

We Are All Here!

Multiple Groups on a Social Network Site

Airi Miina Inkeri Lampinen

University of Helsinki

Faculty of Social Sciences

Social Psychology

Master's Thesis

April 2008

Tiedekunta-Fakultet-Faculty Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta		Laitos-Institution-Department Sosiaalipsykologian laitos
Tekijä-Författare-Author Lampinen, Airi		
Työn nimi-Arbetets titel-Title We Are All Here! Multiple Groups on a Social Network Site		
Oppiaine - Läroämne - Subject Sosiaalipsykologia		
Työn laji-Arbetets art-Level Pro gradu -työ	Aika-Datum-Month and year 2008-04-10	Sivumäärä-Sidantal- Number of pages 85+5
<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>Sosiaalisten verkostosivustojen suosio kasvaa vauhdilla. Tässä tutkimuksessa ilmiötä tarkastellaan ryhmänäkökulmasta, tutkimalla ryhmien merkitystä kansainvälisesti tunnetulla Facebook-verkostosivustolla. Tutkimuksen kohteena ovat monien yksilölle merkityksellisten ryhmien samanaikaisen läsnäolon seuraukset sekä yksilöiden tilanteesta selviytymiseen käyttämät keinot. Tutkimus sijoittuu sosiaalisen identiteetin lähestymistavan teoreettiseen perinteeseen. Erityishuomiota kiinnitetään käsitteisiin ryhmä ja ryhmäidentifikaatio sekä useisiin sosiaalisiin identiteetteihin.</p> <p>Tutkimus perustuu kahteen aineistoon, online-havainnoiteihin sekä puolistrukturoituihin haastatteluihin. Kymmenen lääketieteen opiskelijan ja kymmenen suuren IT-yrityksen työntekijän Facebook-profiileja havainnoitiin heidän ryhmä- ja verkostojäsenyyksiensä selvittämiseksi. Tämän jälkeen viittä opiskelijaa ja viittä työntekijää haastateltiin tutkitusta ilmiöstä saadun tiedon syventämiseksi. Kaikki tutkimushenkilöt olivat suomalaisia, iältään 20-31-vuotiaita. Haastatteluaineiston analyysissä käytettiin menetelmänä teoriasidonnaista laadullista sisällönanalyysia.</p> <p>Analyysissä sosiaaliset kategoriat jaettiin kahteen tyyppin, eksplisiittisiin ja implisiittisiin ryhmiin. Ensin mainitut on määritelty sivuston käyttöliittymässä julkilausutusti, jälkimmäisiä ei. Implisiittisillä ryhmillä tarkoitetaan käyttäjälle ilmeisiä ryhmäluokituksia hänen henkilökohtaisessa ystäväverkostossaan. Tutkimuksen keskeinen tulos on, että sivustolla todella syntyy tilanne, jossa monia yksilölle tärkeitä ryhmiä on samanaikaisesti läsnä. Yksilöt kuitenkin kokevat tästä seuravan vain vähän jännitteitä, koska he etsivät aktiivisesti keinoja tilanteen kanssa selviytymiseen. Tilanteesta tehdään vähemmän ongelmallinen luomalla laajempia sisäryhmäidentiteettejä. Lisäksi yksilöt helpottavat tilannetta ehkäisemällä potentiaalisia ongelmia ennakkolta.</p> <p>Keskeiset lähteet: Sosiaalisista verkostosivuista: boyd, d. m. & Ellison, N. B. Social Network Sites: Definition, history and scholarship (2007) ja Lampe C., Ellison N. & Steinfield C.: A Familiar Face(book): Profile Elements as Signals in an Online Social Network (2007). Sosiaalisen identiteetin lähestymistavasta: S: Haslam, S. A. Psychology in Organizations. The Social Identity Approach. (2004), Hofman, J. E.: Social Identity and Intergroup Conflict: An Israeli view (1988) ja Tajfel, H.: La catégorisation sociale. (1972a) & Experiments in a vacuum (1972b).</p>		
Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords sosiaaliset verkostot verkkoyhteisöt internet identiteetti ryhmät		
Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited		
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information		

Tiedekunta-Fakultet-Faculty Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta		Laitos-Institution-Department Sosiaalipsykologian laitos
Tekijä-Författare-Author Lampinen, Airi		
Työn nimi-Arbetets titel-Title We Are All Here! Multiple Groups on a Social Network Site		
Oppiaine - Läroämne - Subject Sosiaalipsykologia		
Työn laji-Arbetets art-Level Pro gradu -työ	Aika-Datum-Month and year 2008-04-10	Sivumäärä-Sidantal- Number of pages 85+5
<p>Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract</p> <p>Social network sites are gaining ground with a huge pace. This study takes a group perspective on the phenomenon, investigating the significance of groups on an internationally well-known social network site, Facebook. The consequences of the co-presence of multiple groups with which an individual identifies and the mechanisms that individuals use to cope with the situation are investigated. The study is positioned in the tradition of social identity approach. Special attention is allocated to the concepts of group and group identification and to multiple social identities.</p> <p>The study is based on two sets of material, online observations and semi-structured interviews. The Facebook profiles of ten medical students and ten employees of a big IT company were observed in order to enumerate their groups and networks. Five students and five employees were then interviewed to deepen the understanding of the studied phenomenon. The research subjects were all native Finns, their ages ranging from 20 to 31. The interview material was analyzed with theory-bound qualitative content analysis.</p> <p>In the analysis, social categorizations were divided into two distinct types, to explicit and implicit groups. The former ones are explicitly defined in the user interface of the site where as implicit groups on the site are not. The latter ones are salient for the user as feasible categorizations of his/her personal network. The central finding of the study is that co-presence of multiple groups does indeed occur on Facebook. However, individuals perceive relatively few tensions due to it since they are actively finding ways to deal with the situation. The situation is made less problematic by creating more inclusive ingroup identities. Individuals are also coping with the situation by preventing potential problems beforehand.</p> <p>The most central references: On social network sites: boyd, d. m. & Ellison, N. B. Social Network Sites: Definition, history and scholarship (2007) and Lampe C., Ellison N. & Steinfield C.: A Familiar Face(book): Profile Elements as Signals in an Online Social Network (2007). On social identity approach: Haslam, S. A.: Psychology in Organizations. The Social Identity Approach. (2004), Hofman, J. E.: Social Identity and Intergroup Conflict: An Israeli view (1988) and Tajfel, H.: La catégorisation sociale. (1972a) & Experiments in a vacuum (1972b).</p>		
Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords social networks online social networks social identity social groups		
Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited		
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information		

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Social Network Sites and Facebook.....	2
2.1	Social Network Sites	2
2.2	Introduction to Facebook	3
3	Theoretical Background.....	6
3.1	Social Identity Approach.....	6
3.1.1	Social Identity Theory.....	7
3.1.2	Self-Categorization Theory	9
3.1.3	Core Ideas of the Approach.....	11
3.2	Conceptualizing a Group.....	12
3.2.1	Points of Departure	13
3.2.2	Two Definitions of Group.....	14
3.2.3	A Methodological Perspective on Groups	17
3.2.4	Critical Conclusions	19
3.2.5	Groups Online	20
3.3	Multiplicity of Groups and Group Identifications	21
4	Research Questions	24
5	Epistemological and Methodological Background	25
5.1	Epistemological Standpoint	25
5.2	Theory Bound Approach.....	26
5.3	Virtual Ethnography.....	28
6	Research Material.....	29
6.1	Participants	30
6.2	Online Observations.....	33
6.3	Interviews.....	34
6.4	Analysis Process	36
6.5	Ethical Considerations	38
7	Groups and Group Identification on Facebook.....	39
7.1	Explicit Groups: Networks, Groups and Causes.....	40
7.1.1	Networks	40
7.1.2	Groups.....	45

7.1.3 Causes	52
7.2 Implicit Groups: Categorizations in Personal Networks.....	54
7.2.1 The Structure of Personal Networks	56
7.2.2 Categorizing the Personal Network	58
7.2.3 Personal Networks On and Beyond Facebook.....	59
7.2.4 The Importance of Facebook for Different Implicit Categories	60
8 Multiple Groups in One Context.....	62
8.1 Awareness of Multiplicity and Perceived Tensions.....	63
8.2 Reconceptualizing Group Boundaries.....	65
8.3 Preventing Conflictual Situations	68
9 Conclusions	71
10 Discussion	73
10.1 Theoretical Issues.....	73
10.2 Limitations of the Study.....	76
10.3 Remarks on the Technological Context	78
10.4 Ideas for Further Research	80
11 References.....	81

Appendixes

Appendix 1. Interview outline

Appendix 2. Illustration of the Friend Wheel -application

1 Introduction

Social network sites are gaining ground all over the globe. More and more individuals sign up and start maintaining a network online. During the past year, Facebook, an internationally popular social network site, has become a large scale phenomenon in Finland, too. The site has more than 64 million active users according to Facebook's own statistics (<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>, April 8, 2008). So far, there has been much discussion but only little scientific research on the topic. Social network sites in general and Facebook in particular will be presented in more detail in chapter 2.

The general goal of this Master's thesis is to add a group perspective to the research of social network sites. From a social psychological point of view, groups form an indispensable mediating level between micro and macro level social interaction. I believe that neither the study of communities on an abstract level, nor the study of interindividual relations is sufficient for understanding the functioning of these sites.

To fully address groups and their roles in the context of a social network site, it is necessary to explore their importance on the site in a two-fold fashion. Firstly, the variety of groups on Facebook is explored (chapter 7). The explorative and descriptive discussion on groups lays the ground for tackling the main research question (chapter 8): What follows from the materially new environment for social interaction that Facebook and social network sites like it form? On these sites, multiple groups relevant to an individual are present simultaneously. What are the implications of this situation? How do individuals deal with possible tensions and conflictual situations due to this co-presence? The name of the thesis, "We Are All Here!" refers to this co-presence of groups. In a sense, all groups and people important to an individual may be present in one context, i.e. on Facebook.

This thesis is a part of the research of Helsinki Institute for Information Technology (HIIT). It is a qualitative study situated in the tradition of social identity approach, revolving more closely around the concepts of group, group identification and multiple social identities. The empirical setting of the study allows investigating the theoretical limits of social identity approach, at least when it comes to its conceptualization of a group and its adaptability to a new context. As Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002, 18) have

stated, theoretical framework describes the key concepts of the study and their relations to one another. It consists on one hand of the already existing knowledge of the phenomenon that is being studied and on the other of the methodology that steers the study. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002.) Both parts of the theoretical framework will be discussed before turning to the analysis: Social identity approach and related theoretical issues are addressed in chapter 3. This review is followed by the presentation of the research questions in chapter 4. Epistemological and methodological background of the study is discussed in chapter 5. The empirical part of the study is an analysis based on online observation and interview material. The research material is presented in chapter 6. The analysis is presented in chapters 7 and 8 as described above. The results of the study are reviewed in chapter 9 and, finally, discussed in chapter 10.

2 Social Network Sites and Facebook

The empirical material of this study was gathered from and in relation to an internationally well known social network site, Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>). After having discussed the concept of a social network site, Facebook and its key characteristics will be briefly introduced in order to familiarize the reader with the technological context of the study.

2.1 Social Network Sites

Social network sites¹ have been defined as web-based services that allow individuals to construct public or semi-public profiles within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (boyd and Ellison, 2007). They and other forms of mediated social interaction are growing in popularity with a huge pace. The number of academic studies focusing on these phenomena is increasing rapidly (for an overview of recent publications on the theme, see <http://www.danah.org/SNSResearch.html>).

According to Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2006) social network sites differ from the virtual communities the earlier research has covered in the sense that in addition to initiating new relationships, they allow maintaining existing ones. If the earlier research

¹ The term "social network site" is often used interchangeably with "social networking site". In this study, the former term is used, following the reasoning of boyd and Ellison (2007). According to them, what makes social network sites unique is not the act of networking (especially not with strangers) but primarily that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks.

on virtual communities focused on the relation between online and offline settings at all, they studied mostly how online communities facilitated connections in offline environments. When studying social networking sites, attention should be paid also to how offline relationships are articulated and maintained in online contexts. (Ellison et al., 2006.)

As the user populations of social network sites grow continuously, there is little controversy over social interaction being increasingly often technologically mediated. Users are by default enrolled to Facebook with their own name, so a strict distinction between online and offline as separate spheres of life seems irrational and arbitrary. A strong interdependence of online and offline settings is typical of social network sites and is becoming more and more typical even of the internet in general. It can be claimed that internet is no longer the sphere of anonymous freedom that it has been seen to be in much of the previous study in the domain (see, for example, McKenna and Bargh, 2000, and Bargh and McKenna, 2004).

2.2 Introduction to Facebook

Facebook was originally founded in 2004 (<http://www.facebook.com/press.php>, March 29, 2008) and has expanded ever since. In the beginning the site was only open for the students and alumni of certain North American universities, but nowadays anyone with a valid e-mail address can create an account. Lately, Facebook has aroused the interest of academic researchers widely (see, for example, Rosenbloom, 2007).

Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2007) describe Facebook as a social network site that allows users to create profiles and articulate their social networks by establishing mutual friendship links with other users. Every user on Facebook has a personal **profile** which can be described as the user's home page on the site. The profile contains typically the user's name, a photo of him/her and some personal information selected by the user, such as age, sex, education, work, hobbies and so on. Further elements of the profile are presented below in relation to explaining the functioning and features of the site. Images 1 and 2 illustrate different features of the profile. The researcher's profile page is used as an example since for reasons of confidentiality, the participants' profiles could not be used.

Users can control **privacy settings** on the site. They can, for example, decide who has access to their profile and what elements are shown on their profile. On Facebook the profiles are by default accessible to everyone but the actions a user takes are presented in the news feed of another person only once a friendship connection has been established. The actions a user takes on the site are visible also in the mini feed in the user's profile but it is possible to hide elements from the mini feed or to disable applications from reporting items to the feed.

Image 1. An Illustration of a Facebook Profile.
(Permission for reprinting granted from the profile owner.)

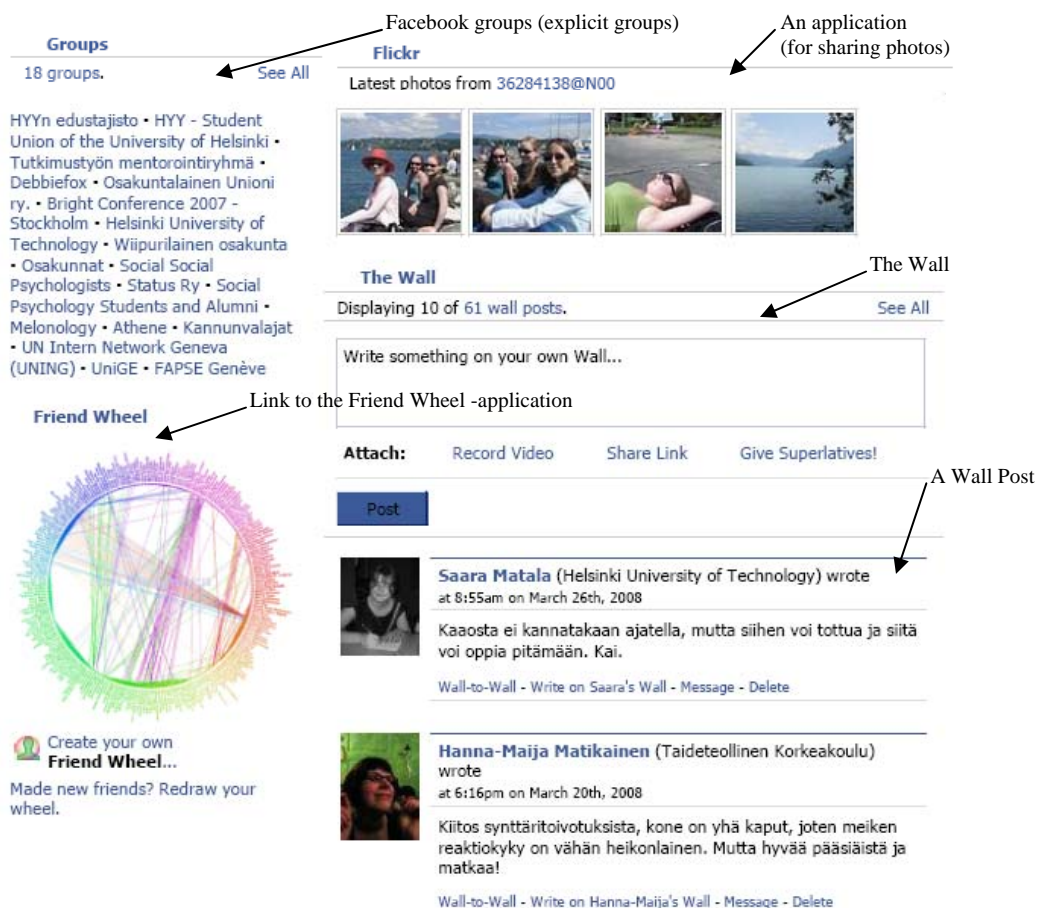


Users articulate their social networks by establishing explicit friendship connections. These connections are reciprocal meaning that both individuals concerned have to accept the connection for it to be established. Connections are created by sending **friend requests** (invitations to become friends with the sender) and by accepting them. The

totality of friends of a user are in this study referred to as the **personal network** of the user. Typically, the personal network is visible in the user's profile as a friend list.

Users can also join various kinds of groups on Facebook. These memberships are typically shown in the user's profile. **Networks** are big social categories such as countries, universities and enterprises. **Groups** are usually smaller than networks and their nature and function can vary a lot. Users can also join **causes** which are a type of groups dedicated to vouching for some specific issues. These three types of groups are discussed in detail in section 7.1.

Image 2. Additional Features of a Facebook Profile.
(Permission for reprinting granted from the profile owner.)



Facebook can also be used for sending both public and private messages, publishing photos and videos, playing online games and taking quizzes, sending out invitations to different kinds of events to a chosen audience and staying updated on friends' lives through a news feed. Users can add diverse **applications** to their profile. These can be, for example, quizzes, tests, games and all kinds of (often interactive) entertainment.

News feed is a feature that aggregates information of the recent activities that have taken place on the site, such as status updates, wall postings, the establishment of new friendship connections, joining of groups, networks or causes and activities related to various applications. There are two kinds of news feeds on Facebook. Firstly, there is the main news feed that the user sees by default first when entering the site. This feed contains information of the activities undertaken by one's personal network. The second news feed is called mini feed. **Mini feed** contains a listing of the latest activities a user has undertaken. It is visible in the user's profile.

On Facebook, there are three main ways of communication. Users can send messages either by posting on other users' walls, by sending private messages or making status updates. **A wall** is an application that is visible on the user's profile and on which others can write messages to him/her. These messages are visible on the profile for everyone and they also appear in the news feed. **Private messages** are only visible for the people involved. The message function of Facebook can be understood as an internal e-mail of the site. **Status updates** are short pieces of information that are visible on the profile of the user and in the news feed. They can be seen as a form of micro blogging. They are usually used, for example, for expressing current issues such as moods, locations and information on what the user is doing at the moment.

3 Theoretical Background

The broad theoretical framework of this study is the social identity approach that evolved from the beginning of the 1970s on, based most prominently on the work of Tajfel and Turner. The first section of the chapter will take a general look at the core elements of the approach. After that, the conceptualization of a group is discussed in detail. The chapter concludes with a section on multiplicity of groups and group identifications, i.e. on multiple social identities.

3.1 Social Identity Approach

Social Identity Approach consists of two branches. In brief, social identity theory (SIT) is a theory of intergroup relations where as self-categorization theory (SCT) can be defined as a theory of the psychological group. SIT was developed in the early 1970s and SCT about a decade later. Both took some years to evolve and they were given their

present names only in 1978 and 1985 respectively. (Turner, 2000.) According to Turner (2000) the epithet "the social identity approach" can be used as shorthand to refer to the full range of arguments and hypotheses that are generated by the two theories. However, he stresses that it is important to continue to distinguish between the two theories in order to avoid misunderstandings that can arise if (and when) they are taken for one. (Turner, 2000.)

Social identity approach has its roots in the social comparison theory of Festinger (1954). According to Festinger, individuals have a drive to evaluate their opinions and abilities. When there are no objective measures in place for these evaluations, they will be realized by comparisons respectively with the opinions and abilities of others. These comparisons are seen to be selective in their nature and aiming at achieving a satisfactory concept or image of oneself. (Festinger, 1954.) According to Tajfel (1978), Festinger neglects the notion that individuals are also members of groups and that these groups influence their self evaluations. Thus, in SIT, comparisons that Festinger studied mainly on the interindividual level, are expanded to the intergroup level.

In this section, both SIT and SCT will be presented in more detail. After that, to conclude the section, the core ideas shared by the two theories will be briefly discussed. The aim is to present the general theoretical background of the present study. Furthermore, the section forms a necessary foundation for the following discussion on defining groups and on multiple groups and group identifications.

3.1.1 Social Identity Theory

SIT began as a way of trying to make sense of discrimination between social groups. Its fundamental psychological idea was that where people make social comparisons, they seek positive distinctiveness for their ingroups compared to outgroups in order to achieve a positive social identity. (Turner, 2000.) According to Turner (1975) the intergroup social comparisons that seek to confirm or to establish ingroup favoring evaluative distinctiveness are motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem.

Social identity theory (SIT) of intergroup relations was originally created to develop a fuller explanation of the findings of the so called minimal group studies. Minimal group studies (or Minimal Group Paradigm, MGP) are a series of studies conducted from the beginning of the 1970s onwards. In the article on the first minimal group studies Tajfel

et al. (1971, 150) outline the aim of the studies as "*to assess the effects of social categorization on intergroup behaviour when, in the intergroup situation, neither calculations of individual interest nor previously existing attitudes of hostility could have been said to have determined discriminative behaviour against an outgroup*".

