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Facebook as a New Source of Social Exclusion in the Web 2.0 Era

New media are one of the main subjects studied by social sciences today (Castells, 2000; Filiciak & Ptaszek, 2009; Gergen, 1991; Grzenia, 2012; Jung, 2010; Korab, 2010; Mielczarek, 2012; Ślusarczyk, 2011; Wileczek, 2011). Researchers conduct comparative analyses of old and new media in an attempt to capture and understand changes at the psychological and social level (Briggs & Burke, 2009; van Dijk, 1999; Tapscott, 2009). In this context, the present article aims to analyse Facebook not as a platform offering new opportunities (*the Facebook effect*; see Bąk, 2016),[1] but as a place where old social divisions are replaced by new ones. I will also demonstrate that Facebook generates a new, peculiar kind of exclusion – hitherto unknown, albeit based on well-known mechanisms: social media exclusion.

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[1] *The Facebook effect* (Pol. *efekt Facebooka*) is a phrase that gained currency following the publication of David Kirkpatrick's *The Facebook effect: The inside story of the company that is connecting the world* (Kirkpatrick, 2010); Polish edition: *Efekt Facebooka*, trans. Michał Lipa (Kirkpatrick, 2011) (translator's note).

The cyberreal world

Often used with reference to the world of computers, the term virtual reality may be defined as "a set of images and sounds produced by a computer, which <u>seem to</u> [emphasis K. N. S.] represent a place or a situation that a person can take part in" ("Virtual reality", 2008). Wikipedia, in turn, defines virtual reality as "a computer technology that replicates an environment, real or imagined, and simulates a user's physical presence and environment in a way that allows the user to interact with it" ("Virtual reality", n.d.). It must be stressed that, as observed by Umberto Eco (Eco, 1984) and Jean Baudrillard (Baudrillard, 1995), for many users the world shown on the computer or television screen is more real than the world in which the events actually happen. In Eco's terminology (Eco, 1984), this means that virtual reality is hyperreal, or more real than reality itself, which blurs the boundary between them. The virtual world is very often a world with no real referents, i.e. a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994). According to Baudrillard, events reported by media do not have to actually take place; a non-existent, simulated reality may be created (Baudrillard, 1995), which is nevertheless taken as real and makes an impact on society as a social fact in Durkheim's sense of the term. Following this line of thinking it may be claimed that at the outset every innovative work constitutes a simulacrum, since it does not have a prototype. Only when it becomes part of broadly understood culture, as a social fact detached from its creator and belonging to society, does it become a reference point for its copies. In such a view, it can be assumed that all social reality by definition is hyperreal, since at the moment of its creation no element of culture has a prototype in reality, i.e. it is a simulacrum, and it becomes an element of culture only when it is disseminated. By analogy, what is called virtual[2] should be seen as an element of reality as real as other elements of culture (Sobczak, 2014).[3] This thesis is crucial to the argument of the present article and provides the starting point for the claim that Internet activity is as important as the activity outside the Web, and has a similar impact on the lives of individuals.

　　　Since the division into the real and virtual world can no longer be maintained, I propose the term **cyberreal world** to describe the one world of human life. In order

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[2] This notion, depending on the definition, includes both the computer-modelled world (Korab, 2010), broadly understood mediated communication (Aboujaoude, 2011; Klimczewska, 2010; Marody, 2010) and everything that is not real.

[3] The concept of cyberreal world and arguments for the adoption of such perspective are presented in the article "Tożsamość czy tożsamości? Ja w świecie cyberrealnym" (Identity or Identities? The Self in the Cyberreal World) (Sobczak, 2014)

to highlight the differences between the space within and outside computers, we must assume that the cyberreal world is composed of two spheres: the digital and analogue one. The analogue sphere comprises those elements of reality which cannot be recorded in the computer-intelligible language of electrical impulses (with the use of digital devices), while the digital sphere includes everything that is recorded in the language of computer technology (Sobczak, 2014). In the digital sphere one can observe phenomena and processes which are familiar from the analogue sphere, and which result from similar causes, including a change of behaviour. Every individual who enters the Internet remains the same person, and there is no such thing as a different e-personality.[4]

The Internet and the problem of social exclusion

The postulate of the existence of cyberreality is crucial, since it makes it possible to view the digital world as one and the same with the analogue world and ruled by similar (and often identical) mechanisms. They may take different forms and vary in intensity, but their core remains the same. For this reason, all the phenomena and processes observed in society at large – including social exclusion – may appear on the Web, if not necessarily in the same way. Is it possible that mechanisms of exclusion should develop in the digital sphere where the differences of age and social status usually do not matter too much?

