extent Sophia). So one can assume that their confidence in their technical skills made them less fearful of accidentally making public something which they preferred to keep private.

Another surprise was when Tom mentioned that because he was a loner, he didn't like Facebook pushing him into contact with many people. This was in contrast to what I expected, because I had thought that Facebook pushing people who don't have many friends into contact with others would be a good thing. Perhaps a distinction should be made between people who are alone by design, like Tom obviously was, and people who are alone due to bad circumstances and feel sad about it. For the former, Facebook may indeed be something that makes them uncomfortable, whereas for the latter, it can be beneficial. A solution for self-identified loners could be to learn to say “no” to unwanted friend requests, without embarrassment. They could simply explain that, contrary to most people, they use Facebook only for their closest friends and family. Of course, in Tom’s particular case, this might not be very helpful,
since using Facebook is also part of his job and he may have to accept requests from the people on the tour. A solution for Tom might be to use one of his accounts for the people on the tour (and have it continue being managed by his wife), and the other one as a very private account, only for close friends and family.

I was also surprised when Sophia cited a love of new technology as a motive for joining. In general, older adults are supposed to be less comfortable with new technology (Selwyn et al., 2003) and have more negative perceptions about it and its usefulness (Lüders & Brandtzæg, 2014; Sundar et al., 2011; Nef et al., 2013; Gregor et al., 2002 cited in Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009, p. 645). Sophia's view was directly in contrast with that. This seems less unexpected if one takes into consideration the fact that Sophia was a person who joined Facebook and liked it, therefore her opinion of new technology can be expected to be fairly positive (she would have quit Facebook or reported disliking it if she disliked new technology). Still, it is a notable exception to the rule that older adults are more suspicious of new technology.

Joinson (2008), McAndrew & Jeong (2012), and Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris (2009) all mentioned that older people tend to have fewer friends than younger people. For example Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris (2009) found that the median number of mySpace friends was 60 for teenagers and 12.5 for adults over 60. This was not the case for my participants6. The smallest number of friends was 40 (Dimitris) and the largest 1101 (Sam), with a median of 165. This may be due to the fact that many people added friends they had met on their travels, while Tom and Mary's high friends’ number was due to the fact that they added or were added by many of the people they met through the tours they worked on. Sophia and Dimitris, by contrast, who had the lowest number of friends, did not mention adding people they met while travelling. Sam, who had by far the largest number of friends, not only added people he met while travelling but people he found on Facebook who had common interests. This probably explains why he had so many friends. Another reason for the discrepancy between my research and the aforementioned studies could be that in the years that have passed since they were conducted, more people of all ages have joined SNSs like Facebook, making it more likely for someone, younger or older, to find many people they know online.

There was a general dislike of Facebook's way of making money (advertisements targeted by using user profile information). This ranged from the annoyed but accepting (Joe) to viewing it as very intrusive upon people's privacy (Jim). Such concerns were also found in Xie et al. (2012) and Lüders & Brandtzæg (2014). There is not much that can be done to eliminate advertisements completely, since this is how Facebook makes much of its money, and it would have to charge users if it were to do away with them. However, Facebook could make users more accepting of advertisements by having a "Why we need to show ads" page where they explain how that helps them keep the site free, and also work with users to find and eliminate the most annoying aspects of advertisements. For example, do they find the advertisements that appear in the News feed more annoying than those that appear on the right side? Next, Facebook needs to be more transparent about its privacy policy and how it uses users' data. I believe Facebook should serve its users' interests first and those of other companies second. Users could be asked to opt-in to having their profile data used to target advertisements, and they could be asked to choose which

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6 This analysis does not include Jim, who had set his friends list to be invisible to others. Tom is included twice, for each of his accounts. Mary is considered part of Tom's account.
data they want used. This will help make Facebook a more enjoyable experience, as well as make more people (especially in the over 55 age bracket) likely to join.