In the original minimal group studies Tajfel et al. (1971) investigated the necessary and sufficient conditions fostering intergroup discrimination. The crucial aspect of the experiment situation was that it contained a socially derived and discontinuous categorization of people into an ingroup and an outgroup. The subjects were made to allocate money between ingroup and outgroup members. The participants had no personal stake in the outcomes. The clearest finding of the first minimal group studies was that, even in minimal group conditions, the subjects acted in terms of their group membership and their actions were directed at favouring the members of their ingroup as against the members of the outgroup. (Tajfel et al., 1971.) As Haslam (2004, 19) puts it, the participants were motivated less by a desire to maximize their own absolute gain than by a keenness to enhance their relative gains vis-à-vis the outgroup. It needs to be stressed that the discrimination took place in the absence of any obvious reason for such behaviour. (Haslam, 2004.)

In another minimal group experiment Billig and Tajfel (1973) proved that, indeed, the only necessary and sufficient prerequisite for discrimination was the existence of an ingroup-outgroup division (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). Turner (1975) has later argued that the most important upshot of the original minimal group studies was exactly the suggestion that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display ingroup favouritism. These empirical findings and the striving for an understanding of them are the basis of SIT.²

In his textbook, Haslam (2004) describes SIT as an 'integrative' theory that attends to both the cognitive and the motivational basis of intergroup differentiation. In essence it suggests that, after being categorized in terms of a group membership and having defined themselves in terms of that social categorization, individuals seek to achieve positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their ingroup from a comparison outgroup on some valued dimension. This quest for positive distinctiveness means that

² For a fuller review of MGP, see for example Bourhis & Gagnon (2001) and for some critical points of view on MGP, Bourhis & Sachdev (1991).

when people's sense of who they are is defined in terms of 'we' rather than 'I', they want to see 'us' as different to, and better than, 'them' in order to feel good about who and what they are. (Haslam, 2004, 21.)

Tajfel and Turner (1979, 41) identify three variables that make a particularly important contribution to the emergence of ingroup favouritism. First, the extent to which individuals identify with an ingroup and internalize that group membership as an aspect of their self-concept is crucial. This is also why group identification can be seen as the first premise for intergroup phenomena. Second, the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups plays a key role, too. Finally, the third variable is the perceived relevance of the comparison outgroup, which itself will be shaped by the relative and absolute status of the ingroup. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979.)

The key processes of SIT are firstly categorization and secondly intergroup comparisons. The aim of the comparisons is to establish and maintain a positive social identity. There are different strategies in disposition both on individual and group level to achieve this positive distinctiveness. The choice of a strategy is influenced by conceptions of the status of the group, the legitimacy and stability of the intergroup relations and of the possibilities to leave the group. (Tajfel, 1978.)

3.1.2 Self-Categorization Theory

The idea that individuals are members of many different groups is present in SIT from early on. It is also assumed that the relevance of these group memberships to them varies, between groups and according to circumstances, i.e. that the salience of social identities varies. (Tajfel, 1972a, 292-294). As Haslam (2004, 28) points out, one important limitation of SIT is that it offers a relatively underdeveloped analysis of the cognitive processes associated with social identity salience. Self-categorization theory (SCT) was developed partially to address this flaw. However, it also has a broader cognitive agenda than social identity theory and a greater explanatory scope, largely due to its core hypotheses not being specifically targeted to issues of social structure and intergroup relations (Turner & Oakes, 1997).

As was already mentioned, in SCT an individual's self-concept is seen to be defined along a continuum ranging from definition of the self in terms of personal identity to

definition of the self in terms of social identity. The conceptualization of a continuum was later replaced by the notion that personal and social identity represent different levels of self-categorization. SCT assumes that self-conception reflects self-categorization, i.e. the cognitive grouping of the self to some class of stimuli in contrast to some other class of stimuli. Self-categorizations can exist on different levels of abstraction related by class inclusion. (Turner, 1999, 11-12.)

Hogg and Terry (2000) summarize the core ideas of SCT stating that the theory specifies the operation of the social categorization process as the cognitive basis of group behaviour. Social categorization of self and others into ingroup and outgroup accentuates the perceived similarity of the target to the relevant ingroup or outgroup prototype. Self-categorization cognitively assimilates self to the ingroup prototype and, thus, depersonalizes self-conception. This transformation of self is the process underlying group phenomena since it brings self-perception and behaviour in line with the contextually relevant ingroup prototype. (Hogg and Terry, 2000, 123.)

A core concept of SCT is category salience. There is assumed to be no functioning based on social identity if the group is not present in an explicit manner in the individual's representations. SCT also stresses the contextual importance of different social (or personal) identities, differing thus from the assumptions of a more permanent identity structure made in SIT. Identities vary on two levels: firstly, there are different social categories and, secondly, these can be manifest on different levels of abstraction. (Turner, 1999, 12.)

SCT explains variation in the salience of any given level of self-categorization as a function of interaction between the relative accessibility of a particular self-category and the fit between category specifications and the stimulus reality to be represented. The relative accessibility of a self-category is also referred to as 'perceiver readiness', the readiness of a perceiver to use a particular categorization. (Turner, 1999, 12.) Readiness to define oneself as belonging to a certain category is an important aspect of group identification (see section 3.2.4).

Following the work of Bruner, Haslam (2004) summarizes the main aspects of fit. Fit is a crucial determinant of social category salience and means the degree to which a social categorization matches subjectively relevant features of reality. When fit is high, a

particular category appears as a sensible way of organizing and making sense of social stimuli such as people and things associated to them. Fit consists of comparative and normative components. In brief, comparative fit means that people will define themselves in terms of a particular self-category to the extent that the differences between members of that category on a given dimension of judgement are perceived to be smaller than the differences between members of that category and others that are salient in a particular context. Normative fit arises from the content of the match between category specifications and the stimuli being represented. In addition to the demands of comparative fit, it requires that the nature of differences between groups must be consistent with the perceiver's expectations about these categories. (Haslam, 2004, 34.)

3.1.3 Core Ideas of the Approach

In social identity approach, the self-concept system is seen to comprise at least two major components, social and personal identity.³ The former refers to self-descriptions related to formal and informal group memberships, such as nationality, occupation, sex and religion. Social identity can be defined as the totality of an individual's social identifications. Tajfel (1972a, 292) originally introduced the concept as “*an individual's knowledge that he[/she] belongs to certain social group together with some emotional and value significance to him[/her] of this group membership*”. Personal identity, on the other hand, consists of what is perceived as personal and differentiates the individual of others. In other words, it refers to self-descriptions that are more personal in nature, reflecting personality traits and other individual differences such as physical appearance, intellectual qualities and idiosyncratic tastes. (Turner, 1984, 526-527.)

From this distinction between social and personal identity follows the idea that one cannot make sense of how people are behaving when they are acting in terms of their social identities by extrapolating from their properties as individual persons. There is assumed to be a psychological discontinuity between interpersonal behaviour and group

³ Lorenzi-Cioldi (2002) makes a further distinction between collective and personal social identity. These are best described in terms of the respective two types of groups: aggregates and collections. The members of a collection are seen in more individual terms and as persons who do not need a group to define themselves. The group membership is understood to be voluntary and accessory. The coherence of a collection derives from the complementarity of its members. Aggregates, on the other hand, are described as an ensemble of persons not differentiated from one another. The members of an aggregate are seen as interchangeable and as extensions to the attributes of a coherent and homogenous group. According to Lorenzi-Cioldi collections and aggregates represent the two poles of the social power continuum – dominated and dominating. This distinction of two different types of social identity is interesting but, however, not in the scope of the current study.

behaviour. Moving from personal to social psychologically transforms people and brings into play new processes that could otherwise not exist. In SIT, this is considered on the level of behaviour, ranging from interpersonal to intergroup (“us versus them”), where as in SCT the continuum is situated on the level of an individual's self-concept (“I and me” versus “we and us”). This means that the self-concept itself can be defined along a continuum ranging from definition of the self in terms of personal identity to definition of the self in terms of social identity. (Turner, 2000.)

Another point that both SIT and SCT are committed to is the conviction that social structure, social context and society more broadly are fundamental to the way that social identity processes come into being, are experienced and shape cognition and behaviour (Turner, 2000). The social setting of intergroup relations contributes to making the individuals what they are and they in turn produce this social setting; they and it develop and change symbiotically (Tajfel, 1972b, 95).

The close relationship of individuals and their social setting has also methodological implications. As Tajfel (1972b) states in an early text outlining the social identity approach, experiments cannot be conducted in a social vacuum. An analysis of the social context of the experiment and of the social situation which it represents must always be made. (Tajfel, 1972b, 84.) However, this ideal has unfortunately not been realized commonly (see 3.2.3).

The key experiments of the approach, for instance the minimal group studies, research dichotomous group memberships. Yet, the theoretical conceptualizations of group in the approach are not necessarily in line with the definition such experiments seem to take as a premise. In the following section, the conceptualization of groups will be discussed in detail.

3.2 Conceptualizing a Group

In social psychology, the concept of group is not only a commonly used building block – it is a cornerstone. Groups and the phenomena related to them are frequently studied and discussed (see for example Brown (2000) and Smith and Mackie (2007)). However, what exactly a group is, is too often left undefined, especially in research articles, or the discussion is limited to small groups (see for example Pennington, 2002). Definitions vary depending on what the definition is used for and in what kind of a theoretical

context. The definitions of a group used in the social identity approach are reviewed in this chapter. In the end of the chapter, some initial elements concerning groups online are introduced.

3.2.1 Points of Departure

The discussion on the definition of a group in social identity approach (for example, Tajfel 1978 & 1982) is related to research on intergroup behaviour. Thus, Tajfel (1978, 1982) motivates his discussion by Sherif's (1966, 12) definition of intergroup behaviour which states that "*Whenever individuals belonging to one group interact, collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group identification, we have an instance of intergroup behaviour*". According to Tajfel, this definition needs to be anchored to its two underlying concepts, "group" and "group identification" (Tajfel, 1982).

As another starting point, Tajfel (1978, 28) presents Emerson's (1960) definition of a nation. According to Emerson (1960, 102) "*the simplest statement that can be made about a nation is that it is a body of people who feel that they are a nation; and it may be that when all the fine-spun analysis is concluded this will be the ultimate statement as well*". Tajfel (1978, 28-29) uses a definition of group identical to this description of a nation as the basis of his discussion on groups. He states that this loose definition deliberately ignores distinctions usually made between, for example, membership groups and reference groups or between face-to-face groups and large-scale social categories. (Tajfel, 1978, 29). Vast social categories such as gender, social class, nationality and ethnicity are included as well as small groups. Equally, both temporally restricted groups and group memberships that last a lifetime fit under this definition.

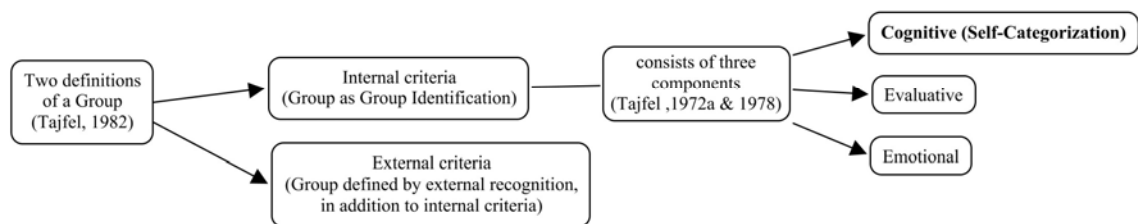
Tajfel (1982) also points out that a "group" can be defined as such on the basis of criteria which are either external or internal. By external criteria, Tajfel refers to "outside" designations, where as internal criteria are understood as those of "group identification". The approach is thus using two interrelated but distinct definitions of a group: a group based on internal criteria (a psychological group, synonymous to group identification/social identity) and a conjunctive definition of group requiring some external criteria in combination with the internal criteria. (Tajfel, 1982, 2.) In the latter some external designation and recognition of the group is seen as a necessary condition

for its existence where as the former is highly subjectivist. These definitions will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

3.2.2 Two Definitions of Group

Tajfel uses the concept “group” in two senses. Firstly, there is the individualist and subjectivist definition of a group based solely on internal criteria. In this sense, “group” is synonymous to “group identification” and “social identity”. In a second time, there is a definition of group which adds some external criteria to the above mentioned internal ones. This means that in the latter version, in addition to the group identification of the members of the group, external recognition of the group's existence is required. The two definitions are illustrated by Image 3. In this section, both definitions are considered. The discussion begins with a discussion on group as group identification.

Image 3. Two Definitions of a Group.



The concept of social identification⁴ can be seen to derive from that of group identification (Asforth & Mael, 1989). However, in the literature, social identification and group identification are often used synonymously. For reasons of clarity, when referring to a group defined on internal criteria, I will use the concept 'group identification'.

According to Tajfel (1978) the description of what **group identification** is may include a range of between one to three components: a cognitive, an evaluative and an emotional component. The cognitive component means the individual's knowledge that

⁴ The concept of identification can be traced all the way back to Freud. However, the current study does not address identification or identity in general but focuses on group identification. Tolman (1943) distinguishes between three interrelated kinds of identification. As a first type there is the identification of an individual with some other older and more important (or in some other way envied and preferred) person whom the individual in question wants to be like. The second and third types are of more interest to this discussion, as they are outlining group identification. There is the identification of an individual with some whole group which he wants “to love” and “to be loved by”, and secondly, that of an individual with a cause proclaimed by a group. Tolman states that “*one accepts and gives oneself not only to groups, but also to seemingly quite impersonal causes*”. However, Tolman sees this kind of identifications to be merely expressions of what were initially and more fundamentally group identifications. According to him adopting values and causes proclaimed by the group with which one identifies is inevitable. (Tolman, 1943.)

she/he belongs to a group. The evaluative component contains the positive or negative value connotation that the notion of the group and/or one's membership of it may have. Thirdly, there is the emotional component which refers to the possibility that the cognitive and evaluative aspects of the group and one's membership of it may be accompanied by emotions directed towards one's own group and towards others which stand in certain relations to it. (Tajfel, 1978, 28-29.)

In a later discussion Tajfel (1982, 2) stresses that the two former criteria, i.e. the cognitive and evaluative component, are necessary conditions for achieving the stage of "identification" whereas the third, emotional component, is frequently associated with them. Group identification is thus defined in a way essentially identical to Tajfel's original definition of social identity (1972a) as an individual's knowledge that he/[she] belongs to a certain social group together with some emotional and value significance to him/[her] of this group membership.

The empirical reality of the internal criteria is a necessary condition for the existence of a group in the psychological sense of the term (Tajfel, 1982), i.e. of group identification. Turner (1984, 526-527) defines social identification as the internalization by an individual of socially significant social categories as aspects of his self-concept. Formulating the self-categorization theory, he (1982) follows the same subjectivist line of thought as Tajfel's original definition of group in a slightly more moderate way. He states that a group can be defined to exist when two or more individuals perceive themselves to be members of the same social category (Turner, 1982, 15). This definition of group can be regarded as less extreme than Tajfel's version since it requires at least some shared understanding of the group's existence (even if only between its members) and is thus not purely individualist.

Brown (2000) evaluates this definition as attractive due to its simplicity and inclusiveness but points out that it is problematic to disregard the recognition of the group's existence by others. He proposes a reformulation stating that "*a group exists when at least two individuals define themselves as members of the group and at least one other person recognizes the existence of the group in question*". Many groups can be characterized as a collection of people bound together by some common experience or purpose, who are interrelated in a micro-social structure, or who interact with one another. Yet, the crucial necessary condition for a group's existence is the shared

conception that the members of the group have of themselves as belonging to the same social unit. (Brown, 2000, 4.)

However, there exists no need for such a reformulation, as the second definition of group has not been discussed, yet. Tajfel (1982) is not disregarding the **importance of external criteria**. In fact, he goes on to state that the existence of internal criteria is not a sufficient condition for the emergence of intergroup behaviour and hence formulates another, complementary definition of group which requires some external consensus that the group exists. The second definition is not based solely on external criteria. A classification made by others of some people as a group does not necessarily mean that the individuals so classified have acquired an awareness of a common group membership and the value connotations associated with it. (Tajfel, 1982, 2.) The second definition of group proposed by Tajfel is a combination of the internal criteria of group identification with at least some external criteria which, then, is fully congruent with Brown's (2000) proposition.

Tajfel (1978) differentiates between two types of external criteria i.e. of those criteria which do not originate from the self-identification of the members of a group. First of all, there are the objective criteria used by naive outside observers (who are sometimes social scientists) without a sufficient knowledge of the culture which they study that may sometimes go wrong. Secondly, the other and more significant kind of external criteria are those consistently used in relation to a selected group by other groups in any multi-group social organization. The consensus about 'who is who' is often shared by the group socially categorized in certain ways and by the surrounding groups by which and from which it is perceived as distinct. Tajfel additionally points out that the consensus may actually originate from other groups and determine in turn the creation of various kinds of internal membership criteria within the ingroup (Tajfel, 1978, 30-31). The internal and external criteria defining a group are thus intimately related in the second definition of a group.

According to Tajfel (1978), the external criteria that are consistently used in a multi-group social organization are highly likely to correspond to the internal ones delimiting the membership of the group in question. In this study groups are, in general, defined based on both internal and some external criteria. However, as the significance of groups is approached from the point of view of an individual, group identification is the most important aspect defining a group.

3.2.3 A Methodological Perspective on Groups

In addition to the theoretical elements presented above, it is necessary to consider how groups have been conceptualized and operationalized in empirical settings. This discussion will include both research on group identification and on groups defined (additionally) on external criteria. By the latter I refer mainly to experimental studies on intergroup behaviour.

Ellemers, Kortekaas and Ouwerkerk (1999) state that even as **social identification** plays a key role in social identity approach, relatively little attention has been devoted to the question of how exactly this concept should be defined theoretically, or how it can be measured empirically. According to them, the key proposal of social identity theory is that it is the extent to which people identify with a particular social group that determines their inclination to behave in terms of their group membership. (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999.)

Haslam (2004) presents a review of different measures of social and organizational identification developed over the past 20 years. He differentiates between global measures that treat social identification as a unitary construct and measures that incorporate discrete subscales, each measuring different subcomponents of the construct. According to Haslam, most researchers agree that a measure's appropriateness depends on the theoretical and empirical question that is being addressed and, thus, no scale is appropriate for all research settings. (Haslam, 2004, Appendix 1.) However, this differentiation is not only methodological but also a profoundly theoretical one: Some researchers argue that identification is a cognitive construction (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), while others consider that it includes multiple components (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999).

Ellemers et al. (1999) propose a structure of group identification that is highly similar to the three components of group identification (cognitive, evaluative and emotional) formerly outlined in social identity approach. According to them identification should be conceptualized and measured as consisting of multiple aspects that can be distinguished from one another. (Ellemers, Kortekaas & Ouwerkerk, 1999.) Ashforth and Mael (1989), on the other hand, consider social identification (which they use interchangeably with group identification) as a perceptual cognitive construct that is not necessarily associated with any specific behaviours or affective states. (Ashforth & Mael, 1989.)

Kinket and Verkuyten (1997) have studied the forms of ethnic self-identification in relation to the immediate social context. They distinguish between three forms, self-definition, self-evaluation and group introjection, and argue that these refer to psychological levels of identification. The relation between the three levels is expected to be cumulative. Introjection is supposed to be more inclusive and comprehensive than self-definition because of the high level of commitment, emotional involvement, and feeling of belonging. Kinket & Verkuyten also argue that a higher level of identification is less dependent on context as the psychological involvement and commitment are stronger. Ethnic self-definition is thus presumed to be strongly affected by social context where as introjection is guided more by psychological need and factors. (Kinket & Verkuyten, 1997.)

The conceptualization of Kinket & Verkuyten (1997) presents a somewhat similar distinction between different forms (or components) of identification as discussed earlier. What makes it interesting is the explicated cumulative structure that is assumed to exist between the components and the contextual consequences of this structure. As Lange (1989) points out, a person may recognize and accept a group as self-defining, but does not have to consider this definition as personally important. Addressing this issue, Lange (1989) distinguishes between *identification of* and *with*. The former pertains to the cognitive act of recognition and classification of somebody (including oneself) or something as the possessor of a particular labelled identity and/or some particular characteristics, in many cases connected with membership in some category or categories. The latter, identification with a category, implies that the identity in question constitutes an important part of the self-concept which has evaluative and emotional meaning. (Lange, 1989.) That an individual identifies him/herself as a member of a certain category does not necessarily mean that he/she identifies with this category, i.e. that it is important to his/her self-concept.

In social identity approach, research on **groups defined on external criteria** has typically taken the form of experimental studies on intergroup relations. These studies, MGP experiments as the most famous example, often conceptualize groups as separate and distinct social entities. This mind set can be illustrated also by the more recent common ingroup identity model proposed by Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman and Rust (1993). The model is based on a premise of a clear cut ingroup-outgroup distinction which implicitly defines groups as separate social entities with clear cut borders.

3.2.4 Critical Conclusions

There seems to exist a general agreement on self-categorization, i.e. one's awareness of belonging to a certain social category, as the basis of group identification. Additionally, and this is where the controversy between researchers raises, identification can be seen to include evaluative and affective components. Following Haslam's (2004, 281) definition of social identification, I will use the concept of **group identification** to mean "*a relatively enduring state that reflects an individual's readiness to define him- or herself as a member of a particular social group*".

While stressing the importance of self-categorization, i.e. the awareness of the individual of his/her group membership, the significance of evaluative and emotional aspects of identification will be taken into account. In Lange's terms, I consider *identification of* as a minimal necessary condition while simultaneously recognizing the cumulative relevance of personally perceived importance of group membership, i.e. *identification with* a group. Mere (assigned) group membership where identification or personal involvement is not necessarily present is referred to as belongingness to a group.

Additionally, it needs to be taken into account that much of the theorizing on group identification is based on quantitative studies⁵. This poses a challenge, as the current study is qualitative. Group identification can, hence, not be measured in a similar way as in the previous studies but the approach to the phenomenon has to be more holistic. The technological context of the study is another challenge. The focus of the study differs from earlier research which has often concentrated on questions on either ethnicity or organizations. It is not self evident to which the degree the theories are applicable to the social and technological context of this study.