For the purposes of this text I assume that social exclusion means inability to participate in the broadly understood social life (both in the analogue and digital dimension) despite one's willingness to do so (see Lister, 2004). According to Ruth Lister, social exclusion may be analysed not only in economic and social categories, but also political (political and civil rights), cultural (participation in cultural events, contact with art, access to communication technologies) and spatial ones (Lister, 2004). In the world where the role of computers and the Internet is becoming more and more important, digital exclusion of the first and second degree is also increasingly relevant. The first degree social exclusion concerns a lack or inadequacy of infrastructure permitting the use of technology, while the second degree exclusion involves a lack of skills which enable one to use technology in practice (Czerniawska, 2012). According to data provided by the Central Statistical Office of Poland for the years 2010–2014 (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2014), there is a positive

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[4] The question of the change of personality on the Internet is discussed in detail in the article "Tożsamość czy tożsamości? Ja w świecie cyberrealnym" (Sobczak, 2014).

correlation between ownership of a computer and access to the Internet in the household and the size of village/town/city where one lives and the level of urbanisation of the region. What is more, in 2014, 63.5% of those surveyed used the Internet regularly, and this group comprised mainly young people (in the 16–24 and 25–34 age groups the figures exceeded 90%), university graduates (94.1%) and students (98.5%). Lack of need was the reason quoted in 59.1% of the households with no access to the Internet, with the figure remaining at a fairly stable level. It seems significant that in the years 2012–2014 a perceived sense of lack of skills grew from 37.9% to 44.8%. Since lack of need to use the Internet may result from lack of knowledge about the opportunities it offers and the benefits of the ability to find necessary information in it, it may be assumed that both elements point to lack of the necessary competence. Consequently, it seems that it is digital exclusion of the second degree that plays the main role today (see Czerniawska, 2012), which is confirmed by the fact that only 1.8 percent of the surveyed in 2014 indicated lack of technical possibilities as a factor limiting their Internet use.

Traditional factors of exclusion may be divided into two main categories: external and internal ones. External (macrostructural) factors include those elements which are rooted in culture (e.g. commonly accepted knowledge), ideology (e.g. the relative value of work) or the law (which may allow justified inequality; Zielińska, 2011), or which result from infrastructure or spatial planning and thus are independent of the individual. Internal (microstructural) factors concern those variables which are dependent on the individual, i.e. his or her socio-demographic features and desire for development. In this group the most important factors are, for example, social background, education, age, gender, or disability. Other factors that could be mentioned include the inclination or reluctance towards spatial mobility and raising or changing one's qualifications, as well as employment status, professional position and income.

It turns out, however, that not all types of exclusion can be reduced to these two categories. There is a third kind of exclusion, which does not depend on external or internal factors. It is social media exclusion (mezostructural in nature). In this case, it is other people and relations between them that have a direct impact on whether a particular individual will be excluded from access to information. The second characteristic feature is that the flow of information is mediated and depends not only on individuals (as is in the case of direct contacts and media institutions), but also on algorithms which select and present content according to the specified criteria.

Social media exclusion[5]

It should be noted that although the question of *social media exclusion* understood as restriction of access to information published on social networking websites emerged in the twenty-first century, its sources can be found in the analogue sphere long before the advent of the Internet. The phenomenon as such is not new, and like the change of behaviour on the Web (the so-called *digital I*), it derives from familiar mechanisms which can be observed in the analogue sphere outside the Internet. However, as is also the case in the process of creation of one's image, the Internet gives it a different dimension and enables the use of new tools (see Sobczak, 2014). Outside the mass media, access to a particular item of information has always depended on who an individual knows and whether those people decide to include him or her in the circle of the informed. In the analogue sphere, however, it is a communicative process that usually demands direct contact[6], and one in which information may be heard against the will of the sender, a situation difficult to observe in the sphere of computers.[7] In the digital era, as the individual world expands and the amount of information one can pass on is almost unlimited, social media exclusion becomes even more important than exclusion from the circulation of information in direct communication. In direct contacts, information is mainly limited to closest friends, while Facebook posts can be seen by all acquaintances (and even acquaintances of acquaintances, which results in an expansion of the circle of potential receivers incomparable with the possibilities offered by the analogue world).