Finally, Jim, Tom, and Mary expressed concern about cyber-bullying, with Jim saying he had indirect experience of it through his daughter. This had been cited as a concern in Xie et al.'s (2012) study. From Jim's personal experience, it seems that fear of cyber-bullying is not unfounded, and as Mary said, "we as a society need to be concerned about [it]". This brings to mind what Pottle (2013) said about identifiable individuals acting as anonymous when they are online, leading to a lack of accountability due to perceived anonymity. Verifying this, Jim said he didn't believe that these same people would act in the same way in a face-to-face situation. We also see an example of people “carrying their old baggage with them” into cyberspace, as mentioned in Ajana (2005). Rather than being an example of disembodiment, where one is freed from bodily limitations, prejudices over a person’s gender carry over to the virtual world, exacerbated by the fact that one feels anonymous and therefore unaccountable. It is also an example of the self presented on Facebook reflecting actual personality (Back et al., 2010); Jim said that this misogyny showed "how some men think".

However, this is not a reason to panic and abandon Facebook and other social media. Only 3 of the 8 participants mentioned this problem, and only one of them had (indirect) experience of it. Also, none of them viewed that as the main characteristic of Facebook, and they were not deterred from using Facebook because of it. I believe Facebook has many positive characteristics, and although mechanisms should be put in place to report and stop the spread of cyber-bullying, this is not a reason to give up on Facebook altogether.

6.3 Discussion of Barriers

Many studies (Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas, 2013; Lüders & Brandtzæg, 2014; Hartnett et al., 2013; Liu & Yang, 2014) cited lack of competence as a barrier for people of the less-frequently using demographic to use SNSs. This was confirmed in the present study, with Lotus, Tom, Joe, and Sophia all mentioning encountering problems with the technical side of Facebook. Joe and Sophia mentioned that they had now overcome these problems, and although observation of Sophia may have shown that this was not completely the case with her, the fact that she claimed she was now very comfortable using Facebook means that she doesn't see technical problems as a barrier for ordinary, day-to-day use. For Tom, his lack of competence made his privacy concerns worse and increased his fear of saying something socially unacceptable and having everyone know it. This confirmed the findings of Hartnett et al. (2013) and Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas (2013). I believe that Mary was very astute when she attributed these problems to a lack of patience for re-learning on the part of older people. The world of technology changes fast, and it can be annoying to have to learn yet another new technological innovation. As noted in Bean & Laven (2003) and Jones & Bayen (1998), the older you are, the harder it is to learn new things. For younger people things are easier, not only because "it's what they've learned on", as Mary said, but because learning itself is easier, so re-learning isn't as cumbersome as it is for older people. It is noteworthy that Tom, who seemed to be the most discouraged by technical problems, was also the eldest of the participants. He was also very afraid of making mistakes, something common in older people, according to Bean & Laven (2003). However, that didn't motivate him to take more time to learn, as Bean & Laven (2003) suggested. Instead, it was one more reason that made him withdraw from Facebook.
The other users didn't mention any technical problems. Of those, Mary and Dimitris had backgrounds in computers, which may explain why technical problems were not an issue for them. In general, with the exception of Tom, it seems that technical problems have not been enough to keep people away. However, this study dealt with people who continued to use Facebook; it is possible that there are other people who tried Facebook, found it too technically difficult and gave up on it. It is important, therefore, to make training available to people of the less-frequently using demographic to help them better understand the use of Facebook, either through Facebook's own efforts (perhaps posting "how-to" videos on YouTube) or through classes offered by municipalities or educational institutions. Special attention should be paid to education about how to manage privacy settings, since it was shown in this research that the people with the least privacy concerns were people who knew how to manage the technical side of Facebook; learning more about how to manage their privacy will alleviate privacy concerns.

No barriers due to decline in old age were mentioned by any of the participants. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that they were comparatively young (the oldest was 73), so they had not yet begun to experience the physical limitations of old age.

Lotus and Tom expressed a preference for sending an email, which was cited in Sundar et al. (2011), Xie et al. (2012), and Lüders & Brandtzæg (2014). However, only Tom actively avoided Facebook; Lotus continued to use it in spite of her preference for email, probably because she found the communication aspect of Facebook to be useful (in contrast to Tom, who didn't like being pushed into contact with many people).

Finally, Dimitris mentioned a lack of time to post as a barrier. This was not mentioned in any of the research, or by any other participant. This is clearly because all of the other participants (except Joe) were either retired or using Facebook as part of their job (Tom and Mary), so they had no problem finding time for it. I do not believe this is a general barrier for people of the less-frequently using demographic, as they are more likely to be retired than younger people and those who are not yet retired will be soon.