When it comes to **groups defined on external criteria**, the aim to make the research subjects consider themselves as members of groups with well defined, clear cut group boundaries is prevalent in intergroup studies. While it can be experimentally necessary and justified, in natural situations the distinctions between groups are often not that clear and straightforward. The authors of common ingroup identity model express

⁵ There is a body of qualitative research on the topic that stresses the importance of the social context in the creation and maintenance of identities (see for example Shotter, 1984, and Shotter & Gergen (eds.), 1989). This branch of research has its foundations in social constructionism and values the study of discursive and narrative constructs over the study of individuals. However, the review of this tradition is beyond the scope of this study.

confidence that their model is applicable in real, complex intergroup settings, too, even if, according to them, it would certainly be more difficult to induce a common ingroup identity in naturalistic settings than in a laboratory. (Gaertner et al., 1993.) In a limited scope their consideration may well be correct. However, what is crucial here is that such a conceptualization of a group does not fully match the original definitions discussed in the previous section. The conceptualization of group the authors are using does fit under Tajfel's (1978, 1982) definitions but it covers their scope only partially.

Additionally, in experimental intergroup studies such as MGP experiments, groups are, at least implicitly, opposed to one another due to the strong division to an ingroup and an outgroup. Skevington and Baker (1989, 1996) state that the conception of one social identity was created mainly out of the experimental methodology used by the social identity researchers which lead to simplifying the theory in order to be able to operationalize it. According to them, already the definition of social identity includes a reference to multiple groups. (Skevington & Baker, 1989, 1996.) The opposition of different groups can, hence, be criticized. An individual's different group memberships are not necessarily in contradiction with one another.

The design of various experiments and the implicit assumptions included in them have led to giving little attention to the simultaneous presence of multiple groups. This goes against Tajfel's (1972b) conviction of the impossibility of studying group phenomena in a social vacuum. Studying intergroup relations as separate, individual cases between two groups means neglecting the complex social context in which groups exist. In real situations the distinctions between groups are often not that clear and straightforward. Actually, such definitions are not feasible, taking into consideration that also vast social categories such as ethnic groups are included in the theoretical definitions of group that are being used.

3.2.5 Groups Online

As Ristolainen et al. (2007, 18) state, social identification is not dependent on the corporal presence of other group members. This is relevant taken the technologically mediated context of the study. However, the groups discussed in this study can be defined as ones based on both internal and external criteria. In many groups at least some members know each other and interact in some way. Even if such functioning is not a necessary criterion for the existence of group identification, it is taken into account

in the following discussion. In this section, some analytical starting points concerning the nature of groups on a social network site will be introduced. Wide social categories are left with little attention in the analysis, as they were not salient in the empirical material of the study. They will be discussed in more detail in chapter 10.

The empirical part of the study will show that many of the groups that are found on social network sites have originally been established in offline settings. Sometimes they continue to function mainly elsewhere than on the site. In other cases social network sites bring together groups that have otherwise ceased to function, such as old school classes. Groups to which both online and offline interaction is or has been relevant are typical of Facebook. Feasible classes of groups are also ones that have been created on Facebook and only function there, as well as groups that have been founded on Facebook but whose functioning has afterwards expanded to other contexts, too.

A social network site can function as a platform for maintaining the group identity of an already existing group or entirely new groups can be created on it. At all times, it is beneficial to keep in mind that online and offline settings should be seen as a continuum, not as two separate spheres of life. However, a distinction between groups that are explicitly represented only on a social network site and those which are based and/or function in other settings as well can be analytically helpful. This distinction should be understood as a pragmatic one, not as an ontological statement.

When discussing groups on Facebook, I refer to two empirically different types of groups. Firstly, there are the groups explicitly defined on Facebook. By this I refer to groups, networks and causes in Facebook's sense of these words, i.e. to groups that are defined in the user interface of the site. Secondly, there are implicit groups that are salient to the user but not explicitly defined on the site, such as subcategories in one's personal network. Explicit and implicit groups will be discussed in detail in chapter 7.

3.3 Multiplicity of Groups and Group Identifications

The idea that individuals belong to many groups is embedded in the very foundation of social identity approach. Continuing the often cited definition of social identity, Tajfel (1972a) argues that it is evident that, in all complex societies, an individual belongs to a big number of social groups and that the importance of those memberships varies. However, sadly enough, this side of the original notion outlining the social identity

approach has received little attention during the decades of research following Tajfel's definition. Yet, it can also be claimed that even if the idea of the multiplicity of groups and of group identifications is embedded in the definition of social identity, the relations and functions of different identities have not been problematized in the original theory.

Social network sites create a materially new situation as they provide technologically sufficient conditions enabling the co-presence of many groups to which an individual belongs or has belonged to and as a member of which he/she possibly identifies him/herself. In understanding the significance of groups on Facebook it is necessary to understand what follows from this co-presence of different groups with which individuals identify with. Taken that this is the focus of this study, special attention will be afforded to the context dependence of multiplicity and the elements enabling the co-presence of different groups (that traditionally have been situated in different contexts, too).

There exists an entire body of research investigating multiple social identities and their relations. As Brewer & Gaertner (2001) state, individuals are members of multiple social groups and have, thus, many social identities and loyalties. Regardless of this, social identities have been treated as if they were mutually exclusive, assuming that only one ingroup-outgroup distinction is salient at a time. According to them, research is now challenging this exclusiveness and has started studying the effects of having multiple social identities simultaneously as well as the inclusiveness of them. (Brewer & Gaertner, 2001.) These relatively recent studies refer to the issue with a scattered vocabulary. Depending on researchers, multiple identities have been addressed as hybrid, dual, hyphenated and nested⁶.

However, these branches of research often address the multiplicity of identities as somehow extraordinary. The studies have concentrated on gaining understanding of, for example, ethnic, national, regional and minority identities. The goal here is not to question the importance of such research. The aim is simply to point out that this perspective might have lead to a limited understanding of the less problematic side of multiple social identities. There is nothing revolutionary nor new about the fact that all individuals belong to (and, hence, possibly identify with) multiple groups.

⁶ For more detailed illustrations, see for example Gartner et al. (1993) on hybrid, Brewer (1999) on dual, Sirin and Fine (2007) on hyphenated and Medrano & Gutiérrez (2001) on nested identities.

Wentholt (1991 ref. Verkuyten, 2005) states that the importance and relevance of a particular social identity depends upon the circumstances or situations under which distinctions are made and upon the relations between and within the groups that are socially categorized under those circumstances. Specific social identities can predominate to such an extent that they are relevant in almost all situations. In general, however, processes of social identity are highly context dependent. The importance and relevance of a particular identity is not fixed. (Verkuyten, 2005.)

The statement seems to include an underlying assumption that there are multiple social identities but that their relations are hierarchical and their importance and relevance is context dependent. On social network sites, such an assumption becomes somewhat problematic, as many groups are assumed to be simultaneously present. In their discussion on gender identities Skevington & Baker (1989) argue that studying multiple identities is not simply a matter of deciding why, and in which social situation, one social identification should be salient rather than another, but is more a matter of understanding how multiple group memberships evolve and coexist at the same time, and, more importantly, are given meaning by individuals as they live in society. (Skevington & Baker, 1989, 196.)

Self-categorization theory (the comparative fit hypothesis, to be precise) states that, as the comparative context that a perceiver confronts is extended so that it includes a range of more different stimuli, salient self-categories will be more inclusive and will be defined at a higher level of abstraction (Haslam, 2004). In self categorization theory the different levels of identity are seen as functionally antagonistic. This means that when self-categorization becomes salient at a particular level, self-categorization at the lower level becomes less salient. Which level of categorization is salient is flexibly influenced by contextually bounded comparisons between potential ingroups and outgroups. (Abrams & Hogg, 2001.) To conclude, on the cognitive level group boundaries are defined differently according to the circumstances.

Hofman (1988, 90) defines as the greatest result of social identity theory for general intergroup theory its description of an individual in terms of multiple and hierarchical affiliations. People have as many loyalties as they have group memberships. Even if these loyalties are often contradictory, people usually cope with the conflicts by switching the hierarchical positions of their identities on function of the situation at hand or by rationalization, i.e. by accepting some degree of contradiction in their

identities. (Hoffman, 1988, 90.) An underlying, commonly shared assumption of research on multiple social identities seems to be that the co-existence of multiple group identifications is problematic and leads to conflictual situations. Yet, multiple group identifications are not necessarily contradictory or difficult to combine with one another. For example, there does not have to be anything conflictual in being simultaneously an alumnus of a certain university, an employee of a specific enterprise, a father and a member of a local charity organization. The consequences of the co-presence of multiple groups (see chapter 7 and 8.1) and the manners in which individuals deal with the possible tensions and conflictual situations due to it will be investigated in chapter 8.

4 Research Questions

The review of the theoretical background showed that the conceptualization of a group is not a straightforward issue. Whether the conceptualizations presented in the previous chapter are sufficient also in a new technological environment, i.e. on a social network site, is an interesting question. Furthermore, reviewing literature on multiple social identities revealed curious assumptions, for example, of multiple social identities being something extraordinary or presumably problematic. The empirical part of this study will allow considering these issues more profoundly.

The research questions of the study are related to the new technological context for social interaction that social network sites provide. The underlying assumption behind the main question is that unlike in traditional offline situations and face-to-face interactions, in social network sites, different groups to which a person belongs to are simultaneously present. The research question of the study is two-folded.

The first research task lays the ground for further analysis. It investigates the different kinds of groups on Facebook and the occurrence of group identification on the site. Identification is analytically separated to two levels, self-categorization (identification of) and an identification which has also evaluative and emotional meaning to the individual (identification with). For a presentation of this distinction, see section 3.2.3. The key here is to find out whether the hypothesized co-presence of groups does indeed occur, i.e. whether multiple groups relevant to the user are simultaneously present. The question is formulated as:

1. *What kind of groups are there on Facebook and does group identification of/with them occur? Does co-presence of different groups occur on the site?*

The second research task constitutes the main research question. It concerns the consequences of the situation in which multiple groups are simultaneously present. The question is answered by investigating the existence of tensions due to the possible co-presence and the participants' manners of dealing with them. The question is formulated in the following manner:

2. *What follows from the co-presence of multiple groups to which one belongs? How do individuals deal with possible tensions and conflictual situations taking place on the site?*

Groups are approached from the point of view of an individual and the importance of social identification is being stressed. Thus, tensions due to the co-presence of groups are considered as inconsistencies in the individuals' representations and as considerations they might feel obliged to make due to the co-presence of different groups.

5 Epistemological and Methodological Background

In the present study, interview and observation material are analyzed by qualitative methods. This chapter completes the theoretical framework as the epistemological and methodological background of the study are presented. After a brief presentation of the epistemological standpoint of the study, theory bound qualitative research will be discussed in more detail. The chapter concludes with a section on virtual ethnography and the methodology of observation in an online context.

5.1 Epistemological Standpoint

Alasuutari (1995) separates two broad epistemological standpoints in qualitative research. On one hand, there is research based on a **factual perspective** and, on the other, there is research concentrated on cultural conceptualizations. The latter is in other texts often referred to as social constructionism. If the factual (or realistic) and cultural perspective outlined by Alasuutari are seen as two ends of a continuum, this study can be situated closer to the factual end of the range.

In this study, groups and group identifications are researched as actually existing phenomena, not as mere linguistic constructions. The relation to language is, thus, much more instrumental than would be typical of a study oriented towards cultural conceptualizations. Alasuutari (1995) argues that when a factual perspective is implemented in qualitative research, it often means forming **typologies** based on the research material. The resulting typologies are not the result of the study themselves. They form the basis for deeper analyses and interpretations. (Alasuutari, 1995.) In the current study such typologies were formed, for example, of different types of groups (see chapter 7) and of different conceptualizations of group boundaries (chapter 8.2).

According to Alasuutari (1995) it is typical of the factual perspective to draw a clear line between the world and the statements that are made of it. Secondly, in a factual perspective it is meaningful to evaluate the truthfulness of the information or the honesty of the research subject. Reliability can, thus, be used as a criterion for judging the usability of the material. A third character of a factual point of view is a pragmatic perspective on truth or reality as something that the researcher wants to reach by making interviews or by researching other types of material. According to Alasuutari, a researcher who has chosen to implement a factual perspective, is interested in the actual behaviour or opinions of the research subject or of what really has happened.

(Alasuutari, 1995, 90-91.) While these characteristics are to some degree true of the present study, a sensitive stance is adopted towards the meanings given to the studied phenomena by the participants.

5.2 Theory Bound Approach

The relation of theoretical and empirical elements in the present study is defined in this section. Eskola (2001, 136) distinguishes between three different types of qualitative analysis: grounded, theory bound and theory driven. In the **grounded approach** theory is constructed from the research material where as in the **theory driven approach** analysis starts from theory and finishes with a return to it after having explored the empirical material. Theory driven analysis can thus be seen as an example of the classical form of analysis based on the natural scientific model of research. (Eskola, 2001, 136.)

This study is an instance of **theory bound approach** to qualitative research. Theory bound analysis can be seen as an intermediate form between theory driven and

grounded analyses. In principal, theory bound analysis proceeds on the demands of the material in a similar way as grounded analysis. The difference between these two is in the way that empirical material is connected to theoretical concepts. In grounded analysis theoretical concepts are created out of the material where as in theory bound analysis they exist beforehand, as "what is already known" of the phenomenon. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002, 116.)

The logic of theory bound analysis is often abductive. In the thinking process of the researcher grounded approach takes turns with pre-existing theoretical models. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 99.) Theoretical connections exist but the analysis neither stems directly from the theory nor is it strictly based in theory (Eskola, 2001, 137). The researcher gets first acquainted with the theory which then steers his or her collection of research material. The collected material is explored taking actively advantage of the theory while, yet, avoiding overinterpretation in the light of the theory (Eskola, 2001, 140). The relationship of theoretical and empirical elements can be best described as circular. This circularity was characteristic also of the research process of this study, as rounds of theoretical and empirical work were made in turns.

In grounded analysis the goal is to create a theoretical entity out of the research material. A purely grounded analysis is extremely difficult to realize due to the unavoidable influence of the conceptual and methodological choices made in the research process. Theory bound analysis can be seen as an attempt to overcome the problems of grounded analysis. Theoretical elements can help out in the analysis, even in an eclectic way, but the research units are selected from the material. The role of the previous theory is rather to open new paths of thought than to steer the process in a theory-testing way. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 97-99.)

According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002, 97) classifying research to grounded, theory bound and theory driven analyses emphasizes the role of theory in qualitative research. They state that the classification makes it possible to take into consideration the different factors influencing the analysis better than the separation between inductive and deductive analysis. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 97). The differences between the three forms of analysis are related to the role of theoretical elements that describe the phenomenon studied in the research process. The definition of this relation influences

the process of gathering research material as well as the analysis and reporting based on it. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002, 100.)

5.3 Virtual Ethnography

As Flick (2006) points out, qualitative research is not unaffected by the digital and technological revolutions at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Internet has been discovered both as an object of research but also as a tool for researching. (Flick, 2006, 254-255.) In this study, internet is present in both ways. A part of the research material of this study (see chapter 6 for detailed information) was collected by making observations in an online environment. The observation method applied can be seen as a form of virtual ethnography.

Flick (2006) presents five dimensions that are being used for classifying observational methods. Firstly, observations can be made either in a covert or in an overt manner. The degree to which those observed are aware of being observed varies between studies. The second dimension ranges from participant to non-participant observation, depending on how far the observer goes to become an active part of the observed field. Thirdly, observation processes vary from systematic to unsystematic. Some observations are made following a standardized observation scheme where as in other studies researchers remain flexible and responsive to the processes in the observed field itself. The fourth dimension differentiates between observations in natural and artificial situations and, finally, the fifth distinguishes self-observation from observing others. (Flick, 2006, 216.)

In the present study, non-participant observations of others in a natural situation were made in an overt fashion, even though the aim was to raise the subjects' awareness of being observed as little as possible. The observations can be best described as systematic since same informations were collected from all of the research subjects. However, as the observations were made to gain understanding of the activities and interaction taking place on the site in a grounded manner, no standardized scheme was being applied.

When using internet as a tool of research, it has to be considered how the qualitative methods can be transferred to internet research, which modifications are necessary and what are the benefits and costs of such a transfer (Flick, 2006, 256). The observations of

Facebook use in the present study were made solely online. This makes their scope limited because the observations can cover only the public traces users leave behind them on the site. This limitation and the practical problems related to the method are discussed in the next chapter in relation to the process of gathering the research material. Additionally, ethical issues and implications are taken into account in section 6.5.

In contrast to interviews and participant observation, non-participant observation refrains from interventions in the field (Flick, 2006, 216). However, even in non-participant observation, it is necessary to reflect on the stance the researcher takes in relation to the field observed. In the case of the present study, this position could be described as the participant-as-observer. Being a Facebook user myself, I had a preconception of how the site functions and what can be done on it already before starting the research process. This pre-knowledge facilitated the research process, especially in the beginning, but, at the same time, it meant that I had to be careful in order not to let my own experiences intervene in the research process.

According to Grönfors (2001), observation is a justified research method when there is little or no previous knowledge of the phenomenon. Secondly, observation might help to situate the knowledge acquired by using other methods because it helps to see the phenomena in their right contexts. Further on, it has been shown that interviews reveal often more strongly the norms related to a certain phenomenon than the behaviour related to it. Observations might reveal this inconsistency between what is said and what is done. On the other hand, an interview might clarify the observed behaviour. Observing can be helpful in gaining more multifaceted knowledge of the phenomenon under study. (Grönfors, 2001.) As Flick (2006, 218) points out, triangulation of different sources of data increases the expressiveness of the data gathered. In the present study it was deemed fruitful to combine online observations to the interviews so that the actual behaviour observed could be reflected upon the accounts given of it in interviews, and vice versa. The research material collected to serve these needs will be presented in the following chapter.

6 Research Material

The empirical part of the study is based on two qualitatively different sets of research material related to Facebook: interviews and online observations. The main weight of

the study rests upon the interviews which are analysed using theory bound qualitative content analysis (see section 6.4). The results of these analyses are reflected on and backed up by the observational material. The study is thus empirically based on a mixture of material that was specifically generated for the purposes of the study (interviews) and of naturalistic material (observations) which has been influenced by the researcher as little as possible.

It has to be kept in mind that not all of social life takes place or is visible in the social network sites. Social life beyond and outside social network sites is not primarily in the scope of this study. However, it is necessary to underline that what happens on the site is, by no means, separate from what happens elsewhere. Different forms of online and offline interaction and communication are interlinked. As was already stated, groups found on Facebook are to a large amount originally based in offline contexts and often function in parallel both in online and offline settings.

In the following sections, different aspects concerning the process of gathering and analyzing the research material will be presented. The next section presents the research subjects and the process by which they were recruited. The gathering of observation and interview material are presented in the second and third sections of the chapter, respectively. The fourth section describes principles of the analysis made of the material. The chapter finishes with ethical considerations concerning the study.

6.1 Participants

The sample of the study consists of twenty (20) Facebook users, all of whom were observed and half of whom were interviewed afterwards. The participants were from two different contexts and the sample consists, thus, of two sub-samples. Firstly, ten (10) students at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Helsinki form the so called student sample. The other sub-sample consists of ten (10) employees of a big IT enterprise. All of the subjects in the latter sample work for the same enterprise but their tasks vary. They have their educational background in business and technology. Both samples were balanced according to gender, containing five females and five males. All of the research subjects were young adults, their ages ranging from 20 to 31 years.

Social psychology has often been criticized of studying university students. In this case, though, including students in the sample is justified by the fact that Facebook was

originally exclusively open for university students and alumni and is still mostly populated by them. The other part of the sample, the research subjects from a work environment, will represent another common context of using Facebook.

In elite sampling the target population of the study can be small or large but only persons who are evaluated to be the best informants concerning the phenomenon studied are selected as research subjects (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002, 88-89). In the present study, criteria for selecting the research subjects were frequency of Facebook activity (daily or almost daily) and the number of friends ($n > 50$) and groups ($n > 0$). These criteria were justified by the assumption that group identification is more likely to occur among people who use the site actively. However, especially in the enterprise sample these criteria were not strictly followed due to the difficulty of recruiting enough participants.

The participants were recruited during October and December 2007. The Facebook use of each of them was then observed over a three-week period. They were added to the personal network of the researcher in order to enable observing their full profile pages. This was done also with research subjects whose profiles were freely accessible for everyone on Facebook or in a certain network. The subjects were rewarded for their participation by movie tickets. Subjects who participated only in the observational section received one ticket each and those who were additionally interviewed two tickets.

In the student sample, the subjects were found via Facebook and contacted either by a private message on Facebook or by e-mail. They were selected from the group of the students of the Faculty. In the enterprise sample the procedure was similar to snowball sampling in the sense that further research subjects were found through the networks of the already recruited subjects. In snowball sampling a key person known in the beginning of the process leads the researcher to further informants (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002, 88-89). When recruiting the enterprise sample, the initial contact was made by using a contact person as a bridge. This person knew both the researcher and some individuals working at the target enterprise and mediated, thus, the initial contact to the first research subjects.

It has to be kept in mind that Facebook is a rather new phenomenon in Finland and thus its user population is expanding quickly. The breakthrough of Facebook in Finland can be situated to the summer and fall of 2007. It was during this period that most of the research subjects had joined the site, too. This means that all of the research subjects were relatively new users of Facebook. The possible consequences of this to the results of the study are reflected in chapter 10. Reasons for starting to use Facebook were varied but in most cases the decision to join the site had been based on the invitations or outright pressurizing of friends. Two of the research subjects in the employee sample explained that their interest in Facebook was (or had been in the beginning) partially work related.

Only one of the interviewed students reported to be actively using another social network site, MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com/>). She explained that many of her foreign friends only use MySpace and are, thus, not on Facebook. Another interviewee had had a MySpace account, too, but he had never actively used it. One of the interviewed students reported a similar experience concerning IRC-galleria (a Finnish social network site, <http://irc-galleria.net>). He had used it moderately some years ago and abandoned it long before starting to use Facebook. Two of the interviewed students had not used and did not use any social network sites apart from Facebook.