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[5] Although this question could be considered in the categories of "conscious segregation", such perspective in my view does not reflect the crux of the phenomenon that can be observed today. The word "conscious" implies awareness of limitations that it is subject to and consent to such a state of affairs, but such a thesis would be an overgeneralisation. Nor is it possible to talk about segregation, defined as "the action of setting someone or something apart from others" or "the enforced separation of different racial groups in a country, community, or establishment." ("Segregation", n.d.). Neither of these definitions reflects the essence of what happens on social media sites, where one may perhaps only talk about self-segregation. Such perspective, however, masks the most important element of social media exclusion: limited access to information. The very concept of *social* implies voluntary membership (it requires an active move: the creation of an account), while the term *exclusion* means "the process of excluding or the state of being excluded" ("Exclusion", n.d.). In this approach the term *social media exclusion* serves to describe a new type of social exclusion, based on the voluntary character of participation in social media networks and the attendant inevitable limitation of access to content. While digital exclusion of the first and second degree were mainly connected with lack of infrastructure or knowledge necessary to use the Web, social media exclusion brings a new dimension: it is beyond control of the individual and constitutes an inherent feature of Facebook. In such perspective all three types of exclusion result from objective factors.

[6] One can imagine that information might be recorded on an analogue dictaphone.

[7] Although it can be argued that hackers can be the eavesdroppers in the digital sphere, there is an important difference in quality: while in the analogue sphere access to information does not require additional competences and thus can be enjoyed by everybody, hackers must possess additional skills, beyond the scope of an ordinary Internet user, which greatly limits the circle of people able to acquire confidential information.

Looking at the process of change of methods of communication from a historical perspective, it can be observed that before the Internet reduced the size of the world to a "global village", everyday communication had mainly been concerned with news from the immediate surroundings, while news from more distant places reached people through more formal channels, by traditional media, which set the agenda from above (Jabłoński, 2007). Social networking sites make it possible to share news which individuals find the most important, in this way enabling them to leave the mainstream and create their own hierarchy of everyday news. At the same time, users – like social journalists – can document and report what they have observed in their environment, passing on information which would never be published by mainstream media. Thus, on the one hand, Facebook users share content created and published by traditional media and news outlets, while, on the other hand, it is a grass-roots initiative, since it is the user, not an employed journalist, who initiates activity, i.e. selects news to be shared or immediately reports what is happening at the moment.

The phenomenon of a Facebook profile may be seen as result of the convergence of old and new media. Before the era of Facebook, there were other social networking sites, e.g. grono.net or nasza-klasa.pl, but they did not gain such popularity as Facebook. The answer may lie in the profile itself: while on traditional sites the user had to search for content, Facebook makes it all available *ad hoc*, as does television or radio. The published items are shown instantly, arranged according to the guidelines established by the user: the most interesting or the latest posts are shown first. While there is no possibility of changing channels, one can – following the example of omitting newspaper articles – omit certain items by hiding them (the option of turning off the visibility of posts similar to the already published ones, or published by a particular user). By hiding such posts the user automatically agrees to voluntary social media exclusion, since he or she willingly excludes him/herself from the circulation of information of a certain type or origin.

Theoretically, social media sites have almost unlimited resources of information, but only part of them reach every user. The messages are thus created by the grass roots, but their distribution is mediated by algorithms which present posts according to certain criteria: posts from people with whom one is in frequent contact are preferred (there is an option of indicating whose posts are to be given priority), as are those liked by a wide public and not excluded by the user him/herself. One cannot be sure, then, that one has received all the content posted by one's friends, and there is no guarantee that one's own posts will reach all of them. This aspect makes social media more similar to mass communi-

cation, where the actual audience cannot be determined, and the message may not reach the intended circle of receivers (see Mrozowski, 2001). What is more, a potentially private message (a post visible to friends) may freely be passed on irrespective of the intentions of the person who originally published it (e.g. it may be shared by friends). By contrast, in analogue communication, the receiver is pre-determined (letters, postcards, telegrams, etc., private communication), or the messages reach a number of unspecified receivers (leaflets, posters, etc., mass communication). In addition, while a message published on the Internet may be circulated without any temporal, spatial or quantity restrictions, the circulation of leaflets or posters is limited and slowed down by the need to produce analogue copies (quantity) and distribute them (space), which prolongs the time between the publication of a message (printed leaflet) and its reception (a reader getting to know the content).[8] What is more, in the analogue world most of face to face communication is usually not archived (although it may be recorded on analogue or digital media), whereas mass and Internet communication is archived (TV stations' archives, history of posts that can be edited on Facebook).