6.4 The Role of Age

Previous studies of people of the less-frequently using demographic found that they were less comfortable with technology (Selwyn et al., 2003) and used social media less (Pfeil, Arjan & Zaphiris, 2009; Joinson, 2008; Xie et al., 2012; McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). They also had more negative opinions about social media (Xie et al., 2012; Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas, 2013; Lüders & Brandtzæg, 2014) and a fear of privacy (Xie et al., 2012; Lehtinen, Näsänen & Sarvas, 2013; Gibson et al., 2010; Lüders & Brandtzæg, 2014; Hartnett et al., 2013; Nef et al., 2013; Leist, 2013). The participants of this study were less reticent in their use of Facebook than those mentioned in the above literature. Four of them did experience technical problems, and while some were aware of the negative aspects of Facebook and had privacy concerns, ultimately that was not enough to keep them away.

The one person who described his experience as mostly negative and avoided using Facebook was Tom. His disenchantment with Facebook was only partly age-related; he did share a concern for privacy and account misuse with the people of the less-frequently using demographic in the literature, but he was also driven away by the fact that he was loner and didn't like being pushed into contact with people, which is not age-related.
The technical problems experienced by 3 of the participants are, I believe, age-related. As I mentioned before, learning is harder for older people. Social media in general and Facebook in particular are fairly new technologies, and people of the aforementioned demographic haven't had the chance to learn them in their youth, when learning was easier.

I believe age also played an important role in the fact that a number of participants (Dimitris, Lotus, and Sophia) mentioned reconnecting and/or reminiscing with people from their past through Facebook. The older people become, the more importance shift from the future to the past (Reker & Wong, 1988, p. 230). For Dimitris, Facebook provided a way to communicate with people he hadn't spoken to for very long, and with whom he had grown up together. The fact that Facebook allows users to see a list of the friends of their friends (except in cases of stricter privacy settings) makes it easier, once you have found one person from your past, to find more (who may already be friends with this person).

As mentioned before, there are different ways of categorizing age: chronological age, biological age, psychological age, social age. This study's participants were not very old chronologically, and they were still active in society in some way: Dimitris, Joe, Tom, and Mary were still working, Jim and Lotus were travelling, Sam had his "part-time job" hobby and Sophia described herself as a sociable person who socialized a lot. This is important for successful ageing (Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010). It should also be noted that all of them came from (or had lived most of their life in) the "western" world, where ageing is not viewed anymore as a time of decline (see "successful ageing" concept), but as a time of activity (Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010). This affects social ageing, the cultural expectations we have about the position and behaviour of older people, which can also affect older people's perception of themselves. They were also highly educated, which according to Rockwood et al. (1994) is an "asset" in delaying biological ageing. So this probably had a role to play in their acceptance of Facebook; the fact that they were still active in society made them more likely to accept new technologies than if they were cut off from the modern world.

6.5 Conclusions
This study came to similar conclusions with other researchers about communication and finding about interests being important motives for people to use Facebook. As a communication medium, Facebook seemed particularly important for people who lived in a different place than where they grew up. This is coupled with the advantages that Facebook's asynchronicity offers. Facebook was also found to play a role in improving people's quality of life, which is in accordance with previous studies.

The relationships on Facebook were for the participants mostly extensions of the consociates relationship, but also consociated contemporaries (in one case) or a variation of the consociated contemporaries relationship. Mutual knowledge (i.e. mutual familiarity and knowledge of others (Zhao, 2007)) through the Facebook environment cannot be as perfect as it would be in a proper consociates relationship, but it is better than it would be without Facebook.

Regarding embodiment, we saw how the virtual tools of Facebook can act as an extension of the body, allowing people to communicate over long distances. We also saw how people are not as disembodied on Facebook as one might expect, and how real-world baggage such as misogyny can be carried over and even exacerbated by
Facebook's perceived anonymity (although this is not a reason to give up on Facebook altogether).

Age plays a role in making people want to find people from their past. Therefore, reconnecting with people from the past should be made easier by Facebook.