Interestingly, all of the interviewed employees used LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>), while the degree of activity varied. None of them reported on using or having used any additional social network sites.

As to the frequency of use, all of the interviewees reported using Facebook daily or at least almost daily. This statement gains support from the observations, especially when taken into consideration that not all use of the site leaves visible signs of activity to the subjects' mini-feed. The reported use was somewhat less intensive among the employees. Two of them explained that they mainly use the site during silent moments or less busy periods at work and only seldom at home. Two others reported to be visiting the site equally from work and home. The fifth person also used Facebook both at work and at home but stressed that the use of Facebook is most relevant to him when he is traveling on business and, thus, away from home.

In the student sample, the site was most often visited from home even if all but one of the interviewees mentioned visiting the site at least once in a while at the university,

too. None of the people studied had used Facebook via the mobile interface, many had not even known of the existence of such before they were asked about it in the interviews.

6.2 Online Observations

The first part of the process of gathering the research material consisted of making online observations of the profiles and activities (according to the mini-feed of the subject) of twenty Facebook-users. Each of the subjects was observed over a three week period, the exact timing of which depended of their time of recruiting. In addition to observing their profile pages and mini-feeds, information of the groups and networks to which they belonged was gathered.

Flick (2006, 219) summarizes non-participant observation as an approach to the research field from an external perspective. In the present study this characteristic was somewhat problematic as the observations made online allow to enter only the public side of the activities on the site. Thus, in addition to general advantages of triangulation, the decision to have a combination of observations and interviews as the research material was justified by the freedom of Facebook users to present in their profile what they wish and leave out anything they do not wish to show.

Furthermore, there is a lot of activity on the page, such as viewing other people's profiles and composing and receiving private messages, that leaves no sign to the mini-feed. The observation material enables mainly the analysis of explicit groups on Facebook as they are defined and by default visible in the profiles of the users. Implicit groups, on the other hand, could not be studied in the same way. Interviews were needed to find out how subjects categorize their personal networks and to gain understanding of the significations they give to different groups on the site. Observations were also useful for verifying the accounts of the subjects and, thus, made the analysis more reliable.

According to Flick (2006), the virtual ethnography approach challenges several essentials of ethnographic research such as concepts like being there, being part of the everyday life of a community or a culture, and so on. Additionally, he states that virtual ethnography remains much more partial and limited than other forms of ethnography are and than ethnographers claim as necessary for their approach. (Flick, 2006, 265-

266.) This statement can be questioned if online and offline settings are understood to be united or, at least, to form a continuum. However, here the research problem is one that could not, in any case, be adequately answered based on mere observations which are always approaching the research object from an external point of view.

Due to the above presented limitations, the observations were mainly used in answering the first research question for the parts concerning explicit groups. The biggest advantage of the observations, however, was that they increased the understanding of the users' functioning on the site and were, hence, valuable background material when planning and realizing the interviews.

6.3 Interviews

The key material of the study consists of ten semi-structured individual interviews. The interviewees were students and employees who were also included in the online observation sample. Thus, five research subjects from both samples were interviewed, all in all four females and six males. The interviews were planned to be of the approximated length of one hour at maximum. This goal was obtained as the interview lengths ranged from 40 to 65 minutes. After the interviews, permission for follow up questions (via Facebook or by e-mail) was asked from the interviewees. During the analysis process, however, no need to realize this option for further clarifying questions was perceived.

Two pilot interviews, one with a student and one with a recently graduated person who works full-time, were made before the actual interviews. This was done in order to test the duration of the interview and to gain some insight into what kind of questions are the best to gather the material, what matters were given too much or too little attention in the planned interview outline and so on. Based on the remarks made of the pilot interviews and the feedback gained from them, the interview outline was slightly modified and some additional questions were implemented.

The interviews were semi-structured. Same topics were discussed with all interviewees but specific sub-questions varied from interview to interview. The sub-questions were presented according to the perceived need to stir the discussion or ask for additional information. All in all, the realized structures of the interviews were highly similar to one another which facilitated the analysis process.

The interviews covered several topics concerning the functions and meanings Facebook serves for the interviewees. Interviews started with a short section on background information such as the interviewee's age, educational and professional history and previous experiences of social network sites. These questions were followed by descriptions on the ways in which Facebook is being used. These priming sections served multiple purposes. Firstly, they were designed to “warm up” the interviewees before heading for the more important questions. Secondly, they made possible to see whether the subjects would spontaneously discuss groups and, if so, in what terms. The third function of these sections was the most obvious one: gaining understanding of the wider context of using Facebook and, thus, being better able to situate the information acquired.

Sections related to interviewee's personal network and to his/her Facebook network and group memberships formed the core of the interview. Further on, questions on how the interviewee uses Facebook in communication included topics such as wall posts, private messages and photos. In the last part, privacy settings and possible social tensions and conflict related to the site were discussed. In this section, the simultaneous presence of multiple groups was also brought explicitly into discussion. In the end of the interview, each subject was given the occasion to freely address any topics that they felt had been left out or with too little attention and to which they wanted to add something. The interview outline can be found as annex 1.

The interviews were realized in front of a computer screen so that the interviewees could use Facebook during the interview to demonstrate their descriptions and to account for their profile. During the interviews, a video camera recorded the on-goings on the screen. Hence, it was possible to track down afterwards the screen events and match them with the speech if this was necessary for understanding what was said on the tape.

In all interviews the subject's home page and profile page were used as a background for the discussion. Additionally, relevant network and group pages, friend listings and privacy settings were visited when necessary. When discussing the subject's personal network, the Friend wheel application was used to stimulate the discussion. Friend wheel is an application that illustrates in a circle all the friends a person has on

Facebook. All explicit connections (friendships) are visualized by a connecting line between the two dots presenting the people in question. An example of a Friend Wheel picture can be found as annex 2. The picture helped to identify unofficial groups in one's personal network and find out more about their importance to the subject and the importance of Facebook for the group in question. Such a visual stimulus was also helpful as an inspiring, tangible basis for discussion.

In the interviews it was possible to gain some understanding of what is going on privately and what kinds of significations users give to the interaction that takes place on the site. An analysis based purely on observational material would have left out a lot of the actual activities that the interviewees deemed as central in their accounts and would have been restricted to public self-presentation. As the individuals' personal involvement is of high importance when discussing identification, it was necessary to gain understanding of the meanings that users give to the site and of their actions on it. Additionally, the interviews showed that an analysis based solely on observations would have risked to form a much too intentional and, thus, misleading image of the subjects' Facebook use.

The interviews were realized in Finnish as both the researcher and the interviewees were native Finnish speakers. In the analysis, the quotations from interviews are presented in English. Special attention has been paid to the accuracy of translations as translating spoken accounts from a language to another is not a straightforward task. To enhance the credibility of the translations, they were reviewed by another person after they had been translated by the interviewer.

6.4 Analysis Process

As the research material was collected for the purposes of this study and as I transcribed the interviews myself, I was already well familiarized with the material when beginning the analysis. However, the analysis process was started by reading through the interview material and making free notes and comments on it.

The interview material was analyzed by theory bound qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is the basic analysis method that can be applied in all the traditions of qualitative research (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002, 93). The goal of qualitative content analysis is to create a verbal description of the phenomenon that is in the first place

described by the research material. Content analysis is used to organize the material into a concise and clear form without losing information included in it (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002, 110).

The first round of classifying analysis was made by separating the material to five wide classes according to the issues that were discussed. These classes were “background information”, “descriptions of use”, “group issues”, “interindividual issues” and “tensions”. In some cases there was overlap between the classes. For example, “descriptions of use” included also material related to “groups issues”, or “tensions” were combined with “group issues” or “interindividual issues” and so on.

After this initial phase, the class “background information” was used for compiling a description of the research subjects (presented in section 6.1). More profound attention was given to the two classes that were deemed most important for the analysis from the point of view of the research questions: “group issues” and “tensions”. The classes “descriptions of use” and “interindividual issues” were used to support the conclusions drawn from the two key classes.

“Group issues” and “tensions” were classified and analyzed in more detail. The “group issues” class was first divided into two subcategories “implicit groups” and “explicit groups”. The contents of these two were, further on, explored profoundly. This was mostly done by comparing answers to same or similar questions from different interviewees in order to find out similarities and exceptions visible in the material. The analysis was facilitated by the fact that the interviews followed largely the same pattern and, thus, elements on the same topics were easily located. However, in order to deepen the analysis, attention was paid on potential remarks of the same topics in different parts of the interview, too.

The initial grounded notions drawn from the analysis were then conceptualized on a higher level and connections with the theoretical background were reflected upon. Further description of the analysis process is provided in relation to the results of the study in chapters 7 and 8.

6.5 Ethical Considerations

In the beginning of the interview, the interviewees were reminded of the voluntariness of their participation and of their right to skip any questions they might find disturbing without needing to explain why. Also their right to stop the interview at any point, would they wish to do so, was discussed. The interviewees were given the opportunity to ask questions both before and after the interview. In most cases, the questions asked before the interview were mainly practical ones whereas afterwards many of the interviewees were interested in hearing more about the study and its objectives. They were then given additional information describing the study. It was also stressed to the interviewees that would they come up with questions later on after the interviews, they were welcome to contact the researcher.

All research material has been treated confidentially and anonymously. The quotes and examples from the research material presented in the analysis are anonymous. References to specific attributes such as names or locations have been removed from the quotes where necessary. The research subject's age, sex and the sample to which the person in question belongs are mentioned in order to give readers some contextual information.

The main ethical questions concerning the study were, however, related to the observation procedures. Wiberg (1991, 221) states that non-participatory (public) observation should involve fairly few specific risks, as in public spaces people are in any case under observation. When it comes to social network sites, the issue is somewhat complicated as it is not obvious where the line between public and private should be drawn. For example, many of the profiles studied would have been accessible to me as a Facebook user who belongs to certain networks. However, I considered it better to ask for permission for all observations.

According to Wiberg (1991, 221), observation that is done secretly can lead to an increasing lack of trust. In the current study, this had to be treated not only as an ethical problem but also as an essentially pragmatic one, as the structure of the study was to continue from observations to interviews. The success of the study depended on the trust and goodwill of the participants and, thus, it was important that they did not have a feeling of having been observed without permission. This could have been the case, had they not been contacted beforehand, even if the observations had been done of data

freely accessible on the site and thus public in its nature. Also, in some cases the profiles of the subjects were only accessible to members of their personal network. Hence, the sample would have had to be different had the subjects not been contacted beforehand.

More importantly, it is clear, that researching in secret and without the consent of subjects studied is not ethically desirable. Wiberg (1991) stresses the importance of informed consent. The principle of informed consent states that research subjects should have the right to voluntarily and based on their own consideration decide for themselves whether they want to participate in a study. He points out that this rule is too strict to be applied to all cases of social scientific studies. It is not always sensible to strictly follow the principle of informed consent as it can bias the research material and, thus, the results in a fatal way. (Wiberg, 1991, 211-215.)

When observing online behaviour on social network sites the seek for informed consent can bias the results mainly in two manners: Firstly, it can lead to a biased sample. Secondly, it can cause situations where the behaviour recorded does not reflect reality since participants alter their behaviour because of the conscience of being observed. In the current study, neither of these problems seemed to cause significant problems.

As the research in question is qualitative in its nature and not reaching to be generalizable to a specific population, the possible bias in the sample is not as crucial as it would be in a quantitative study. As to the bias caused by the participants' awareness of being observed, the level of activity on the site remained stable throughout the observation period. Additionally, the subjects were not given detailed information as to what exactly was analyzed of their behaviour on the site. Thus, any systematic change in behaviour that would risk the results of the analysis is highly unlikely to have taken place.

7 Groups and Group Identification on Facebook

As was already briefly stated in the chapter on defining the concept of a group, in the Facebook setting the potentially important social categorizations can be divided into two distinct types, to explicit and implicit groups. The former ones are groups that are visible in a user's profile on Facebook for him/herself and others (with the exception of groups that are secret and only visible to their members) and, thus, explicitly defined in

the user interface of the site. By implicit groups I refer to groups which are salient for a user but not explicitly defined on the site, i.e. categorizations of one's personal network. The characteristics and differences of these groups are explored in sections 7.1 and 7.2, respectively.

7.1 Explicit Groups: Networks, Groups and Causes

Explicit group membership on Facebook is explored in this section. The three types of explicit groups, networks, groups and causes in the Facebook sense of these terms will be investigated. These are all groups that are visible in the user interface of the site.

Additionally, reflection upon group identification through these concepts that are built into the user interface of Facebook will take place. The chapter is based on both observation and interview material which are reflected upon each other. The main goal is to investigate what the role of these groups is to the research subjects and whether they identify with these social entities.

7.1.1 Networks

Facebook is made up of many networks, each based around a workplace, region, high school or college (<http://www.facebook.com/networks/networks.php>). The network membership is visible on the user's profile page and the user is also listed as a member of the network on the home page of the network. Even while all of the research subjects belonged to at least one network on Facebook their relevance to the interviewees turned out to be limited.

15 out of 20 observed people belonged to two networks, typically to a country network and either to a university or an enterprise network. Four of the research subjects belonged only to one network and one to three networks. Overall, the most common network in the sample was the country network "Finland". In the student sample, all of the subjects were members of the network of their university⁷. All but one of the observed employees belonged to the network of their employer. All of the networks in the sample are biographical in the sense that they present a tangible aspect of one's life: country of residence, university or employer.

Some further light on the importance of networks can be shed based on the interviews.

Two of the ten interviewees spontaneously mentioned networks when presenting their

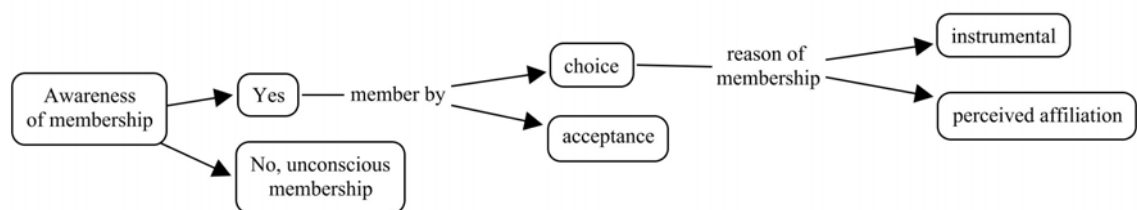
⁷ This result is due to the sampling, as the research subjects of the student sample were selected from the group of their faculty which one cannot join without being a member of the network of the university.

profile pages. Additionally, networks were addressed with direct questions in all of the interviews. These questions covered themes such as the process and reasons of joining a network and the frequency of visiting the home page of the network. The answers given to these form the core empirical material of the following analysis.

In understanding the signification of networks on Facebook, it is useful to consider **the reasons of affiliation of a network** (illustrated below in Image 4) given by the interviewees. The answers were categorized into four classes. Some of the memberships were based on perceived affiliation, others had an instrumental value to the interviewees. Remarkably many interviewees stated that they had joined the networks automatically by somehow accepting the recommendations of Facebook at some point or that they did not know at all how they had ended up in their networks.

There were, thus, three main division lines categorizing the different reasons to belong to a network. Firstly, the membership could be either conscious or unconscious. The interviewees were often unaware of their membership in a network. Secondly, a differentiation could be made between being a member by acceptance or by choice. In some cases the subjects took their membership in a category for granted, in others, the decision to join had been a conscious, deliberate choice. Thirdly, had the decision been a conscious choice, the reasons to join were either instrumental or valuing the membership of the network itself, i.e. perceived affiliation with the network.

Image 4. Reasons of Affiliation of a Network.



When the choice to join a network was conscious, it was often justified by perceived affiliation and ease of joining the network. As all of the networks in the sample were biographical, this is hardly surprising. Joining the network of one's employer or university had not required the interviewees to make a reflected choice of affiliation. The membership seemed to be better conceived of as a mere expression of the state of affairs, as in the following quote:

"Well the network of the enterprise I wanted to take just, just because I work here" (male employee, 31)

In some cases the presence of friends in the network and the perceived trustworthiness of the network were additional important factors convincing one to join. Another quote represents this:

"Well, probably like quite simply due to friends' example since like to Finland just because like I think it's like a basic network and like almost all of my friends are members of Finland and then the network of the university, I can't really recall why I joined [R: yes] it, it happened to be, it felt like somehow like relatively like sensible and trustworthy since it's like in principle a closed network, if I remember correctly" (female student, 24)

Some of the ease related to being a member of the country network of Finland can be explained by the fact that all of the interviewees were native Finns living in Finland at the time of the interview. This gives reason to believe that country and nationality issues were probably neither especially salient nor problematic to them at the time of the interviews.

The share of purely instrumental network memberships was remarkable. Two of the student interviewees had joined the network of their university primarily in order to be able to join the group of their faculty. In a similar vein, one of the interviewees in the employee sample had joined the country network of Finland so that he could become a member of a Facebook group founded by his friends.

"-- my friends had founded this (group) in my home town and it, to join it you had to belong to the network of Finland. That, in a matter of fact, was, well, it was really the only reason for me to join it (the network) [R: yes] there was no other reason." (male employee, 31)

"Well the network of the university, it, well, it came since I was looking for, like, looking for a friend, then he was a member of it and well, then I thought that when I join it maybe there I can find more easily (old friends)--" (male employee, 25)

The instrumentality represented by the second quote is weaker, as the decision to join was at the same time influenced socially in a similar way as in the case of the female student quoted above. However, the reason to join was more to find other old acquaintances to friend with than to join and categorize oneself as a member of a social entity.

The interviews revealed that being affiliated to a certain network was not always a conscious choice. One of the interviewees accounted that it was a complete mystery to him how he had ended up to be a member of his networks. This case being the extreme,

the majority of interviewees did not know very well how they had joined some of the networks in which they were. This is well exemplified by the account of one of the employees, while the second quote is an example of having automatically joined one's networks:

"Well, somehow just like by chance like (I joined) both of those right away when I started to like, started to use Facebook so I added them, I don't actually even remember why and I still don't quite understand what networks even are in the first place --" (female employee, 26)

"-- when I came along, then apparently they (memberships in networks) came like pretty much automatically when just typing in one's email address and other things [R: yes] like I didn't need to join them at all" (male student, 21)

Once aware of their affiliation, however, none of the interviewees refused their membership in any way. Even if this can be taken as a sign of accepting the correctness of the categorization, it is evident that in such cases networks were not pronouncedly important to the research subjects. According to the definition of group identification adopted in this study, individual's awareness of his/her group membership is a first and founding premise for identification. In the cases of unconscious membership described above, this criterion is clearly not filled.

None of the interviewees visited or updated actively the home page(s) of their network(s). Four research subjects (two students, two employees) explained that the big size of the networks was a reason for not using them. The subjects found that it was difficult to find one's friends or anything else significant from the network sites. The first quote below shows how a student reflected his feelings of unease on using the network site due to its size. In the latter, one of the employees describes how she gave up browsing the network site.

"I haven't, haven't done anything [R: yes] they are quite big networks so that like [R: right] that it is like difficult to go there and browse like completely by chance something but it is like quite a big crowd after all in both" (male student, 20)

"So I haven't like anything else but, then I have browsed these people but then I noticed like that there are 26000 people [R: yes] so then the browsing stopped quite quickly like, in principle it is pretty funny to check out who of the colleagues are there [R: yes] but that then there were a bit too many, to go through" (female employee, 26)

One of the students stated as an additional reason for not using the page of the university network that even in general the students of her faculty tended to stick with each other and that they joined only rarely the activities of the rest of the university. Here, identification seemed to occur on the level of the faculty whereas the rest of the

university community was seen as an outgroup. One of the students reported to sometimes browse his friends categorized by the networks they were in. However, all in all, the sample revealed little activity in relation to the networks.

However, active use of a network site is, by no means, a necessary condition of identifying oneself as a member of a network and in achieving a positive social identity. As one of the employees explained, instead of practical functionality, being a member of certain networks was important in terms of indicating to others who he is:

"-- but I don't know, maybe more like for me it describes more what others can see, that like where I work or what I'm interested in or how it like, it like desc- describes me"
(male employee, 25)

Networks were in general perceived to be distant and too big to enable meaningful online activities. Using Lange's terms, the research subjects did to some degree identify themselves as members of their networks but they did not identify with the networks. It has to be kept in mind, though, that many of the interviewees had not even been fully aware of their membership before the interview, which means that self-categorization as a member of a network could not have taken place. In cases where some kind of identification occurred, networks were still not considered to be ingroups in the sense of forming an entity with which the research subjects would have felt natural to share things important to them. One of the interviewees explicitly stated that when joining the network he had directly changed his privacy settings in order to enable not the entire network but only his friends to have access to his full profile page.

Additionally, two notions on network memberships have to be made. Firstly, the absence of identification to a network on Facebook does not give a basis to assume that there would be no identification in general to the category that the network represents online. As a simple example of this, not being a member or not being aware of one's membership in the country network of Finland does not give sufficient reason to conclude whether one categorizes or not him/herself as a Finn. Secondly, from the self-presentational perspective, an explicit affiliation with a network will be present to others viewing the profile even if the person in question would not be aware of his/her membership in that network. This means that unconscious affiliations can be taken by

others for conscious and deliberate and, thus, be used as socially significant cues when forming a picture of another person on Facebook.

7.1.2 Groups

Membership in **groups** turned out to be, both in qualitative and quantitative terms more important for the research subjects than membership in networks. Groups have their own home page on Facebook in which it is possible, for example, to view who the members of the group are and post messages, photos and videos for members of the group to see. The members of these groups are Facebook users who have joined the group on the site. The groups can be either open for everyone or require administrative approval to join. Additionally, there are groups that are only open to those invited.

Overall 120 different Facebook groups were found in the sample (due to overlap between research subjects, the material consists of 134 instances of group membership). All but one of the subjects had joined at least one group. Two of the subjects were members of seventeen groups. This was, however, the maximum. In more than half of the cases subjects belonged to five groups or less. This section concentrates on describing the different kinds of groups, the significance of groups and the interindividual differences in combinations of groups found between the research subjects.