Factors of exclusion

The factors which exclude individuals from the circulation of information on Facebook may be divided into individual and group ones as well as dependent on and independent of the user him/herself. Group factors of exclusion are partly related to individual factors, hence they need to be analysed in the appropriate order, starting with the individual ones.

The level of social media exclusion depends to a great extent on the social capital accumulated in the analogue sphere. While Internet acquaintanceships are neither dependent on the number of friends with whom an individual is in direct contact, nor limited to contacts transferred from the analogue sphere, it is those contacts which are the starting point when setting up a social media account. The more people one knows directly, the more potential resources one has at the outset (assuming that one's friends, too, have Facebook profiles). The process of transferring direct acquaintanceships to the Internet may be called the Internetisation of the analogue social environment.

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[8] One may imagine a situation when a letter is shown to a third party, but the number of potential unintended receivers is smaller than on the Web.

On Facebook people become senders, and the potential diversity of information they receive depends on the diversity of their friends. This means that the more homogenous the group, the more homogeneous content the user receives, which may be similar to the mechanism of obtaining information from one source or of reception gaps (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001). On the one hand, friends are an inclusive factor, as they make it possible for the user to receive a range of different news; on the other hand, they are an exclusive factor, since posts shown to the user depend on his/her network of contacts. In other words, access to information is limited by the group of people that one knows, while lack of contacts or reluctance to establish them may lead to one's exclusion from the circulation of certain content. In the Internet era, when reaching many of the Web's nook and crannies demands knowledge of their existence, lack of access to information may lead to lack of awareness about commonly known facts (e.g. memes), and consequently the exclusion from such a course of communication which assumes a shared pool of knowledge of the interlocutors. In this way, lack of access to information on the Web leads to marginalisation of the individual in the reality outside it.

The process of enlarging one's circle of friends is thus at the same time a process of expanding the potential range of available information, and takes place in a structured way. In order to increase the number of friends, one side needs to send an invitation (the list of potential friends suggested by a social networking service depends also on the number of existing contacts and relies on shared acquaintanceships), to which the receiver does not have to react (they may decline the invitation), in this way excluding the person who wanted to gain access to their (the receiver's) messages. Comparing this process to direct communication, it should be observed that such an act is not equivalent to a refusal to answer a question, but rather amounts to a total lack of verbal and non-verbal communication. This cannot occur in the analogue world, where it is not possible that a question is asked but elicits no response, even of a non-verbal nature,[9] unless the question is mediated (via telephone or e-mail) and ignored, which implies the use of the digital sphere.[10]

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[9] Even in the case of gravely ill people, lack of verbal or non-verbal answer (i.e. facial or vocal reaction) is also a message of sorts, showing, e.g., the gravity of the situation or the development of the illness. Questions asked to the victims of accidents, to which one receives no verbal answer but nevertheless acquires information, are a case in point. As Paul Watzlawick claims, "one cannot not communicate" (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 2014, p. 30).

[10] Lack of reaction in the digital sphere should not be taken as a response due to technical limitations: there is no certainty that the message was delivered, received, etc.

The next problem concerns the public or private nature of posts. Even if a friendship has been made and confirmed, the person interested may not be authorised to read a significant number of posts. This happens because users can specify who is to receive their messages, excluding in this way particular people from the circulation of information more effectively that it would be possible in the analogue sphere. There are also events that one may not be aware of until one is invited to attend or one sees information about them made available by friends. What follows is that access to information about events also depends on the size of one's circle of Facebook friends, their activities, contacts and active participation in various groups. For example, sometimes users may find out about competitions or social actions because their friends have taken, or intend to take, part in them.

Facebook **groups** have a potential to exclude to an even greater extent than individuals, not only because of their specific features discussed below, but also because participation in such groups gives access to a large circle of users, while lack of participation means a higher level of exclusion. What groups and in what order will be suggested to the user depends not only on the user's own previous activity, but also on his or her friends and their activities. Consequently, having a large number of active Facebook friends facilitates access to a wide range of content.