Regarding obstacles and concerns, privacy was not found to be a universal concern; a number of people had learned to avoid privacy worries by being careful and not posting things they didn't want to reveal. This may be related to these people's confidence in their technical skills. Advertising was disliked, especially when it used people's profile data to target advertisements. Facebook should find ways to make advertising less intrusive and more acceptable to users, and allow users a level of control over whether their personal data is used to make money.

Some users mentioned technical problems, although with one exception they haven't been enough to keep people away. Facebook should improve "Help" options available to users. Here age again plays a role, as it makes it harder to learn to do new things.
7 Conclusion

This study sought to qualitatively explore why people of the less-frequently using demographic use Facebook, how they use it, and what their experiences with it are. This was done through Skype interviews with 8 Facebook users aged 58-73, as well as the study of their Facebook pages and posts over a period of three weeks. The resulting data was analysed according to the tenets of phenomenology. Care was taken to ensure the research was done in an ethical manner.

The main motive for joining Facebook was communication, with curiosity, work, and (surprisingly) love of new technology also mentioned. Communication and keeping in touch were also a major part of Facebook use for the participants, especially as related to reconnecting with old friends and keeping in touch with people over long distances. This confirmed findings in the literature. The communication advantages offered by Facebook were so strong, that they encouraged even those people concerned about privacy to continue using it. The participants also used Facebook as an information source and a way to promote their interests and job.

As far as experience with Facebook goes, for all the participants except one, the Facebook experience was more positive than negative. Technical problems, mentioned as an obstacle in the literature, were encountered by four of the participants, especially at the start, but two of them managed to overcome them and become confident in their use of Facebook. Age is considered to play a role in this, as it makes it harder to learn new things. A dislike for Facebook's showing of advertisements was also mentioned by many.

Although privacy was mentioned as a serious concern in the literature, this study found that there are many who do not consider it a problem and have found ways of dealing with it by simply not posting things they do not want to be generally known and by taking care where they post what in general. For one of the users who was concerned, technical problems seemed to play a big part in this. It seems that better educating people of the less-frequently using demographic about the technical aspects of Facebook, including how privacy works and how to use privacy settings, will do much to alleviate their privacy concerns.

Finally, expressions of hate and cyber-bullying were also mentioned by some of the participants. This was not enough to make them give up on Facebook, but it was a matter of concern.

In general, the participants of this study paint a picture of people still active after their 50s. Their use of Facebook was a part of that, as they used it to stay in touch with people, promote their interests, or for work. Their age probably played a role in the fact that some of them used it to reconnect with people from the past and reminisce about it. It also had a role to play in the technical problems some of them experienced. This shows that age is more than just a number and it is connected to a person's life activities. The participants’ active life was in line with the “western” concept of “successful ageing”, which affects cultural expectations about older people’s behaviour (Phillips, Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ajrouch, 2010).

My recommendations for Facebook and other SNSs, old or new, are the following: first, they should offer users more help and "how-to" videos, to help them overcome technical difficulties. Special emphasis should be given to education about privacy settings, since it would help alleviate privacy concerns. Second, greater transparency over how they use user profile data to make money, and taking users'
concerns about it into account to change how they use this data, is needed both to improve privacy and to alleviate users’ concerns. Third, they need to work with their users to make advertisements less intrusive and more acceptable. Fourth, they should make reconnecting with people from the past easier, as this seems important for people over 55. Finally, they should ensure communication is known as a major advantage of using their website and that their company name stays relevant and in the news, in order to draw more users to them.

7.1 Contribution
I hope that this study has shed more light on the experiences of people of the less-frequently using demographic with Facebook and their motives for using it and joining. This will be of use to providers of SNSs (both Facebook and others), in order that they might see what problems these people encounter and how SNSs can help to make it an easier and more enjoyable experience for them. The study has also provided a look on Facebook from the point of view of people who joined of their own accord (i.e. they were not specifically taught to use an SNS by the researcher, as some previous studies had done), which I hope will contribute to the academic literature on social media and people of the less-frequently using demographic.