In the interviews, the research subjects were asked to describe the groups they had joined. Some gave such accounts spontaneously when presenting their profile page. Additionally, actions related to group membership such as joining and leaving groups, declining, accepting or sending invitations to join a group and founding new groups were discussed. A third entity of questions concerned the ways of making use of groups, communication with groups and their members and the significations given to groups.

The groups in the sample were classified to ten categories which were then divided into three broader classes. This classification is based on the observational material but it gained support from the interviews. In the analysis, in addition to the names of the groups, the descriptions given of the groups on their home pages were used to find out what the groups were about.

The classes are biographical, recreational and declarative groups (table 1). Biographical groups are related to somewhat tangible and formal aspects of one's life history, such as

educational and professional affiliations. Recreational groups are less formal but still often have a direct correspondent in offline settings, the class containing different kinds of hobby groups, fan clubs and friend circles. Declarative groups are typically firmly situated solely in the context of Facebook. They typically either present a personal interest of their members in a humorous way or make a statement. Different kinds of groups will be presented in more detail below. There is some overlap between the categories since some groups can be included in multiple categories.

Table 1. Classification of groups.

Class	Categories (nro of groups)
Biographical groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School groups (13) 2. Student groups (23) 3. Work related groups (4) 4. City groups (3)
Recreational groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Hobby groups (28) 6. Fan clubs (14) 7. Friend circles (6)
Declarative groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Entertainment groups (14) 9. Statement groups (20)
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Temporary groups (5)

The different types of groups were widely present in the sample. 17 out of 20 observed people were members of at least one biographical group. Memberships in recreational and declarative groups were slightly less common but both categories were present in 14 profiles out of 20. Overall, biographical groups were the most common type of groups (66 instances of group membership), followed equally by recreational (43 instances) and declarative (44 instances) groups.

A look at the individuals' profiles of group membership reveals that the relative share of declarative groups in the totality of groups was bigger when users were members of many different groups. In profiles that contained many biographical groups (the maximum was 8), there seemed to be a tendency that a number of these groups were related to each other, for example by being distinct but interrelated student associations. Thus, sometimes a big number of groups could be taken more accurately as a sign of

identification with some general category (such as medical students) than of identifying with a multiplicity of different groups.

Biographical groups (school groups, student groups, work related groups and city groups) were usually firmly based in offline settings or had a concrete reference point such as a school or a city as their basis. School groups are groups dedicated to specific schools. Student groups include different kinds of groups related to studies and student life. Some of them are groups of student organizations ranging from local to international level, others are dedicated to specific year classes or to a faculty. The category also includes hobby groups of students. Work related groups are dedicated to enterprises or organizations. Their members usually work or have previously worked at the enterprise in question. The fourth category consists of city groups which are groups dedicated to cities and towns. The members of these groups in the sample lived currently or had lived before in the corresponding city.

Some of the school, student and work related groups are best characterized as alumni groups. Their aim is to bring together groups that have otherwise ceased to exist (in any functional form). In the sample they were mainly used for finding old friends and acquaintances who one had met through these organizations. Additionally, many subjects felt that it was "natural" or "logical" to show their old affiliations in their profiles as a way of presenting one's background and personal history.

The second class in the classification are **recreational groups** (hobby groups, fan clubs, friend circles). They are groups based on a shared interest of its members. The category "Hobby groups" includes different kinds of groups dedicated to hobby organizations and spare time activities. Some of them bring together people with shared general interest, others had been created to support or to commemorate the achievement of a specific goal. Fan clubs were groups that brought together fans of, for example, bands, books or sport teams. Friend circles were groups consisting of a small number of people who were friends with each other. The sites of these groups were typically open only for their members. One of the interviewees told that he had a secret group with his cousins.

The third class consists of **declarative groups** (entertainment groups, statement groups, temporary groups). The existence of the groups in this category is typically limited to Facebook. They have been created online and they do not have a concrete correspondent elsewhere in the same way that biographical (and often also recreational) groups do. Entertainment groups aim essentially at being humorous or entertaining.

They can be based on inside jokes or appeal to more general audiences. Statement groups are for or against something or otherwise make a statement. The entertainment and statement categories are often intimately interlinked. However, not all statements are meant to be funny. Some of them are serious, striving for change or speaking out on a societal topic.

The tenth category of groups, i.e. temporary groups, could not be fit pertinently under any of the broader classes. Temporary groups were better defined by their actuality than by their content. Membership in temporal groups was typically limited in its duration and the groups had been created stemming from actual issues. These groups were not defined by being related to a specific current issue, such as student union elections or the school shooting at Jokela (November 7, 2007). Hence, they had characteristics of both biographical and declarative groups, as they were related to tangible issues but often in a statement making way.

The three classes presented above can be situated on a **continuum from tangible to intangible**. Biographical groups present the tangible end as they typically relate to concrete events, places or phases in life. Declarative groups can be situated in the intangible end of the continuum as instead of being concrete they stress and present some shared personal attributes of their members such as points of interest, opinions and sense of humour. Recreational groups are an intermediate form between the former two. Membership in them is less strictly defined than in biographical groups but they relate to more concrete aspects in their members' lives than declarative groups. The degree of tangibility is related to but simultaneously different from the separation between online and offline based groups. Biographical groups have most commonly pre-existed Facebook where as declarative groups (at least in any explicit form) have been created on the site.

It is important to note, however, that online and offline settings are typically intertwined. This is probably especially true when discussing group identification which necessitates neither interaction with nor physical presence of other members of the same category. Groups can be salient to an individual even when they are explicitly manifest nowhere. However, a group membership can be made more salient both to the individual him/herself and to others by making it explicit on the site. This can be seen as a means to achieve positive social distinctiveness and, hence, a positive social identity.

The classes differ in **the permanence and optionality of membership**. Declarative groups typically come and go and they can be joined based on seemingly light grounds such as noting from the news feed that such a group exists and finding it amusing or being invited by someone and not having any specific reason as why not to join the group. Sometimes it can be questioned whether Facebook groups are indeed groups in neither of the meanings defined in section 3.2 as the users are hardly identifying themselves as members of specific social categories based on their membership in some of them.

One is free to join and quit declarative groups as one wishes, where as when joining biographical groups people are restricted by their personal history. For example, even if it is possible to join a group of a school in which one never went it does not make much sense. However, joining biographical groups is not obligatory but one has the liberty to show his/her affiliation to the degree he/she wishes to. It is essential to keep in mind that in all cases people have the freedom not to join groups on Facebook and that this goes for biographical groups as well.

The process of joining a group usually started either by receiving an invitation from a friend to join a group or by noticing the existence of an interesting or personally relevant group from the news feed or from friends' profiles. Thus, the joining process was typically mediated by the members of one's personal network. Reasons to join named by the interviewees were varied. Joining biographical and recreational groups was typically seen as something quite natural and as a part of creating one's network where as declarative groups were joined following the example of friends or because of the group seemed either humorous and/or self-descriptive. Declarative groups were often joined on seemingly light grounds, such as having been invited and not having a reason not to join or due to finding the group funny or felicitous:

“--[M]any have come just when like someone has sent an invitation and, then I have seen, I haven't seen any big reason why not to join so then, why not, I have joined that group.”
(male student, 20)

“And that then, it was just such a, such an amusing group to my opinion so then I joined as I thought it was a funny one” (female student, 24)

Some interviewees criticized this light-hearted fashion common in joining declarative groups and valued much more highly the membership in biographical and recreational groups. The following two quotes represent well how these memberships were seen as strongly related to one's life and being pertinent:

“But these are all like such, like pertinent, like some year classes of the faculty, even like quite boring like most of them [R: yes] what I've looked it seems that people have like huge lists of these groups that are like all kinds of possible here, such as like against or pro this and that and then like, whatever so I have not [R: yes] bothered to join such groups” (female student, 24)

“It (the combination of group memberships of the interviewee) is pretty strongly related to what is, what I have hmmm let's say I've experienced as important in my own life like for example this was such a great experience that I had to join it just because of that and same goes for this. Then here are these groups that are like linked to my life. School things, elementary school, secondary school, high school and university so there is a group of its own for each of them” (male student, 23)

In general there was little activity on the group sites. Logically, browsing group pages was more common than updating them. As browsing leaves no visible public signs on the site, the importance of interviews in the analysis must be underlined once again. Many interviewees did not visit frequently the group pages to see what was going on there. In some cases the interviewees had never even seen the page and, had they done so, quite often only right after joining the group.

The group pages were used least actively by the interviewees who also in general used Facebook little. Even if the interviewees had stated that the big size of networks was a major reason not to visit or actively use network sites, the activity that took place on the sites of much smaller groups was often as rare as on the former ones. It seemed that a group was considered to be the more important the less members it had and the more of them the research person knew personally. Biographical and recreational groups tended to be the ones that were actually active to some degree. In declarative groups the functionality often seized to joining the group and maybe inviting others to join it, too.

The significations given to groups varied. In most of the cases, direct communication or other group activities such as sharing photos did not seem to justify membership in groups. Different kinds of alumni groups were seen to be useful in getting back in touch with former class mates, colleagues and other acquaintances. Even when these points of view are taken into consideration, it seems clear that the deeper signification of groups was in the possibility of building and maintaining explicit social identities. One of the interviewees explained the significance of groups as the sense of being and belonging in a community:

“Well it's like, I think it's a bit like a similar phenomenon as with networks so that they describe like what one is interested in and what kind of groups there are like since quite, quite many of them link together people who are also like somewhere there, like somewhere in the real world then have also done something like together or are interested in the same thing [R: yes] so it's more like this sense of, sense of belonging together with something like that, it like describes that I'm interested in swimming or that I've been or still am a swimmer to some degree. And then here are these schools, like one has went to

a school so then one has joined its group [R: yes] but not like, there is not like any active action taking place” (male employee, 25)

Often it seemed that the groups were in the user's profile to be seen, not to be used. This can be explained by the strive to achieve positive distinctiveness with one's group memberships. Such self-presentation turned out to be a crucially important function of groups⁸. According to some of the interviewees, the groups and networks were on their profiles primarily for others to see and joining such groups was a part of the activity of creating one's personal profile. Groups were used in self-presentation both in terms of showing affiliation to certain social categories or institutions, such as schools and enterprises, and as a way of presenting one's personal characteristics, points of interest and sense of humour. This diversity is depicted by one of the interviewed employee who belonged to the research subjects having most groups on their profile:

“As I said some like, like quite craz- these are like maybe some kind of statements a part of them and another part are ones to which I have belonged but here are like my old high school, then some alumni networks from my student times and then, there are, are, well, some that can't really be categorized. A part of them I find funny, ones that tell something about me to others --” (male employee, 31)

This notion of the importance of self-presentation was interesting, as elsewhere in the interviews, the research subjects often claimed that when making, for example, profile updates they were not targeting any specific audiences. They also stated that they did not care for whether their profiles were viewed or not (except sometimes in the sense of not wanting strangers to be able to look at them). Such contradictions could possibly be explained as signs of efforts to rationalize actions that had not been performed in a highly reflective manner in the first place.

Research subjects differed in the level of selectivity of their group affiliations and, additionally, in the types of affiliations. Some of the interviewees welcomed invitations to groups quite liberally while others were highly selective of their affiliations, joining practically only ones that they perceived as pertinent and serious. This difference was visible both in answers on why the interviewees had joined certain groups and in their reasoning of having declined group invitations.

⁸ Goffman's (1959) theorizing on self-presentation and on social life as a performance might be a fruitful approach to the issue. The creation of one's profile and the membership of explicit groups was in some cases described as an activity consciously aiming at expressing something (positive) about oneself to others. As this is not primarily the scope of this study, and, more importantly, as such self-presentation can be explained as striving for positive distinctiveness and, hence, for a positive self-concept, Goffman's theorizing will not be discussed here.

In terms of group identification, biographical and recreational groups were the most important ones, where as declarative groups were used more to build and maintain aspects of personal identity. However, it should be noted that in these cases the identification usually stemmed from other sources than Facebook and the site has mainly a role in maintaining and supporting identification. This is illustrated by the explanation of one of the interviewed students gave when asked about the frequency of interaction and keeping in touch via Facebook with the members of the group of his faculty:

“Well, with friends I do. But I never know whether they, whether they belong forcefully to this group [R: yes] so then those who are like my own friends, with them I tend to stay in touch, one way or another” (male student, 21)

This quote shows well that the membership in the explicit group of the faculty in itself is not a crucial factor defining group membership. More important is, whether the people are categorized to be members of that group in general, beyond Facebook. Due to this, it is necessary to take into account the presence of implicit groups on Facebook. Concentrating solely on the explicit ones would make the analysis biased and misleading. This will be done in the following chapter, after having taken a look at the third form of explicit groups, i.e. causes.

7.1.3 Causes

In addition to networks and groups, a third empirical form of official groups on Facebook was found in the research material. Causes are a type of groups that anyone on Facebook can create to organize people towards collective action (Facebook, <http://apps.facebook.com/causes/help>). They are meant for fund- and awareness-raising and the issues they champion can range from global to local covering different themes such as health, environment and politics. They fit to the formerly outlined category of statement groups, representing in most cases the more serious side of it. The causes in the sample were typically related to either health ("Support the Campaign for Breast Cancer Research" and "Fight AIDS") or to environment ("Save the Snow" and "Stop Global Warming").

Eight out of twenty research subjects had joined at least one cause. Five of them were students. However, only three out of eight had (successfully) recruited others to join a cause and no one had made donations. Amongst the interviewed research subjects, there were four students who had joined at least one cause. All of them mentioned causes when presenting their profile pages in the interview and, additionally, three of them

brought the subject up again later on in the interview, in relation to Facebook groups. None of the interviewees who had not joined causes brought them up in the interview. As causes were not directly asked about, the following analysis is based on the spontaneous accounts.

When presenting their profile pages, the interviewees explained why they had joined the causes they had on their profiles and gave short descriptions of their idea of what the causes were about. The explanations were very similar to each other. Research subjects accounted that they had joined a certain cause as it seemed to represent an issue that was important, close or otherwise relevant to them.

"These kind of things that I like somehow find important, like, so I have then posted them over there (i.e. on the profile page)" (male student, 20)

"These are things, of course you could join many of these, too, like many things but these have been the ones that have seemed to be close [R: yes] like close to me so I joined them" (male student, 21)

When causes were brought up in relation to Facebook groups, the interviewees often mentioned cause requests that they had ignored. Reasons to decline an invitation supported the picture of the meaning of causes formed above. Declined invitations had not felt relevant to the interviewees or they did not relate with the issues they represented. Even as the interviewees were aware that there are many more causes than the ones they had joined and they had received many requests to join, they had carefully chosen to join only few. As one of the interviewees accounted:

"--or like something like this or "save water by drinking beer" or like this [R: yes] like in a way like more humorous so I don't bother to (join) them [R: joo] I don't bother then because like if, I feel like that if you like join them, it's like an endless swamp, endless swamp indeed" (female student, 24)

This quote describes well the general attitude towards joining causes. The interviewees were reluctant to join causes that they did not consider personally important and meaningful. This indicates that the chosen causes had a special meaning to the interviewees. The research subject's affiliation with their causes seemed to fulfil the criteria of identification. The subjects were aware of their membership and there was an evaluative aspect to this awareness. However, separating social and personal identities from one another might be difficult when it comes to causes as the affiliation to them could be interpreted as a way of expressing the opinions and values of the individual more than his/her identification with others thinking along the same lines.

One of the interviewees had adopted an especially critical stance towards causes and Facebook applications in general. He was annoyed by the fact that some of his friends seemed to join every Facebook cause and group they could find. According to him, this strategy leads to a blurred profile page out of which it is impossible to make any sense. His ideal was to keep the profile page as simple as possible. As he described, he had "a very functional view" of Facebook. He also linked invitations to causes with postings on the so called super wall (an application that allows users to include, for example, images to their wall posts) and criticized both of being in essence the same as chain letters:

"All these other things like super wall or, or these causes things or them, so I don't, smells pretty much the same like what chain letters used to be [R: mmm] that you try like only like, like in brief it's about like do you, do you agree with this or are you a bad person -- they don't like, I'm not really interested in them" (male student, 23)

The interpretation of the social identity function of causes gains further support from the fact that the interviewees were sceptical about the actual influence of the causes on the matters that they supported. They were not actively involved in the causes in the sense of taking actions. One of the interviewees mentioned having recruited a couple of friends to join the causes. In general, the causes were seen as a form of charity but, somewhat ironically, none of the research subjects had made any donations. The description given by one the interviewees of causes and of his relation to them is quite revealing:

"What is that like, some kind of charity like, even if I have donated nothing like concrete, they (the causes) are just hanging over there but --" (male student, 20)

Another interviewee explained that would she wish to donate to the organizations she supported, she would by no means do it through Facebook. However, the same person expressed appreciation of the work of one of the organisation she supported via causes. She was aspiring to join their activities some day, once she had graduated. Thus, on the site, the meaning of causes seemed to be to raise awareness of matters that were deemed relevant and especially to show one's affiliation with the causes one identified with. Based on the analysis, the function of causes can be interpreted to be primarily to support the creation and maintenance of a positive self concept, taking into consideration both social and personal aspects of identity.

7.2 Implicit Groups: Categorizations in Personal Networks

Implicit groups are social categories that are not explicitly defined in the user interface of Facebook. In this study, implicit groups are explored and conceptualized as different

groups salient to the user in his/her personal network. Every Facebook user has a personal network which consists of the people with whom he/she has established an explicit friendship connection. These friend lists or personal networks, as they are called in this study, are not explicitly divided into groups on the site. However, they typically consist of different people important to the individual such as one's friends, family members and colleagues. Even as these groups are not explicitly defined on the site, they can be highly important for the individual in both online and offline settings.

Implicit groups are different categories (to which the user belongs or has belonged) in one's personal network such as former school classes, work teams, relatives and hobby groups. Also wide social categories, such as gender, ethnicity and age, fall into this category but the interview material includes few remarks of them. Hence, they are largely absent from the following analysis. This, however, should by no means be taken to say that these categories could or would be of no importance on social network sites. They will be addressed in chapter 10. The focus of the analysis, however, is on smaller groups and categories, the membership of which seemed to be more salient for the research subjects.

Even if the membership of and identification with implicit groups can be more difficult to prove, it is reasonable to assume that they are of importance in understanding the role of groups on Facebook. After all, amongst groups on Facebook, they are probably the ones most strongly related to other contexts, too. Additionally, as such categories are produced and maintained by the users themselves, it seems obvious that they must serve some purposes for them. These classifications are also the group memberships that one would use as a basis for categorizing others and themselves to make sense of the diversity of their social network. As was seen in the previous chapter, research subjects did not always know whether a specific friend had joined certain groups (for example the group of the students of their faculty) but their belongingness to that category in general (such as being a student of the faculty) was still salient and, thus, potentially important.

The existence of implicit groups would be difficult to study based on online observations, as these categorizations do not necessarily leave marks to the publicly accessible parts of the site (or anywhere, for that matter). These categorizations can well function in the minds of the individuals as social guidelines without taking an explicit form. Due to this, the following analysis is primarily based on the interview material. First, a brief look will be taken at the structure and process of growth of personal

networks. After that, the categorizations of personal networks and their importance will be investigated, as well as the correspondance between the personal networks on Facebook and the general social networks of the interviewees.

7.2.1 The Structure of Personal Networks

The sample showed remarkable variation in the size of the personal networks of the research subjects, i.e. number of "friends" they had on Facebook. This number varied from 33 friends (one of the employees) to 287 (one of the students). Five out of twenty research subjects had more than 200 friends, while 10 of them had less than a 100 friends. This variation can be partially explained by the variation in the time of joining the site as it takes some time for the network to grow into a more stable size. However, the interviews additionally revealed that the subjects differed in their selectivity when making friends (or friending, as it is sometimes called in Facebook jargon) on Facebook.

When describing how their personal network had evolved to its present form the research subjects generally reported that they had invited on average a half of the members of their personal network and the other half had become their friends via requests directed to themselves. Some of the interviewees accounted having been active in the invitation process, where as one of the employees told that she had invited hardly anyone after joining the site. The interviewees had sent the main part of friend requests to people who already had a Facebook profile but many had invited also ones that were not yet members of Facebook.