Not all groups are equally open to new members. Paradoxically, while in the analogue sphere it is possible (in some situations) to strike up a conversation with strangers (join someone's table at a café, have a chat in the queue to the supermarket checkout), Facebook offers no such opportunity. A stranger cannot write or comment on a message posted in a group he or she does not belong to; he/she may not even be authorised to read such messages. Open groups allow strangers to follow a discussion and read the posts, whereas closed groups reserve access to such elements only to their members. In this way non-members are excluded from the circulation of information in a given group in a way which would be difficult to observe in the world of direct contacts. Paradoxically, the inclusive Web puts up mechanisms of absolute exclusion in a space that is, in a certain sense, public. In this case the division us–strangers becomes much sharper than in the analogue sphere, and information technology closely guards the secrets of members of all groups which wish so.

In order to become a member of a group, one must send a request, which may remain unanswered. Whether or not one is accepted as a new member depends on the existing

contacts (friends who are already members), and joining a group without their help may even be impossible.[11] In this way friends yet again become a key element determining one's access to content posted on Facebook.

Consequently, although the Internet is a space which is conducive to the elimination of many social divisions arising out of differences in age or level of education, its technology makes it possible to create new divisions, even more visible and sharper than the old ones. Despite a relative egalitarianism of social network contacts, Facebook groups follow a much more formal procedure of accepting new members and giving them an appropriate status than groups of friends in the analogue sphere. Recruitment to a Facebook group is thus formalised and resembles the process of admission to associations and societies (e.g. student ones) rather than joining a circle of friends or a discussion group. The prospective member is often required to answer a question posed by the administrators before his/her request is accepted.

It must be emphasised that the group space is often used as private space, even though its mechanisms seem to be different. In the analogue sphere it is possible to imagine situations when members of a group (a circle of friends, members of a discussion group) bring their partner or friends to a meeting; such guests, while not members, may nevertheless on this occasion take part in the group's activities (e.g. a meeting in a pub, a discussion meeting, a barbecue party). By contrast, in order to participate personally[12] in the activities of a Facebook group even for a short while, one must be accepted as a member, and all non-members are automatically excluded.

Another element that differs analogue and digital groups (in this case not only Facebook groups but also e.g. discussion forums) is the question of moderation. Importantly, even members, who can post and comment on content, are still not allowed full expression and free speech. Whereas in analogue groups one may voice one's opinion relatively freely, if only one is determined enough, and such an opinion may not be withdrawn (considered non-existent), Facebook groups have tools that enable them to do so. This means that such groups presume a stricter hierarchy and group roles: a moderator (who may also be the leader of, e.g. opinion) and members. While this option need not be used, and all members may be treated as equal, still the roles are clearly distinguished from the outset. Moderators can not only remove a post (participants may also point out the posts which, in their opinion,

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[11] Strangers may ignore the request sent to them, and the user will not be admitted to a group.

[12] The options I consider here include only digital access to a group from one's own social media account.

should be deleted), but may also reserve the right to censor messages, which means that no content will appear on the group profile without their approval. Even though such groups have no official structure and do not function as organisations, but rather bring together friends and people sharing similar interests, the flow of information resembles the pattern known from media institutions and channels of communication in formal organisations rather than in informal circles of friends. In informal groups of friends or hobbyists, it cannot be expected that every person who wishes to express their opinion will first make its content known to the leader, who will then pass it on in an identical form to the rest of the group. Thus despite the seemingly greater social equality, in the case of Facebook groups one can observe a sharper division of roles and functions than in the analogue sphere, as well as the proliferation of an institutional model of the formation of groups and their subsequent activity. Removing a member is also done formally by the group leader, which cannot be observed in circles of friends in the analogue sphere, where such a process is more prolonged and fluid.