The results were discussed with the help of various phenomenological concepts. It was shown how Facebook was used by the participants for relationships in the consociates realm, the consociated contemporaries realm, and an in-between realm. The asynchronicity of Facebook was shown to offer advantages to communication, while on the other hand the lack of physical cues made mutual knowledge more difficult. We saw how the body extends along the paths created through Facebook interactions and how it is used as an extension of users’ corporeal ability to communicate. Finally, we saw how use of Facebook is a case of embodied disembodiment, where people carry their baggage (such as misogyny) from the real world into it; this is made worse by Facebook’s perceived anonymity.

The main contribution of this study is that contrary to the previous literature, privacy is not as great a concern as may seem. This study shows that people can lose their privacy concerns if they find (or are taught) ways to manage privacy. I believe this is a strength of the current study. Another strength is that it includes people from many different countries, making the participants list more diverse.

The weaknesses of this study are as follows: first, it is restricted to highly educated people. Second, the people it includes are not very old, with the oldest one being 73. Finally, the interviews were rather short; longer interviews, with more questions, might have yielded more information.

7.2 Reflections
Doing this study has been interesting and has offered me insights into how and why people of the less-frequently using demographic use Facebook. I learned more about their motives and concerns, including some things that surprised me. Doing research for literature on the subject of social media, in conjunction with people of the this demographic or not, also taught me a lot about their potential benefits and the opinions of people of the less-frequently using demographic about them.

At the start of the study I was not sure how I would use the data from the participants’ pages and posts. Gradually, while observing their interactions, I understood that I could deduce how much they used Facebook to communicate, what they preferred to post, and compare what I saw with what they had told me in the interview to see if it matched.
There was also a lot of discussion about the ethical dimension of observing participants' posts and how their friends were involved in this and had to be notified. In the end, we decided on a text participants could post on their Timeline informing their friends about the study so that they could contact me if they had any concerns or questions. This taught me a lot about the ethical problems encountered in a study involving people's posts on the Internet.

Taking a phenomenological point of view was a good idea, because it allowed me to examine my preconceptions about the subject and set them aside; this made it possible for me to let the meaning emerge from the participants' experience as they described it. There were not many studies about social media and phenomenology, so it was interesting to examine social media and people of the less-frequently using demographic through the phenomenological concepts of consociates, consociate contemporaries, mutual knowledge, and lifeworld extension through technology mediation. These concepts helped understand how people's relationships are mediated through Facebook, how it can help these relationships’ development and what barriers there are. Relationships can be dynamic, sometimes waning and then growing stronger again, and this is evidenced by Facebook helping people reconnect with people from their past that they had lost contact with.

If I were to do the study again, one of the things I would have done differently is prepared myself for interviewees that might not be very talkative and how to get them to speak more. For example, Joe gave very short, succinct answers, which I had not been prepared for, and, being nervous myself, I was not able to get her to elaborate more. The result was that her interview was the shortest of all the participants (8:32). Another thing I would have done differently is that I would have made more detailed notes on the participants’ posts from the beginning; as it was, I started by noting whether they posted a status update, a picture, or an article, and it was only later that I started noting the subject of the post (was it about work, or their interests?)

7.3 Further Research

One of the limitations of this study, as mentioned, was that it included only highly educated people (the least educated had completed a one-year college after high school). It would therefore be interesting to do a study that included people from a more varied educational background, to see how and why people with a lower educational level use Facebook and whether their experiences with it are the same or are different. Another weakness is that the oldest person included was 73; it would be interesting to conduct a study that included even older people, in their 80s or even in their 90s.

Another area for further research would be people of the less-frequently using demographic who joined Facebook, but abandoned it after some time. It would be interesting to see what made them give up on Facebook and how this could have been prevented. This was slightly touched upon in this study with Tom (though Tom hadn't completely given up on Facebook or deleted his account), however one person is not enough to draw conclusions and an in depth study of more people like that could offer interesting results.

Another limitation of the study was that it included people who had access to the Internet at home. Therefore further research could be done including people who have to go outside their home to access the Internet.

A further area for study could be how the opinion people of the less-frequently using demographic of Facebook changes after they join, by studying their opinion before and after. One of the participants in my study mentioned how his initial
privacy concerns evaporated after joining, so it would be interesting to see what can make people change their minds, which could be used to overcome the concerns and negative opinions that prevent some people of this demographic from joining Facebook.