Declining friend requests was somewhat more common in the enterprise sample than amongst the students. No one was willing to accept unknown individuals as their friends but some reported being selective with acquaintances, too. One of the interviewees in the enterprise sample systematically declined friend requests from colleagues who he did not have any personal relationships with and recommended them to network with him via LinkedIn, another social network site that he had dedicated for professional purposes. However, friend requests were, in general, rarely declined. One of the interviewed students expressed his reasoning as to why he by default accepted all the friend requests he received:

"No, I haven't received any (friend requests that I would have declined). I haven't, I haven't myself declined any -- this just this that if like someone sends me something then I accept it like as I have no like enemies, as far as I know anyways [R: yes] so then like quite good relations with everyone so then if I think that I'd send (a friend request) to someone, someone would decline it -- but it doesn't like feel good if you like know

someone and then he/she does not accept it [R: yes] that that's why I accept everything, without doubt if like I don't, if I just know the person" (male student, 20)

This quotation illustrates well how accepting friend requests was sometimes based more on politeness and principles of reciprocity (approaching in their extreme the Golden rule) than to feelings of affiliation with the person. In any case, most of the interviewees were willing to accept all friend requests they received, as long as they knew the person who had sent the request. As one of the interviewees explained, the reason for having never declined a friend request was the fact that he had only been invited by people who he knew and had good relations with. He explicated that this was not necessarily the case for everyone, referring to friends who had been confronted with problematic situations:

"-- I do know people who have like, who have had to like look as if they were absent because they don't want to accept friendship- friend requests from people that they simply don't they don't like who they don't count as their friends [R: yes] but I, no, I don't remember that I would have had such a problem." (male student, 23)

As expected, personal networks consisted of relations that existed beyond Facebook, too. None of the interviewees had in their personal networks people that they knew only through Facebook. The site was used for maintaining the already existing ties of social networks, not for networking in the sense of creating new relations. Most of the interviewees claimed that they could not even imagine how such a situation might occur as they did not see a way to meet new people on Facebook and, understandably, did not care to have strangers as their Facebook friends. Many found the idea of having such friends suspicious and unimaginable. When asked whether she could imagine making new friends on Facebook, one of the interviewees expressed her doubts in the following manner:

"I don't think so. I think that'd be somehow suspicious [R: yes]. Like if it was a man I would be right away like no no like what, is he trying to hit on me [R: yes] and I don't quite, like I have myself so many friends that, that like somehow it feels that even otherwise I don't want more friends, even less like such, like virtual ones" (female employee, 26)

Some of the students were more open for making new acquaintances but even then the need to somehow learn to know the other person first before accepting him/her as a friend was stressed. However, it was unclear, how this befriending could happen on the site:

"I have some difficulty in believing, believing what would be the, at least personally for me, so what would be the, the forum via which the, the first contact aa would occur that. - I, I don't deny that at all that it would not be possible that, that some kind of a friendship evolve through this (site) but I just can't see that, how it would, what would be the beginning, the initial like trigger for the friendship" (male student, 23)

One of the interviewees said that she probably would accept a friend request from a stranger but would never initiate such a relation herself. Another accounted having once accepted a person to his personal networks without having been sure of who the person was. Later it had turned out to be an old friend who had got married and thus changed the family name. Personal networks on Facebook seem to reach the outskirts of one's social network in general but do not go beyond its limits. Even more remarkable is that the interviewees seemed to be satisfied with this situation, neither hoping nor willing to make new acquaintances on the site. Technologically, by the time of the study, applications supporting the making of new acquaintances had not been successfully introduced on the site. The emergence of such applications might change the situation.

7.2.2 Categorizing the Personal Network

Categorizations that the interviewees presented of their personal network were the key to understanding implicit groups on Facebook. Interviewees presented such categorizations in three different contexts. Firstly, some of them described their network spontaneously in terms of different groups when they were telling about their ways of using Facebook and presenting their profile page. The second type of classifications were ones provided by the subjects when they were asked to describe their personal network. Thirdly, in order to trigger the research subjects to explain what kind of categories they perceived to exist in their networks, the Friend wheel -application (see section 6.3 for a description) was used as a stimulus. The third type of accounts was, thus, designed to direct and lead the interviewees towards explicating categorizations.

All interviewees categorized their personal networks into multiple categories. The categories were in most cases provided when the interviewees were asked to describe their personal networks. Some groups were mentioned when discussing the Friend Wheel. Most commonly these categories included old school/class mates, university friends, colleagues, friends from one's hobby group(s) and sometimes relatives. These were all categories to which interviewees belonged or had belonged to and with which they possibly (had) identified with, too.

All interviewees mentioned old school friends, distinguishing often between multiple instances, such as comprehensive school and high school. For all of the interviewed students, the biggest and most important group of people in their network consisted of fellow students, people with whom they currently studied. This group was often divided into fine subcategories according to year classes and student organization activities. Four out of five interviewed employees mentioned colleagues, one of them both

previous and current ones. Disregarding student organisations, six out of ten interviewed research subjects mentioned their friends from a hobby group. Four reported having relatives in their personal network.

The presented categorizations were similar in all three contexts. Interviewees presented these categories readily when they were asked to describe their personal network. The categories seemed to be salient to the interviewees even without the Friend wheel - stimulus. This makes the argument that implicit groups have some significance on the site more plausible. Further on, it is hardly surprising that the research subjects find it easy to classify the members of their personal network to different categories, as they have learned to know them in different contexts and often, additionally, in different points of their life span.

These categorizations were supported also by the explicit groups. The analysis reveals a significant overlap between implicit and explicit categories. For example groups related to studying or working were often present both as an explicit group (a group or a network) and as an implicit group (a salient category in the personal network). Thus, even if there was little action occurring on the home pages of the explicit groups, they probably played a role in maintaining the identification with a group, manifested in the readiness to define such a category when describing one's personal network.

7.2.3 Personal Networks On and Beyond Facebook

The interviews showed a high consistency between the personal networks on Facebook and the social networks in general. Some of the interviewees reported that the online networks were practically identical to their social network in general. Many agreed with this claim with the sole exception of some friends or relatives missing from the online network.

The research subjects differed in their stance towards whether or not they wished the people missing from Facebook would join the site. Some wished they would since that would make it easier to keep updated on their lives or since they felt that by excluding themselves from the site these people were missing out on something fun and useful. Others remained indifferent on the issue: according to them it did not make a difference since the main channels for interaction and maintaining friendships were in any case others than Facebook.

On the other hand, the personal online networks sometimes included "friends" who according to the interviewees did not even greet when met in offline situations and who,

thus, they did not really count as belonging to their general social network. One of the interviewees explained the phenomenon in a somewhat annoyed tone:

"And then some here are like that they don't, they have themselves added me (as a friend), but then they don't necessarily even greet me, if we pass each other on the street so that they have then like, they might have like 500 friends there, they have just like collected all even half-acquaintances there" (female employee, 26)

Such activity of collecting all possible "friends" on Facebook is an opposite for the selectivity reported by some of the interviewees. The personal networks on Facebook were wider than the offline ones also in another sense: they often contained old acquaintances with whom one had otherwise not been in contact anymore in a long time. This was mentioned as an important aspect of the personal network on Facebook by many interviewees. As one of the interviewed employees explained, getting back in touch with old acquaintances and maintaining more distant ties was valuable. The site was perceived to have little to offer for social ties that were currently close:

" -- it is more like, an address book and otherwise a means to, if it is needed to contact an old acquaintance or otherwise, I don't like (use Facebook), more than that daily, like with friends with whom or who I anyways like meet or keep in touch with [R: yes] so I don't like, Facebook doesn't really add anything to that" (male employee, 25)

However, a straightforward comparison between online and offline networks is not a meaningful one, as these two were largely united and inseparable. Facebook functioned for the interviewees as another form of staying in touch with friends and acquaintances and organizing one's social life. As seen initially already in the previous chapter, the most relevant groups on Facebook were ones based originally in offline contexts, even if in some cases Facebook was important to their maintenance and functioning. All in all, the conclusion to be drawn is that the social interaction and networking online was by no means a distinct entity or a separate sphere of life.

7.2.4 The Importance of Facebook for Different Implicit Categories

Multiple accounts of the interviewees confirm that the importance of Facebook in keeping in touch was most pronounced on the outskirts of one's social circles. With the closest friends and other most important people, the site was less commonly used as a central medium for communication. The outskirts of one's network are both spatially and temporally defined.

Spatial outskirts of one's network consist of friends living far away, either in another city or in a different country and, thus, beyond reach when it comes to face-to-face communication and participation in everyday life. This distance, however, did not have to be permanent. Business travels and exchange studies were enough to raise the

importance of Facebook but once they were over, habitual means of communication were resumed. One of the interviewees in the enterprise sample explained that the importance of Facebook was pronounced when he was travelling on business and, hence, not capable of being in contact with his friends on the spot.

Temporal outskirts refer to individuals or groups who have formerly been close and important to the person but with whom they are nowadays rarely in contact. Typical examples of this category are one's class mates from comprehensive school. Many of the interviewees had lost contact with them before the friendship ties had been reinitiated through Facebook. In a somewhat similar vein as the quoted interviewee in the section above, one of the interviewed students explained:

"-- for example these, some of these people [R: yes] haven't seen like in eight years [R: yes] them, so I didn't have a clue wh- where they are or what they are up to so like that has been like if there would be only these study friends then I don't know would that then be so remarkable to me, Facebook --" (male student, 21)

Even while the currently most important friends stayed in the center of one's social network, the site in some cases provided contact to acquaintances and formerly close friends who had been lost somewhere on the way. These friendships that were reinitiated online sometimes lead also to face-to-face encounters. The quotation above illustrates, additionally, the fact that according to the sample of this study, a site such as Facebook has relatively little importance for interaction with the core of one's social network. Some of the interviewees expressed even frustration on having too many communication channels at use and were, thus, not welcoming the new message services offered by Facebook.

The interview material contained interesting metaphors of Facebook as an address book, a container of human capital or as a personal tabloid paper. These expressions illustrate well the different significations given to the site and to the personal network. Some considered the network more in terms of added value and usefulness while for others the site was first and foremost entertainment, a new pastime activity or a bonus for social life. However, there was more to it. As one of the interviewees pointed out, having such a network served as a tool for maintaining friendship and creating and preserving an identification with some social entities:

"-- this is like fun if one hasn't seen, seen erm a school fri- a school friend like in a long time so then you can like ask how the other one is doing and then like by if you mark someone as your friend it means that like even if you hadn't seen in a long time that you still know the ot- know the other one or have known like and it is like quite nice, a nice way there to keep in touch – Some, some like collective thing there is related to this, like a human being likes to belong to such like some kind of ent- group of people, a big bunch

of people so that this like that somehow, such a feeling of belonging together --" (male student, 20)

The importance of a personal network on Facebook was partially in the interaction it enabled and the possibility to keep easily in touch with, especially distant, acquaintances. Summarizing the issue from a group perspective, the personal networks facilitated the maintenance of group identification with groups that had some importance for the individual already beforehand. In the case of implicit groups, the pre-existence of identification as a member of certain categories was even more pronounced than with explicit groups. However, the importance of a social network site in maintaining and enforcing the identification should not be undermined due to this.

8 Multiple Groups in One Context

The results of the analysis presented in the previous chapter give evidence of the multiplicity of groups on Facebook and, more importantly, of the fact that users are aware of the co-presence of multiple groups and their membership in them. By co-presence of multiple groups I refer to a situation in which many groups are present at the site and their presence is salient for the user. Practically this means, for example, that the news feed contains items concerning many groups (or members of them), that the actions a user takes on a site such as updating his/her status and writing wall posts, will be visible to members of different groups present in his/her personal network and that the membership of multiple (explicit) groups is visible in the user's profile both to him/herself and to others.

Co-presence does indeed occur in the sense that many (maybe even all) groups important for an individual are simultaneously present in one context, i.e. on Facebook. However, the analysis will show that this situation is being actively controlled and dealt with. When the research subjects were aware of the co-presence of many groups and perceived it as potentially problematic, they looked for and found ways around it. The first section of this chapter investigates the awareness of the multiplicity of groups expressed by the participants and the perceived and potential tensions that follow from this situation.

In the second section, the implications to the conceptualization of group boundaries caused by the co-presence of multiple groups are explored. Based on the analysis it is claimed that one way to deal with the co-presence is to redraw group boundaries by creating more inclusive supralevel categories. In this discussion, references to group

boundaries mean the individuals' mental conceptions of group boundaries, not ones defined in the user interface of Facebook. However, the technological environment should not be understood merely as a passive context of social action. It does influence the practical choices users have at hand, which then, further on, influence the actions users take and the sense they make of the situation. The final section of the chapter presents and analyzes the ways of preventing potential tensions and conflictual situations rising from the co-presence that occurs on social network sites. Users are managing the situation both by means offered by the virtual context and by techniques that they have created themselves.

8.1 Awareness of Multiplicity and Perceived Tensions

As seen in the previous chapter, when presenting both their explicit and implicit group memberships the research subjects brought up multiple groups. This happened both when they brought groups into discussion spontaneously and when they were more directly encouraged to discuss groups on Facebook. As a conclusion of the analysis so far, it is stated that multiplicity of groups on the site does indeed occur and that users are aware of it. This conclusion was further confirmed in the end of the interviews. The participants were asked directly whether they had had problems or perceived tensions due to the co-presence of multiple groups. No one of the research subjects objected to the notion of co-presence. They were aware of the situation even if, in general, it seemed to be neither strikingly salient nor problematic to them.

The multiplicity on the site is both temporal and spatial. Temporal multiplicity means that groups from different phases of the individuals life-span are present on the site. Past meets present as one's old class mates are standing in line with the current colleagues. Spatially the site brings together people important to the user who might be living either in a different city or even in another country and who, thus, might not be present in the face-to-face interactions of everyday life. Above all this, the key notion is that on the site groups that traditionally belong to different contexts are now present and presented in one context, in parallel to one another.

The focus in the study was on social tensions related to groups. Over all, the interviewees reported few tensions and, furthermore, most of these tensions were not on group level. When the tensions or problems on the site were discussed in the interviews, the research subjects mentioned mainly security issues, such as the fear of someone

misusing the contents put on the site. Research subjects thought of possible trouble also in terms of revealing something private or shameful of themselves for example to one's boss or to less well known acquaintances. The problems were placed far out – distant threats seemed more salient than the possibility of conflict occurring between different friend circles.

Furthermore, instead of groups, the social tensions were often related to individual persons, typically ex-partners, with whom the research subjects did not wish to be in touch anymore. These interindividual tensions, however, were seen to be easily solved by excluding the unwelcomed individuals from one's personal network:

“-- so of course I have such people who that who I would not want that they in fact would see my profile that that I am not interested at all in like having any contact to them but that of course then the solution is that, that I do not accept them as friends” (female student, 24)

“Surely, well yes, there is one, one ex, ex like ex girlfriend who like in fact it now just occurred to me that I could go and block her from there (from privacy settings), -- but like otherwise, if like you leave out this one person like amongst all the millions of people in the world so then like everyone else are quite welcome to browse [R: yes] like that doesn't bother me” (male employee, 25)

In the latter case the interviewed employee stressed that apart from one exception he did not mind anyone browsing his profile. However, not everyone was sharing this point of view. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

One of the interviewees suspected that the site encourages people to communicate openly issues that on other fora would be perceived as delicate and not public to everyone. According to her, people should be more careful of what they publish on the site. However, most of the interviewees reported having faced no tensions due to the co-presence of multiple groups. Many of them said that they could not even imagine what such problems could be and how tensions could come about. However, the fear and potential of tensions was present to some degree. One of the interviewed students expressed that she had thought of the possibility of what happens as people from so many different contexts are on Facebook:

“Like, like I did indeed think at some point about what, what happens when there is then like a little from all situations that like well all old acquaintances indeed [R: yes] who do not necessarily are not at all like a lo- a lot belong to one's own life that will that then cause some trouble but no it then it has not been anything like that after all” (female student, 24)

The same interviewee explained that a possible problem caused by the multiplicity would be that wall postings might be read by people to whom they were not addressed. However, she did not really consider this a serious problem and, ultimately, stated that

the tensions of co-presence were not really reasonable as according to her it is quite ordinary that people have friends from different contexts:

“Like these friends who are then like not in touch with each other so m of course now someone can read but not like this, this here, this wall but somehow now I don't, I don't like can't believe that anyone anything from there like that like it would in anyway disturb anyone like like everyone has like friends from many contexts --” (female student, 24)

Based on the research material it seems that the co-presence of multiple groups to which one belongs can be unproblematic. The accounts of two interviewees illustrate how the possibility of tensions in one's network was not taken to be probable:

“Mmmm I don't really know like I don't, I can't imagine, since, they are like not in anyway, them they they have no reason to like mutual hostility -- I don't like belong to two like rivalling gangs or like that like I don't like I don't like see any reason that there could be any kind of problem” (male student, 20)

“-- like even otherwise one tries or like that I do feel that, that I don't want to hide any side of myself, or like that, that like that all friends know like the same or like that” (female employee, 26)

In the first quotation the student expressed that he did not see any real reason why there would be tensions in his network as the different groups to which he belonged to, according to him, had unconflictual relations to one another. In the second quotation the statement made is more on the level of identity than of intergroup relations. The interviewee claims that people from different groups all know her as the same person and there is, thus, no identity incongruities to settle.

This result differs from much of the previous research related to multiple social identities in the social identity approach. Yet, the difference is less surprising when taking into consideration how the situation studied here differs from studies that have investigated clearly dichotomous intergroup situations. Additionally, the unproblematic state of affairs does not seem to occur automatically. The following analysis will shed light on how the situation is made and maintained unproblematic.

8.2 Reconceptualizing Group Boundaries

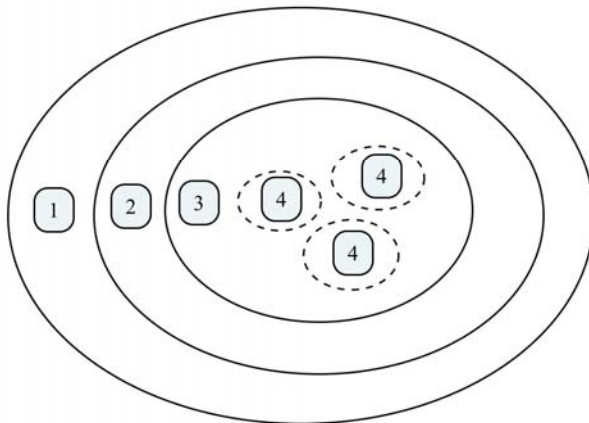
In this section, the conceptualization of group boundaries on Facebook will be investigated based on the interview material. According to self-categorization theory, as the comparative context that a perceiver confronts is extended so that it includes a range of more different stimuli, salient self-categories will be more inclusive and they will be defined at a higher level of abstraction (Haslam, 2004). This can mean the creation of more inclusive, common supralevel categories which, furthermore, may allow and

facilitate the co-presence of multiple groups by making the situation more feasible and easier to grasp for the individual.

Based on the analysis, five different group boundaries will be discussed. Three of them are ones that the research subjects themselves had adopted. One of them was referred to by only one of the interviewees as an option adopted by other people. The fifth option was not present in the analysis but as it logically follows from the others, it will be briefly discussed in the end of this section. Typically one conceptualization of the boundaries was dominant in the representations of each individual but some of the interviewees seemed to combine/switch between different levels of categorization.

Image 5 illustrates the different boundaries in a simplified form.

Image 5. A Simplified Illustration of Potential Group Boundaries on Facebook. Number 1 represents the entire Facebook community, number 2 a specific network and number 3 the personal network of a user. Different implicit groups in one's personal network are represented by number 4.



In the first case, fine differences between groups were disregarded. The profile was (as is the default-option on Facebook) open and freely accessible to everyone. However, many interviewees who had adopted this stance expressed that they only told on the site things that they felt they could tell to everyone. Additionally, users who had adopted this stance often undermined the importance of the site (especially as a forum of communication) and stressed that to them, Facebook was most of all entertainment. As the differences between groups were disregarded and the population on the site was treated democratically, the contents shared on the site were limited. Thus, while a Facebook-level group identity was in a sense created, the boundary of privacy on the site was actually drawn between oneself and others.

”--and well, to some degree but on the other hand I have tried to put there quite little such information that I think that I don't want of mys- myself to be told so I have left that then completely out of there” (male student, 21)

“-- I am like in such things like quite loose so that I have thought that I put that, there only then such things that everyone can see [R: yes] that no, I don't know, somehow I'm not interested, like let them see what I put there that I don't then put there anything that I don't want --” (female employee, 26)

In another common conceptualization the ingroup boundary was made more restricting. In this case the individual treated the whole of his/her personal network as an ingroup and excluded everyone else. Practically, this was done by making the privacy settings more limiting so that the profile was accessible only for people that the user had accepted as his/her friends on Facebook. Interviewees who were adopting this option were more picky about who they accepted to their personal network. They were well aware of the control they had over who they accepted in their network and who not. This control was given to be a reason for which the social situation on the site was not problematic:

”Nooo, I don't have enemies I suppose [R: that then the line is drawn more in that...] or even if I had [R: ...who you accept as a friend]. Yes, yes indeed that, that's the point [R: yes] like I control completely it like who- what they see there [R: right], it is not a problem for me” (male employee, 31)

”-- but like, otherwise like, quite freely and, and then like, I am then myself the filter who like, if someone approaches me so I accept or don't accept” (male employee, 27)

The members of one's personal network were referred to as friends (which they are, in the Facebook sense of the word). When discussing the issue in this way, the co-presence of different (implicit) groups in one's personal networks was not salient or, at least, not saliently problematic to them. The members of one's personal network were trusted and they were not seen to be in a controversial relation to one another.

There were also some indications of restoring the group boundaries within one's personal network. As the user interface does not offer an explicit way of implementing such a conceptualization, this third option was mainly evident in considerations of what and how can be communicated on the site. As a principle, potentially delicate or controversial issues were left out of discussion or communicated via private messages or other closed communication channels. One of the students explained how she avoided using inside jokes related to her studies in her status updates because they might be understood wrongly by uninvolved people:

”Well no, well not now really in that way or of course that a little as one knows that here is not even like not only students of my faculty so then in general I like it doesn't, I put in that status no jokes like that that would be like quite directly – (something) that then for someone else could sound somewhat weird” (female student, 24)

Distinguishing between a Facebook network, e.g. the country network of Finland or the network of a university, and the others is a group boundary that is explicitly offered in

the user interface of Facebook. However, it was not present in the research material as an option adopted by any of the interviewees. Taken the weak identification to networks (see section 7.1.1) shown by the interviewees, it is not surprising that the network is not a social entity that the interviewees would consider as an meaningful and trusted ingroup. However, when discussing how he managed the situation on Facebook one of the interviewees referred to this boundary as one adopted by many other users (even if possibly only as a technical choice made in the user interface):

”Yes, I do, use like sensible judgement like a little, I think a little like sensitively but like no, not really more than that, well, that's about it [R: Yes, how] I use consideration, for example exactly this that many people have like by default like some Finland-network open [R: yes] I have come into the conclusion that I don't want for it to be like that”
(male employee, 31)

The fifth possible conceptualization would be one in which all Facebook users are defined as ingroup members. There would, thus, be no ingroup-outgroup distinction on the site but the line would be drawn between the online community and others. The situation has evident similarities with the first option but is essentially different. In this case the user would keep his/her profile page accessible to everyone without making distinctions neither between known and unknown people nor between different implicit groups. He/she would communicate freely and publicly on the site. The open approach separates this conceptualization from the others. In this fifth option, there would be no limitations and self-censorship. Logically, such a boundary is possible but it gained no empirical support. It is remarkable that no one of the interviewees was entirely open and careless in their use of the site.

All in all, the interviewees reported few tensions between their ingroups. The next section will investigate in more detail how, in addition to reconceptualizing group boundaries, some practices might inhibit the occurrence of problems due to the co-presence. This prevention of tensions often seemed to be done in an unnoticed manner or be taken to be "business as usual". It was understood as "common sense". The relation of technological design, i.e. the limits the user interface sets on the freedom of users, and the users' representations of group boundaries will be discussed in chapter 10.

8.3 Preventing Conflictual Situations

According to Hofman (1988, 90) flexibility in the hierarchy of social identities and the rationalization, i.e. partial acceptance of some contradiction in one's identities, are common ways to cope with tensions between multiple social identities. On Facebook,

due to the co-presence of multiple groups, the strategy of changing the hierarchy of social identities on function of contexts and situations is hardly at the disposition of users. As it has been seen, many groups co-exist on the site, in one context. The second strategy, rationalization, seems to be more commonly applicable also on a social network site. Yet, it does not wholly explain why the co-presence of groups is for the most part perceived as unproblematic.

Before turning to the analysis on ways of preventing conflictual situations used by the interviewees, a notion on the limits of the co-presence is at place: Even if on Facebook multiple groups are present in one context in principle, in practice this unity can be limited. The interviews show that while everyone is present on the same site, not everything is being shared with everyone. Private issues are dealt with in private messages, the photos uploaded to the site are carefully selected and many things are simply not discussed or communicated on the site. The information that is freely accessible to everyone is limited. Many of the research subjects claimed to be showing only things that they felt they could freely share with everyone (or with everyone in one's personal network).

The platform allows users to create **separate spaces**. Home pages of groups can be made closed so that only members of the groups are capable of entering the page and accessing its contents. As one of the interviewees in the student sample explained, publishing photos on the site was less of an problem as they were only available to members of the group of the faculty. According to him, the members understood the context in which the photos were published:

“-- but on the other hand here as well in the background is also that, like that, that group of our faculty is, is closed so so pictures that I have, that there are of me so those can be seen only by students of our faculty [R: yes] then there in the background surely, in the background comes of course something like that that the students of our faculty maybe understand that it, that the context in which those photos are put there” (male student, 23)

“Of such things that then for example in this group there might be someone that then it that it comes then like or that some things might become public to such people through this that that I don't want that they will find out about it from anywhere in the web but that I think it's nice that I myself then [R: yes] personally say and it is nothing like, that it read in the web (laughter)” (female student, 24)

The second quotation above is an example of how using private messages instead of wall postings allows controlling the privacy and secrecy of communications. Private messages were used for private communication that was not meant to be seen by others for a reason or another. Wall postings were written when the contents of the message were deemed to be harmless and, thus, freely open for public. Such **consideration**,

sometimes outright **self-censorship**, was a common practice amongst the research subjects. Such actions were most popular amongst those who had decided to keep their profile open for everyone. As the quotation below shows, self-censorship was intimately linked with keeping the profile open:

”-- in my opinion these are quite harmless, all of them, but I do of course I do take into consideration it that unless I do some changes there (in the privacy settings) so then aa then everyone sees like what I put there. But then on the other hand if I did set awfully strict (privacy options) that almost no one else was allowed to see them then that would be, there would be no sense in that either then like in my opinion it is like fun to keep it like open [R: yes] and, then not to put such things that one doesn't want that others will see” (male student, 20)

The interviewees also brought up the importance of **trust and responsibility** which were used to explain and justify the considerations made on what could be done on the site. Consideration was used to secure both one's own privacy and that of others. The interviewees understood the situation on the site as one in which mutual interdependence prevailed amongst the users. Interestingly, the interviewees described how their ways of using the site had evolved as they gained more experience of Facebook. The quotation illustrates such a description of one interviewee. He explained that he had been more open in the beginning but had quickly learned to use more consideration in order not to spread his communications too widely around:

”Well yes I do think about it somewhat yes like yes I do think whether I forward something, in the beginning one was maybe a bit more careless, like that one forwarded anything but then, then when one notices that, that they are then pretty well visible to the entire network [R: yes] like what there is, what one has sent to people like messages or other things so then one thinks a little whether or not to put (something on the site)” (male student, 21)

Another way to approach the issue seemed to be the **acceptance of the limits** of one's control and of the risks involved in joining the site. Some of the interviewees brought up that it was better not to worry about the information given on the site, approach the situation calmly and not to take Facebook too seriously.

”Well I don't, these are all things that one can like someday or another if someone wants to know these things of me that are written here so they can find them out without problems quite simply like by calling somewhere to the Statistics Finland or to the Population Register -- I don't think there is anything more special than that that would make me afraid that someone can. Behind everything is also that, that fear of that some people might somehow take advantage of them, but I don't really see, see here such things that could be turned against my, me” (male student, 23)

”--no, I haven't, I haven't thought about it that much, like I think, like it's all the same, let them go, like anyone, it is like a consciously taken risk that one goes here (=joins the site) so there the information will spread but that like, I have accepted it and that's it and the only thing how I control that is that I try to keep to there, I don't invite anyone, like not all people that one could invite there that [R: yes] that through that at least I have like control even though probably those pieces of information can be searched and found some way from there but. I don't stress about it” (male employee, 27)

Pictures were often a touchy point for the interviewees. The quotation below shows how one of the interviewed students, however, brought up that the pictures taken in the events of their faculty were in any case so widely spread that there was no point in worrying about them being on Facebook:

”Eee, mh, well it is possible yes, that, that like, yes. There could be pictures that I would prefer not to be there but even otherwise it seems like our photos have spread so much they are being spread so much usually, people sent them on mailing lists or in other ways that [R: yes] that then they now it is all the same then that where they are” (male student, 21)

All in all, the interviewees reported that they had not had problems with photos, i.e. no one had published on the site photos of them that they would have found offensive or too revealing. Many interviewees had uploaded at least some photos on the site themselves, too. Additionally, amongst those who had not published photos on Facebook, the reasons were often banally technical: they did not have a digital camera, did not care to carry it around and take photos or did not find the time to upload photos on the site.

All of the actions and ways of thinking presented in this section can be interpreted as action taken to deal with the situation taking place on the site. Both individual and group level tensions are widely prevented. Individuals are protecting the harmonious co-presence of groups actively. Interestingly, these preventive actions were understood as normal monitoring of one's behaviour following from common sense. The interviewees themselves did typically not conceive of the situation as one in which they were practicing censorship.

These preventive measures seem to be the key reason explaining why so few tensions are perceived in conditions that on a first glance could be assumed to cause a lot of potential for problematic and conflictual situations. Furthermore, it stands as evidence of the importance of groups on the site: Were the groups not important, individuals presumably would not bother to prevent potential tensions due to their co-presence.

9 Conclusions

While groups on Facebook differ in their roles and significance to the users, the general conclusion of this study is that **groups do matter on social network sites**, too. Groups can be divided into explicit and implicit ones according to whether or not they are defined in the user interface of the site. Explicit groups can be seen as groups based on external criteria since their existence is, at the very least, recognized by Facebook.

When it comes to implicit groups, such a straightforward statement can not be made but, in general, also they are externally recognized. For example, social entities such as students of a certain faculty or employees of a specific enterprise are comprehensible categories also for others. However, due to the focus of this study, the analysis concentrated primarily on internal criteria, i.e. on group identification.

Explicit groups include networks, groups and causes in the Facebook sense of these terms. Amongst them, networks and causes turned out to be less important than groups. The groups were be classified to biographical, recreational and declarative groups. In terms of group identification, biographical and recreational groups were the most important ones, where as declarative groups were used more to build and maintain aspects of personal identity. They were mainly used for self-presentation. The sense of membership in them was weaker than in biographical and recreational groups. Overall, however, **implicit groups**, i.e. categorizations made of the personal network seemed to be more relevant to the users than the explicit ones. This can be explained by the fact that they were even more strongly interconnected to settings beyond Facebook than explicit groups. However, there was significant overlap between implicit and explicit groups.

When presenting both their explicit and implicit group memberships the research subjects brought up multiple groups. This happened both when they brought them into discussion spontaneously and when they were more directly encouraged to discuss groups on Facebook. In conclusion, **co-presence of groups on the site** does indeed occur and the users are aware of it. This result was further on confirmed in the end of the interviews. When the participants were asked directly whether they had perceived tensions or had problems due to the co-presence of multiple groups, no one of them objected to the notion of co-presence. The participants were aware of the situation even if, in general, it seemed to be neither strikingly salient nor problematic to them.

The **perceived tensions** were related to individual relationships or to distant threats more often than to group level issues. However, the potential for group level tensions was recognized to some degree as well. This finding is in line with the general result of the study, i.e. that the co-presence of multiple groups with which one identifies does not necessarily cause social tensions or discrepancies in one's representations. The interviewees' claim that the situation was unproblematic could be taken to be somewhat

controversial with the extensive self-censorship that they were practicing. The analysis shows that the co-presence of multiple groups was unproblematic largely due to the fact that research subjects were using efficient strategies to deal with the situation by preventing tensions. On a higher level, this stands as evidence of the importance of groups on the site: If the groups and identification with them had not been relevant, individuals presumably would not have bothered to prevent potential tensions due to the co-presence of multiple groups.

The analysis of **conceptualizations of group boundaries** revealed two main types of common, more inclusive group identities: members of Facebook as an ingroup and members of one's personal network as an ingroup. The need to differentiate between members of different subcategories was not strong. Furthermore, it should be noted that the user interface of the site does not support differentiations in the personal network so such an option is not explicitly available. However, some of the interviews included signs of restoring these finer group boundaries, too.

In addition to redrawing group boundaries, the users were coping with the co-presence of different groups by **preventing potential tensions** and conflictual situations beforehand. The perceived ease of co-presence can be explained to follow from using consideration in one's postings, maintaining a feeling of control over the situation and accepting risks included in being a member of Facebook. The interviewees understood the situation on the site as one in which mutual interdependence amongst the users existed and reciprocal trust was needed.

10 Discussion

10.1 Theoretical Issues

The results of this study give reason to critique the **dichotomous conceptualization of groups** as separate and opposite entities common in the experiments of social identity approach. This conceptualization is especially salient in the minimal group paradigm studies. Implicit or explicit understandings about an individual's group identification has been based on this presupposition. The co-presence of multiple groups shows that such a distinction is not sufficient when investigating groups and their significance to their members. Individuals are members of multiple groups and, on a social network site, many of these groups are present simultaneously. This means that the notion of multiplicity can not be left out plausibly by concentrating on a specific context in which

only one ingroup-outgroup distinction would be salient, as has been done in much of the previous research. One of the key findings of this study is that many groups that are salient and relevant to an individual can be simultaneously present without the usual conflict situation found in SIT studies. This, however, requires continuous management of group identification. These points should be taken into account in further research situated in social identity approach.

In previous research, **multiple groups and identities** have been typically addressed as somehow extraordinary. Furthermore, another underlying, commonly shared assumption of research on multiple social identities seems to have been that the co-existence of multiple group identifications is problematic and leads to conflictual situations. The results of this study question these assumptions. First of all, as the study brings into view the mundane side of membership in multiple groups, it shows that an individual's different group memberships are not necessarily in contradiction with one another. Furthermore, the results presented in chapter 8 show that individuals find ways to deal with the co-presence and prevent potential tensions it might cause.

There is nothing new nor revolutionary about individuals belonging to multiple groups. Actually, the idea that individuals belong to many groups is embedded in the very foundation of social identity approach (see Tajfel, 1972a). However, the design of various experiments and the implicit assumptions included in them have led to giving little attention to the simultaneous presence of multiple groups.

The classic Minimal Group Paradigm's experimental intergroup studies are an excellent example of how groups were opposed to one another due to a strong division to an ingroup and an outgroup. While studying intergroup relations as separate, individual cases between two groups means neglecting the complex social context in which groups exist, this might have been justifiable due to the limits of the methodology at hand. Social network sites, such as Facebook, form a platform on which some of these methodological constraints are removed. Hence, groups and their significance can be researched also in more complex settings, in relation to one another. Tajfel (1972b) was convinced that group phenomena should not be studied in a social vacuum. Based on this study, even when taking methodological constraints into account, they need not be studied as such.

Furthermore, the results of the study reveal an interesting **interplay between social and personal aspects of identity**. Individuals present groups in their profiles not only to

show affiliation with certain social categories and to be seen as members of those but also to present personal attributes. On Facebook, groups can be used to achieve a positive self-concept by distinctiveness in both personal and social identities. When this is taken into account, the principles of social identity approach seem capable of offering plausible explanations in this new technological context, too.

It can be argued that in some cases group membership in explicit groups is used to present personal attributes instead of belongingness to a certain social category. Additionally, identification with multiple groups can be seen to serve not only social identity functions but also one's sense of uniqueness. In the research material, this was most evident in relation to explicit groups. Snyder and Fromkin (1980) state that multiple group membership might promote the sense of uniqueness. The larger the number of groups, the more there is uniqueness, since the pattern of multiple group memberships becomes increasingly personal. (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980.)

Finally, another theoretically interesting issue are the results on how individuals deal with the co-presence that occurs on the site. According to this study, prevention of potential tensions has an important role in maintaining the situation bearable. However, an important aspect of coping with the situation is also how the situation is perceived in the first place, more precisely, the **conceptualization of group boundaries**. Self-categorization theory suggests that when the comparative context that a perceiver confronts is extended so that it includes a range of more different stimuli, salient self-categories will be more inclusive and will be defined at a higher level of abstraction (Haslam, 2004). Such a phenomenon seems indeed to be taking place, either on the level of one's personal network or on the level of the entire Facebook community.

Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman and Rust (1993) introduce the common ingroup identity model as a means of reducing intergroup bias. The model proposes that bias can be reduced by factors that transform members' perceptions of group boundaries from "us" and "them" to a more inclusive "we". (Gaertner et al., 1993, 1-2.) The model is concentrated on the reduction of prejudices and discrimination, as it stems from Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis. However, the similarities of the model to the individuals' reconceptualizations of group boundaries on Facebook (see section 8.2) are evident. Elements of the model could, thus, be useful also in understanding how, from an individuals' point of view, the co-presence of multiple groups can be made unproblematic.

10.2 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of the study that must be discussed. The empirical material of this study gives feasible indices of the implications of multiplicity of groups and the mechanisms at place to cope with it. However, to fully understand the phenomenon one would also need a sample of Facebook drop-outs, very passive users and of people who have not to join the site in the first place, as well as of very active Facebook users with a long experience of using the site.

All of the research subjects were **relatively new users of Facebook**. It is possible that their perceptions might change as time goes by and their personal network on the site matures, assuming that they will continue using the site for a longer period of time. Personal networks typically contain people from various contexts, all of whom are somehow important to the user. However, social networks are not static. Life events such as breaking up, changing jobs or graduating have their influence on one's social networks, logically also on those maintained online. Whether such changes bring about tensions, on group level or otherwise, can not be answered based on this study.

Another aspect following from the **maturation of one's network** is its growth. The implications and range of this growth are beyond the scope of this study. When more and more people have access to the updates one is making on the site, the situation might be perceived more problematic. The potential problems need not be abstract discrepancies, they can be understood in quite practical terms. For example, would one's personal network be international, i.e. containing people with different mothertongues and language capacities, the choice of language one is updating his/her status serves as a concrete spot of deciding who is the audience of the update and who is not. Such decisions might make the users uneasy and possibly put them in a conflictual position between the expectations of different groups.

As was stated before, remarks on **membership in vast social categories** such as nationality, ethnicity, gender and social class were largely absent in the interview material. They were, thus, left with little attention in the analysis. However, it is not plausible to assume that these social categories would be of no importance on social network sites. Following the path of thought of Lorenzi-Cioldi (2002), it can be claimed that group membership becomes more invisible when it is normative. It is likely that the

interviewees did not find their nationality, socioeconomic status, age or educational background in any way marginal in the context of the study. Thus, these group memberships may not have been salient to them in the research situation. Additionally, from a lay perspective such categories are not necessarily understood as group memberships.

All of the interviewees were native Finns, living in Finland by the time of the interview. This might explain, at least partially, why nationality as a group membership was not brought up in the discussion by the interviewees and why it did not seem salient to them. **Gender**, on the other hand, is such a profoundly present categorization in our culture that it is not easily understood in terms of membership in a social category. Another factor that is deeply rooted in our society is **age**. All of the research subjects were young adults. It is not out of question to assume that had the age range been broader, empirical findings might have been different, too. Another point to consider is whether social network sites are an age-specific phenomenon that concerns primarily youngsters and young adults. However, it might be more plausible to see the members of these age categories as trend setters or early adopters in the domain of social network sites.

Even while these vast categories are not specially addressed in this study, they should be taken into account in understanding the empirical findings. Qualitative research is not striving to generalizations on the level of any given population but it is, in any case, important to understand that the background of the research subjects and the social setting in which the research material was produced have an influence on the research process and its results.

Another point in considering the **generalizability of the results** of this study is to evaluate how applicable they are to social network sites other than Facebook. While each site has its own specificities, similar co-presence can be assumed to take place on all sites which enable the creation and maintenance of personal profiles and explicit social networks.

Methodologically, it is problematic that the online observation method adopted in this study does not capture interactions that take place via other media. The picture given by the observation material is forcefully limited to the public actions on the site. On the

other hand, interviews as a means of producing research material have their limitations as well. The interview setting and the questions asked influence inevitably the material that is being created. All research based on interview material is faced with the potential problem of interviewees explaining what they think they do or what they think they should do instead of what they are actually doing.

The interview material makes it obvious that many actions taking place on the site are unreflected, sometimes even unintentional. When observing the mini-feed of a user, it would be easy to assume that the actions taken on the site and the image given by them are intentional. However, this is not always the case. The material showed that it is not evident that users know how the site functions, neither are they necessarily aware of their membership in a certain network or of their privacy settings. In this study, the solution adopted in response to these methodological challenges was to combine observation and interview material.

10.3 Remarks on the Technological Context

The **interplay of technological and social aspects** on Facebook is interesting. Technology plays a key role in causing the co-presence of multiple groups. Furthermore, it also offers solutions to the potential problems following from this co-presence. In practice, group boundaries are being drawn and maintained using the possibilities offered by the user interface. These actions are reflected upon the conceptualizations of group boundaries, too. The technological setting is not merely a passive context for social action but it influences both actions and representations of the users. It brings to one context groups that in face-to-face interactions belong to different settings.

Facebook pushes users primarily to draw group boundaries in a permanent manner. Basically, based on this study, users are either sharing more information with fewer people or sharing less information with more people, i.e. sharing their updates on the site with everyone but making sure not to communicate anything too delicate or private. However, situational decisions can be made as well, since users are not merely passively accepting the options offered to them in the user interface. This is most evident in the case of restoring the subcategories in one's personal network and taking them into consideration by decisions of what and via which channel to communicate. Technology influences but does, by no means, determine the social interaction taking place on the site. The users are actively using the site to serve their own purposes as

well as they can and, when necessary, creating techniques to overcome the limitations imposed on them by the technology.

The possibility to send private messages to others instead of making public wall postings seems to give the users a feeling of agency. Another option in their disposition is to stay in touch via other channels such as e-mail, telephone or face-to-face interaction. Both of these options were commonly used amongst the interviewees. This liberty secures one the possibility to shift potentially controversial or problematic communications from the socially shared realm to a private, more exclusive one. Furthermore, even if Facebook is one platform on which many groups are simultaneously present, it can in practice be separated into multiple separate spaces. The existence of closed and secret groups and the wide spread use of private messages stand as evidence of this. This can be seen to question the main result of this study, i.e. the occurrence of co-presence of multiple groups. However, such separating actions can be better conceived of as one of the ways to cope with the co-presence occurring on the site.

It seems that on Facebook things that are perceived to be important, are not readily shared freely. However, the causal relation is not necessarily this. It is as plausible to state that what is private and exclusive is seen as more important and valuable than things that are shared with everyone. Even if strict ingroup-outgroup distinctions are largely absent and replaced by more inclusive group boundaries, the themes of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the line between public and private, are present and relevant in this technological context.

Another aspect of the technological context that should be noticed is **the relation of online and offline settings**. The research material bears evidence of the strong interconnectedness of online and offline settings. The research subjects were all using their real name on the site and their personal networks consisted solely of people they had learned to know in some other setting than on Facebook. No one had made acquaintances on the site and many were reluctant to do so in the future, either. In general, the interviewed students were more open for meeting people than the employees. Even then, however, they were sceptical of just how the initial steps of learning to know someone on the site could happen. The unification of online and offline settings was true of groups, too. Overlap between explicit and implicit groups

was remarkable and the participants' personal networks consisted solely of people known primarily from some other context than Facebook. Hence, a metalevel conclusion of this study is that online and offline settings should not be studied as separate spheres of life. They are interlinked, if not inseparable, and neither of them is more "real" than the other.

10.4 Ideas for Further Research

The goal of gaining more understanding of the co-presence occurring on Facebook could be attained, for example, by studying **different types of Facebook users and non-users**. When researching a technological context, it is not sufficient to study only active users. Taking into account also the points of view of non-users, both ones that never signed up and ones that dropped out, could increase the understanding of the phenomenon remarkably. Such a focus might, for example, help to shed more light on the implications of co-presence and bring into view critical assessments of social network sites. It would also be interesting to make comparative studies with other social network sites in order to find out whether a similar situation indeed takes place on them, too. Additionally, studying the significance of vast social categories such as gender and nationalities on social network sites would be of interest. Adopting an age sensitive approach to these thematics might be fruitful and recommendable, too.

Individuals make constantly choices between **different channels of communication**. The logic behind these decisions in specific situations is still widely unknown. Research on the topic could best be realized by including to the study not only the communication channels of a specific social network site but by striving to understand the totality of mediated and face-to-face interaction. The theme is related to the broader thematics of **privacy**. Privacy is often conceptualized in terms of data security and the management of risks related to distant threats such as hackers and identity thieves. However, the results of this study show that it should be understood also as seemingly mundane, social issues of everyday life. Social psychological research could certainly have an important role to play in bringing this topic into discussion and deepening the understanding of this side of privacy.