Finally, research could be done on the concept of self-presentation on social media as described by Hogan (2010). Hogan (2010) used Goffman’s dramaturgical approach of self-presentation to argue that on an SNS, the presentation of self is not done as a performance but as an exhibition. The difference is that a performance is done in front of an audience, bounded by time and space, and the “actor” has the ability to adjust to the audience’s reactions, whereas in an exhibition, one submits artefacts (data) to be presented by a third party (the curator/SNS) to an audience that he/she does not continually monitor and which he/she may not fully know. Unlike a performance, an SNS “exhibition” is not bounded by time and space. This “exhibition approach” means that on an SNS, the self-presentation context is collapsed, as a “friend” may be an actual friend, an old schoolmate, or a mere acquaintance. So when one submits something, he/she must consider not only the people for whom it was intended but also the rest of the people who will see it (Hogan, 2010). This leads people to post according to “the lowest common denominator of what is normatively acceptable” (Hogan, 2010, p. 383). In this study, the findings did not lead to any conclusion that would either support or falsify this theory, but I believe it is a very interesting theory and it would be useful to test it.
8 Reference List


Johnson, B. (2009). How exactly is Facebook making money? Guardian.com Technology blog, [blog] 16 September. Available at:


Appendix A - Interview Questions

1. How long have you been using Facebook?
2. How did you decide to join Facebook?
3. What were your first experiences like on joining Facebook? Did your experience change over time?
4. How often do you visit Facebook? What activities do you use Facebook for?
5. What role does Facebook play in your everyday life?
6. What motivates your use of Facebook?
7. How would you describe your general experience with Facebook? Any things you particularly like or which you find annoying?
8. Are you concerned at all about your privacy on Facebook?
9. Anything you would like to add that I haven't asked about, which you find interesting to talk about in relation to FB, use, experiences, etc.?
Appendix B - Consent Form

Title of the research: Facebook use in people over 55 - A qualitative study

Aim of the research: To better understand how and why people over 55 use Facebook, and what their experiences with Facebook are.

Benefits of the research: The findings can be used to improve Facebook in particular and social media in general so that more people over 55 will feel comfortable joining and using them. This will have benefits not only for the social media websites, but for the people themselves who will be able to reap the benefits of social media (decreased loneliness and strengthening and sustaining of social relationships, leading to improved quality of life).

Researcher info: Myrto Pirli, mp222qr@student.lnu.se, myrtopirli@hotmail.com

Description of the research: You will be interviewed about your use of and experiences with Facebook. The interview will be recorded in order to be transcribed and analysed later. Your Facebook page and posts will also be examined in order to gain information about your use of Facebook.

Risk and discomfort: None foreseen. Only your age, country of origin and education level will be used in the final report, in order to provide context for the study. Only general descriptions of your Facebook page and posts will be used (for example, I may state that you share pictures/articles, but not what the pictures/articles contain).

Participation's right about the information: Your participation in this research is voluntary. You can choose to withdraw at any time, without explanation, if you feel you no longer want to participate. The themes extracted from the data will be taken back to you, to check whether you feel that they accurately represent what you said.

Confidentiality: The information gathered from the interviews and Facebook page and posts will be used only for the purpose of this research, and will not be shared with third parties. The recorded interviews and original transcripts and notes will be seen only by the researcher, her supervisor and the examiner.

Questions about the research: You may contact the researcher at any time if you have questions, at the email addresses provided above.

☐ I have understood the nature of this research study and I consent to participate in it.
☐ I agree to the recording of the interview
☐ I agree to the examination of my Facebook page and posts.
☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time, without explanation.

Date Signature Researcher Signature

(name of participant) Myrto Pirli
Appendix C – Text posted on Participants' Timeline

Hi, I’m a master student who is in the process of writing my master thesis. My friend (name) has given me permission to follow and study (her/his) actions and interactions on FB for the next three weeks from 26/3 to 16/4. I’m only interested in my friend’s interactions and will not make notes on who (he/she) is interacting with and what (he/she) is posting or having posted on (his/her) wall, only the fact that something was posted and maybe clarify whether it was an article or a picture. My friend (name) has my name and contact information if you have any questions or want to know more about my master project. Thank you.