11 References

- Abrams, D. & Hogg, M. A. (2001). Collective Identity: Group Membership and Self-Conception. In Hogg, M. A. & Tindale, S. (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes* (pp. 425-460). Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Alasuutari, P. (1994). *Laadullinen tutkimus*. Second edition. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Ashforth, B. E. & Mael, F. (1989). Social Identity Theory and the Organization. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14 (1), 20—39.
- Bargh J. & McKenna K. (2004). Plan 9 From Cyberspace: The implications of the Internet for Personality and Social Psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4(1), 57-75.
- Billig, M. & Tajfel, H. (1973). Social categorization and similarity in intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 3(1), 27-52.
- Bourhis, R. Y. & Gagnon A. (2001) Social Orientations in the Minimal Group Paradigm. In Brown, R. & Gaertner, S. (Eds.) *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes* (pp. 89-111). Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- boyd, d. m. & Ellison, N. B. (2007) Social Network Sites: Definition, history and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230.
- Brewer, M. B. (1999). Multiple identities and identity transition: Implications for Hong Kong. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 23(2), 187-197.
- Brewer, M. B. & Gaertner, S. L. (2001). Toward Reduction of Prejudice: Intergroup Contact and Social Categorization. In Brown, R. & Gaertner, S. L. (Eds.) *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intergroup Processes* (pp. 451-472). Malden: Blackwell.
- Brown R. (2000). *Group Processes. Dynamics within and between Groups*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Ellemers, N. Kortekaas, P. & Ouwerkerk, J. W. (1999). Self-categorisation, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29, 371—389.
- Ellison, N. Steinfield, C. Lampe, C. (2006). *Spatially Bounded Online Social Networks and Social Capital: The Role of Facebook*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany.
- Emerson, R. (1960). *From Empire to Nation. The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Eskola, J. (2001). Laadullisen tutkimuksen juhannustaiat. Laadullisen aineiston analyysi vaihe vaiheelta. In Ahola & Valli (Eds.). *Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin II. Näkökulmia*

aloittelevalle tutkijalle tutkimuksen teoreettisiin lähtökohtiin ja analyysimenetelmiin.
Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Festinger, L. (1954). A Theory of Social Comparison Processes. *Human Relations*, 7, 117-140.

Flick, U. (2006). *Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Gaertner, S. L., Dovidio, J. F., Anastasio, P. A., Bachman, B. A. and Rust, M. C. (1993). The Common Ingroup Identity Model: Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 4(1), 1 – 26.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Grönfors, M. (2001). Havaintojen teko aineistonkeräyksen menetelmänä. In Aaltola, J. & Valli R. (Eds.), *Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin I. Metodien valinta ja aineistonkeruu: virikkeitä aloittelevalle tutkijalle* (pp. 124–141). Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Haslam, S. A. (2001). *Psychology in Organizations. The Social Identity Approach*. London: Sage.

Haslam, S. A. (2004). *Psychology in Organizations. The Social Identity Approach*. Second edition. London: Sage.

Hofman, J. E. (1988). Social Identity and Intergroup Conflict: An Israeli view. In Stroebe W., Kruglanski A. W., Bar-Tal D. & Hewstone, M. (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict. Theory, Research and Applications* (pp. 89-102). Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

Hogg, A. & Terry D. (2000). Social Identity and Self-Categorization Processes in Organizational Contexts. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 121-140.

Kinket B. & Verkuyten M. (1997). Levels fo Ethnic Self-Identification and Social Context. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 60(4), 338-354.

Lampe C., Ellison N. & Steinfield C. (2007). A Familiar Face(book): Profile Elements as Signals in an Online Social Network. *CHI 2007 Proceedings. Online Representation of Self*. San Jose, California, USA.

Lange, A. (1989). Identifications, Perceived Cultural Distance and Stereotypes in Yugoslav and Turkish Youth in Stockholm. In K. Liebkind (Ed.), *New Identities in Europe: Immigrant Ancestry and the Ethnic Identity of Youth* (pp. 169-218). Aldershot: Gower.

Lorenzi-Cioldi, F. (2002). *Les représentations des groupes dominants et dominés. Collections et agrégats*. Grenoble: PUG (Presses Universitaires de Grenoble).

McKenna K. & Bargh J. (2004). The Internet and Social Life. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, 573-590.

- Medrano, J. D. & Gutierrez, P. (2001). Nested identities: national and European identity in Spain. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24, 753-778.
- Pennington, D. C. (2002). *The social psychology of behaviour in small groups*. Hove: Psychology Press.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup Contact Theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65-85.
- Ristolainen H., Hankonen N. & Lehtinen V. (2007). Sosiaalipsykologisia lähestymistapoja verkkovuorovaikutukseen. *Psykologia*, 42(4), 276-288.
- Rosenbloom, S. (2007, December 17). On Facebook, Scholars Link Up With Data. *The New York Times*.
- Sachdev, I. & Bourhis, R. Y. (1991). Power and status differentials in minority and majority group relations. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 21(1), 1-24.
- Shotter, J. (1984). *Social accountability and selfhood*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Shotter, J. & Gergen, K. J. (Eds.) (1989). *Texts of Identity*. London: Sage.
- Sirin, S. R. & Balsano, A. B. (2007). Editors' Introduction: Pathways to identity and positive development among muslim youth in the west. *Applied Developmental Science*, 11(3), 109-111.
- Skevington, S., & Baker, D. (1989). *The social identity of women*. London: Sage.
- Sherif, M. (1966) *In Common Predicament. Social psychology of intergroup conflict and cooperation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Smith E. R. & Mackie D. M. (2007). *Social Psychology*. Third edition. New York: Psychology Press.
- Snyder, C. R. & Fromkin, H. L. (1980). *Uniqueness. The Human Pursuit of Difference*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Tajfel, H., Billig, M., Bundy, R. P. & Flament, C. (1971). Social categorization and intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of social Psychology*. 1(2), 149-178.
- Tajfel, H. (1972a). La catégorisation sociale. In Moscovici (ed.), *Introduction à la psychologie sociale* (pp. 272-302). Paris: Larousse.
- Tajfel, H. (1972b). Experiments in a vacuum. In Israel, J. & Tajfel H (Eds.), *The Context of Social Psychology* (pp. 69-119). London: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). The psychological structure of intergroup behaviour. In Tajfel, H. (ed.), *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations. European Monographs in Social Psychology*, 14. London: Academic Press.

Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C. (1979) An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. In Austin, W. G. & Worchel, S. (Eds.) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. (pp. 33-48). Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Tajfel, H. (1982). Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33, 1-39.

Tolman, E. C. (1943). Identification and the Post-War World. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 38(2), 141-148.

Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. (2002). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. Jyväskylä: Gummerrus Kirjapaino Oy.

Turner, J. C. (1975). Social comparison and social identity: Some prospects for intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 5(11), 5-34.

Turner, J. C. (1982). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In Tajfel, H. (Ed.) *Social identity and intergroup relations* (pp. 15-40). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, J. C. (1984). Social identification and psychological group formation. In Tajfel, H. (ed.) *The social dimension. European developments in social psychology*. Volume I. (pp. 526-527). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, J. C. & Oakes, P. J. (1997). The socially structured mind. In McGarty C. & Haslam, S. A. (Eds.) *The Message of Social Psychology. Perspectives on Mind in Society* (pp. 355-373). Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Turner, J. C. (1999) Some Current Issues in Research on Social Identity and Self-categorization Theories. In Ellemers, N., Spears, R. & Doosje, B. (Eds.) *Social Identity. Context, Commitment, Content* (pp. 6-34). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Turner (2000). Preface. In Haslam, S. A. (2001). *Psychology in Organizations. The Social Identity Approach*. (pp. x-xiii). London: Sage.

Verkuyten, M. (2005). *The Social Psychology of Ethnic Identity*. East Sussex: Psychology Press.

Wentholt, R. (1991). *Membership identity: Structure and dynamics*. Rotterdam: Erasmus University. ref. Verkuyten, 2005.

Wiberg, M. (1991). Mitä etiikka yhteiskuntatieteilijöille kuuluu? In Löppönen, P., Mäkelä, P. H. & Paunio, K. (Eds.). *Tiede ja etiikka*. (pp 202-226). Porvoo: WSOY.

Web References

Facebook. URL (consulted March 29,2008): <http://www.facebook.com/press.php>.

Facebook, causes. URL (consulted February 4, 2008):

<http://apps.facebook.com/causes/help>.

Facebook, networks. URL (consulted April 8, 2008):

<http://www.facebook.com/networks/networks.php>.

Facebook, statistics. URL (consulted April 8, 2008):

<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>.

Irc-galleria. URL (consulted March 29,2008): <http://irc-galleria.net>.

LinkedIn. URL (consulted April 8, 2008): <http://www.linkedin.com>.

MySpace. URL (consulted April 8, 2008): <http://www.myspace.com>.

Research on Social Network Sites. URL (consulted March 19,2008):

<http://www.danah.org/SNSResearch.html>.

Appendixes

Appendix 1. Interview outline.

Haastattelusuunnitelma

(Haastattelun alussa näyttö on auki Facebookin sisäänkirjautumissivulla)

Aluksi muutamia yleisiä kysymyksiä koskien taustatietoja:

- ikä
- (sukupuoli)
- opinto- ja työtausta lyhyesti
- Käytätkö muita verkostoitumissivuja kuin Facebookia? Oletko aiemmin käyttänyt? (Mikäli kyllä, voidaan tarkentaa siihen, miksi on lopettanut käytön tms.)
- Miten tulit liittyneeksi Facebookin käyttäjäksi? Milloin tämä tapahtui?
- Kuinka usein käytät Facebookia? Missä käyttö pääsääntöisesti tapahtuu? Oletko käyttänyt Facebookin mobiilikäyttöliittymää?

Voisitko nyt kirjautua sisään sivustolle ja kertoa samalla, mitä teet.

- Kerro omin sanoin, mitä tavallisesti teet, kun kirjaudut sisään.
- Mihin tietoihin kiinnität ensin huomiota, mihin sitten?
- Mitkä tiedot uutissyötteessä ovat kiinnostavia?
- Kuinka usein seuraat näitä linkkejä saadaksesi lisätietoa jostain asiasta? Entä kuinka usein vieraillet muuten vain toisten profiilisivuilla? Keiden sivuilla pääasiallisesti? Mitkä osat niissä ovat sinusta kiinnostavia?
- Kutsutko ihmisiä mukaan käyttämään näitä sovelluksia tms.? Millä perusteella lähetät kutsuja?

Voisitko seuraavaksi esitellä profiilisivuasi.

- Minkälaisia osia se pitää sisällään?
- Minkälaisia sovelluksia olet liittänyt profiiliisi? Miksi nämä? (Jos mainitsee, ettei halua lisätä sovelluksia, tästä voidaan tarkentaa hieman, miksi ei)
 - Miten päädyit ottamaan nämä sovellukset käyttöön?
 - Milloin olet viimeksi ottanut jonkun sovelluksen käyttöön? Entä milloin olet viimeksi poistanut jonkun sovelluksen?
- Mitä osia siitä/Facebookista käytät eniten? (Jos tässä nousee jotain selkeästi esiin, siihen voi myöhemmässä vaiheessa kiinnittää erityishuomiota – yksilölle merkityksellistä!) Milloin olet viimeksi päivittänyt profiiliasi jollakin tavalla (sovellukset, status-päivitys tms.)?
- (Tästä kysymyksestä voidaan siirtyä siihen haastattelun osaan, johon tutkimushenkilön vastauksesta luontevasti päästään, kunhan lopulta käydään läpi kaikki oleelliset moduulit)

Kerro henkilökohtaisesta ystäväverkostostasi Facebookissa. Jos haluat, voit käyttää sivustoa apunasi (jos kysyy miten, voidaan mainita esim. Friend list, Social timeline).

- Keitä ystäväverkostoosi kuuluu?

- Kuuluuko ystäväverkostoosi henkilöitä, jotka tunnet ainoastaan Facebookin välityksellä?
- (Mikäli tässä nousee esiin ryhmiä, voidaan niistä kysyä lisää: mikä on Facebookin merkitys ryhmän toiminnalle? Millaisia henkilöitä ryhmään kuuluu? jne.)
- Voitko kuvailla, miten se on syntynyt? (Kuvausta siitä, miten prosessi etenee – mainitaanko tässä ryhmiä jossakin roolissa?)
- Ketkä ovat pyytäneet sinua ystäväkseen?
 - Milloin viimeksi hyväksyit jonkun pyynnön?
 - Entä milloin viimeksi hylkäsit pyynnön?
 - (Jos ei ole koskaan hylännyt) Pystyisitkö kuvailemaan tilanteen, jossa päätyisit hylkäämään pyynnön?
- Entä keitä olet itse pyytänyt ystäviksesi?
 - Miten olet päättänyt kutsumaan juuri heidät mukaan ystäväverkostoosi?
 - Käyttivätkö he jo Facebookia vai kutsuitko heidät liittymään sivustolle?
 - (Jos käyttivät jo) Miten sait tietää, että hekin käyttävät Facebookia?
- Katsotaan sitten Friend wheel –kuva ystäväverkostostasi (mikäli kuva ei ole entuudestaan tuttu, selitetään FW:n toimintaperiaate).
 - Voisitko kuvailla sitä hieman.
 - Näkyykö kuvassa jotain yllättävää?
 - (Voidaan kysyä tarkentavia kysymyksiä tiheästi linkittyneistä kohdista jne.)
 - Jos täältä erottuu ryhmiä, voidaan kysellä mm. Oletko yleensä yhteydessä ryhmän jäseniin Facebookin välityksellä vai jollain muulla tavalla? Kuinka tärkeä rooli Facebookilla on ryhmän toiminnalle? Onko ryhmän toiminta muuttunut Facebookin myötä? (riippuen ryhmän luonteesta)
- Mitä ystäväverkosto Facebookissa merkitsee sinulle? Miten se suhteutuu sosiaaliseen verkostoosi yleisesti? Koetko, että ystäväverkostosi Facebookissa eroaa jotenkin muusta/muista verkostoista? Jos kyllä, miten?

Puhutaan seuraavaksi hieman ryhmistä, joihin kuulut Facebookissa.

- Mihin verkostoihin kuulut? (Jos ei osaa vastata, ohjataan katsomaan profiilia: Näyt kuuluvan verkostoon X.) (Jos henkilö kuuluu useampaan kuin yhteen verkostoon, keskustellaan jokaisesta vuorollaan)
 - Miten päädyit liittymään tähän verkostoon?
 - Milloin tämä tapahtui?
 - Milloin olet viimeksi käynyt verkoston sivulla?
 - Milloin olet viimeksi päivittänyt verkoston sivua (jättänyt sinne viestin, ladannut kuvia tms.)?
- Voitko kertoa vielä tarkemmin Facebook-ryhmistä, joihin näyt kuuluvan (tässäkin voidaan käyttää profiilisivua apuna). (Jos henkilö kuuluu useampaan kuin yhteen ryhmään, käydään kaikki ryhmät läpi. Pyydetään tutkimushenkilöä kuitenkin keskittymään kuvauksessa tärkeimmiksi kokemuksiensa ja tarpeen mukaan voidaan jättää muut vähemmälle huomiolle)
 - Miten tulit liittyneeksi siihen?
 - Milloin tämä tapahtui?
 - Millainen ryhmä on kyseessä? Millaisia henkilöitä siihen kuuluu?

- Onko ryhmän jäsenten joukossa henkilöitä, jotka kuuluvat myös ystäväverkostoosi Facebookissa?
- Entä kuuluuko ryhmään henkilöitä, jotka haluaisit / joita et haluaisi osaksi ystäväverkostoasi?
- Onko ryhmässä sellaisia henkilöitä, joiden tiedät kuuluvan johonkin toiseenkin ryhmään, jonka jäsen myös sinä olet?
- Milloin olet viimeksi käynyt ryhmän sivulla? Mitä teit siellä?
- Milloin olet viimeksi päivittänyt ryhmän sivua jollakin tavalla (jättänyt sinne viestin, ladannut kuvia tms.)?
- Entä milloin olet viimeksi ollut yhteydessä jonkun ryhmän jäsenen kanssa?
- Oletko yleensä yhteydessä ryhmän jäseniin Facebookin välityksellä vai jollain muulla tavalla? Kuinka tärkeä rooli Facebookilla on ryhmän toiminnalle? Onko ryhmän toiminta muuttunut Facebookin myötä? (riippuen ryhmän luonteesta)
- Mitä nämä ryhmät Facebookissa merkitsevät sinulle? Onko eri ryhmillä eri merkitys? Entä miten ne suhteutuvat muihin ryhmiin, joihin koet kuuluvasi?

Seuraavaksi minulla olisi vielä joitakin tarkentavia kysymyksiä liittyen Facebook-ryhmiin (näitä kysytään sen mukaan, mitä ei ole tullut aiemmasta ilmi).

- Milloin olet viimeksi liittynyt johonkin ryhmään?
 - Miten päädyit liittymään tähän ryhmään?
- Milloin olet viimeksi eronnut jostakin ryhmästä?
 - Miten päädyit eroamaan tästä ryhmästä?
- Oletko koskaan itse perustanut ryhmää?
 - Miten päätit perustaa sen? Mitä varten?
 - Ketä kutsuit mukaan?
 - Mihin käytät(te)/käytit(te) ryhmän sivua?
 - (Entä oletko perustanut Facebookiin tapahtumaa? Esim. kutsunut ihmisiä jonnekin sen avulla? Kertoisitko tarkemmin.)
- Milloin viimeksi hyväksyit pyynnön liittyä johonkin ryhmään? Kuvaile hieman tilannetta.
- Entä milloin viimeksi hylkäsit pyynnön liittyä johonkin ryhmään? Voitko kertoa tilanteesta hieman tarkemmin.
- Entä milloin viimeksi kutsuit jonkun liittymään johonkin ryhmään? Mihin, kenet?
- Oletko jättänyt liittymättä johonkin ryhmään, johon olisit ehkä halunnut liittyä?
- Entä oletko liittynyt johonkin ryhmään, johon et oikeastaan olisi halunnut liittyä?

Voitko kertoa siitä, miten käytät Facebookia viestintään.

- Millä tavalla kommunikoit Facebookin välityksellä? Miten pidät yhteyttä Facebook-ystäviisi sivustolla?
- Minkätyyppisiä viestejä lähetät Facebookissa? (Seinäkirjoituksia, yksityisviestejä, muita viestinnän keinoja? Pelit tms. ja erilaiset requestit?)
- Kuinka usein lähetät viestejä?
- Milloin olet viimeksi kirjoittanut jonkun ystäväsi seinälle? Voitko kertoa tilanteesta.

- Milloin olet viimeksi lähettänyt viestin Facebookin viestitoiminnon avulla? Voitko kertoa tilanteesta.
- Entä onko jotain muita viestintäkeinoja, joita käytät Facebookissa? (Sovellukset, pelit tms.)

Voitko kertoa valokuvista Facebookissa. (Jos tutkimushenkilön profiilissa on valokuvakansioita, voidaan viitata niihin ja keskustella niistä)

- Milloin olet viimeksi ladannut kuvia Facebookiin? Millä perusteella valitsit lataamasi kuvat? Voitko kuvailla, millaisia kuvia ja mihin latsit.
- Jos et ole koskaan ladannut kuvia, onko tähän jokin erityinen syy?
- Minkälaisia kuvia mielestäsi voi ladata? Onko kuvia, joita et halua jakaa Facebookin välityksellä? Millaisia?
- Milloin viimeksi joku lisäsi kuvan sinusta? Onko sinusta koskaan lisätty kuvaa, jonka et olisi halunnut olevan Facebookissa? Voisitko kertoa tilanteesta tarkemmin.

Facebookissa on mahdollista säädellä sitä, kuka näkee sinne lisäämäsi tiedot. Voitko kertoa, miten olet rajannut tietojesi saatavuutta. Jos haluat, voit käyttää sivuston privacy settings –valikkoa apunasi.

- Kenen toivot seuraavan päivityksiäsi?
- Onko henkilöitä, joiden et halua näkevän tietoja itsestäsi?
- Vaikuttaako se, että tiedot (profiilitiedot, viestit, päivitykset) ovat monien nähtävillä, siihen, minkälaisia tietoja palveluun lisäät?

Tuleeko mieleesi osia sosiaalisesta verkostostasi, jotka eivät ole tai joiden et tiedä olevan Facebookissa? Onko sinulle tärkeitä ryhmiä? Voisitko kertoa hieman tarkemmin. (Pyritään selvittämään, onko olemassa tutkimushenkilölle tärkeitä ryhmiä(/henkilöitä), jotka ovat kokonaan Facebookin ulkopuolisia)

- Haluaisitko heidän liittyvän?
- Entä onko sellaisia, joiden et toivoisi liittyvän?
- Voitko antaa esimerkkejä tällaisista tapauksista.

(Jos edeltävän perustella näin on, kysytään) Ystäväverkostoosi Facebookissa kuuluu monia henkilöitä ja eri ryhmien jäseniä.

- Onko tämä koskaan synnyttänyt ristiriitaisia tai hankalia tilanteita?
- Voitko antaa jonkin esimerkin. Miten ratkaisit tilanteen?
- Tuleeko mieleesi vielä muita tapauksia?
- (Jos ei ole) Voisitko kuvitella, että näin voisi käydä? Millainen tilanne voisi olla kyseessä?

Voisitko vielä lopuksi kertoa, onko jotain oleellista jäänyt mielestäsi käsittelemättä? Haluaisitko kertoa vielä jostain liittyen Facebookiin ja tapoihisi käyttää sitä

Appedix 2. Illustration of the Friend Wheel -application.

The Friend wheel is an application that creates a visual illustration of the personal network of a user. It presents in a circle all the friends a person has on Facebook. Each individual is illustrated by a dot and all friendships (=explicited connections) are visualized by a connecting line between the two dots presenting the people in question. Names are written next to the dots accordingly. The picture below is the Friend Wheel of one of the interviewees. All names have been removed in order to assure confidentiality.