While most users of social networking services publish or share content, it is important to make a distinction between content posted by individual users (own activity) and content posted by the user's friends (friends' activity). A user's own activity includes everything that he or she publishes on the Internet. The number and nature of posts not only show the user's personality and character but are also evidence of his/her social attractiveness understood as popularity with friends. If the posts are few and far between, one's acquaintances may come to the conclusion that the individual is not worth including in their world (both digital and analogue), and consequently exclude him/her from some or all activities undertaken by friends in both spheres. In this way a poor social media profile can lead others to perceive such a person as isolated and a-social, to exclude him/her from their social life and limit their contacts with him/her, thus making him/her a sociometric isolate. At the same time, each individual may inflict social media exclusion on oneself by editing options of availability of published content to other users. If access to posts is limited to selected people, all those who are not authorised to see the messages do not get new information about the user and consequently cannot define him/her in the way described above. Thus, in today's world, where social life is largely carried out in the digital sphere, a desire for privacy or reluctance to publish snapshots of one's life on the Internet may lead to exclusion from social events in the analogue sphere. In order to avoid such exclusion and to feel one is in the centre of attention, many Facebook users publish content which

may have a detrimental effect (e.g. photographs from parties, which may have a negative impact when one is looking for a job), including pictures of children, without taking into account the fact that in near or more distant future the children may bear the brunt of their parents "digital exhibitionism". The desire to mark one's presence in the digital life can be called inclusion at all costs.

On the other hand, the activity of one's friends may also become an element contributing to exclusion. Through materials they publish and users they tag, they show their position in the social environment. It can be assumed, then, that the more active the person, the more films and photographs featuring him/her will be found on the Internet, and the more liked he or she is, the more often he or she will be tagged and his/her posts commented on and liked. These elements may be used as variables determining the sociometry of the group (the so-called sociometric star and isolate). In view of the above, the aim of every post is to accumulate the highest number of likes, and lack of activity in response to a post conveys a message about lack of popularity. At the same time, less popular posts are less often shown and read. Also in this case, then, persuading friends not to publish a picture in which one features, or reluctance to be tagged can mean that one's image will not be socially attractive. Analogically to the phenomenon of the spiral of silence, if someone comes across as a person who does not participate in events,[13] the chances that he/she will be invited to take part in the next ones diminish. Hence a question arises whether it is better to let friends publish pictures (even embarrassing ones) or to forbid them to post such content and tag photographs and posts, thus demonstrating one's concern about preserving an impeccable image, but – on the other hand – risking social invisibility and marginalisation.

Conclusion

In the cyberreal world, in which the digital and analogue sphere are inextricably interrelated, new and old divisions constantly interlink. With the rising importance of the digital sphere and social media services, it is mezostructural factors, i.e. human relationships, rather than macrostructural ones, which become increasingly more significant in the context of

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[13] It should be noted that from Facebook's perspective a person may be considered a-social because he/she does not boast about their experiences. This need not mean actual non-participation in social meetings. However, it creates a Facebook image of the person, which influences the way he/she is seen mainly by people from outside the immediate circle of closest friends.

social exclusion. Resources accumulated in the analogue sphere have an impact on, and to a certain degree determine, the possibilities offered by the digital sphere (e.g. on Facebook). The contacts the user has allow him/her to join the circulation of information, but at the same time they limit access to other content, as messages posted by people outside the circle of friends are not available. Thus the range of information received by the user depends on the number of friends, their variety and activity, as well as their networks of acquaintances, to such an extent that even private correspondence from people with whom one does not have any connections is automatically transferred to a separate folder, and the user is not informed about its existence.

The wider and more diverse the circle of friends, the more varied messages one receives (in accordance with the theory of reception gaps and data from one source). Also, there are greater chances of obtaining first-hand accounts about events happening in the close social environment of one's acquaintances, in place of news officially presented in media. In addition, while news conveyed by old, traditional media reaches all receivers in the same unchanged form, a Facebook profile is highly personalised. Thus the audience of traditional media receive the same message irrespective of their social relations, while there are no two identical news stories presented to Facebook users. Consequently, social activity has a bearing on the shape of received messages, and lack of friends among users leads to exclusion from the circle of people receiving the news they publish.

Finally, it is equally important to bear in mind other, non-social factors of exclusion, i.e. algorithms, shaped unintentionally by our activity on social networking sites and outside them, and consciously by our actions, as we ourselves edit the options of showing posts (e.g. omitting or hiding them). No other type of communication apart from the digital one offers a similar automatic mechanism of content selection. In direct communication selection is possible at the moment of forming the message (autoselection) or when a third party is involved, as in interrupted messages or when someone else is asked to pass on information (the so-called Chinese whispers). Even in mass communication it is not possible to profile and select content depending on the user to such an extent as in communication mediated by algorithms of social networking sites. In addition, algorithms selecting content are not only part of social media, but have a much wider use, for example in advertising or marketing. Consequently, it seems that they set the direction that will be followed by digital communication.

Mezostructural social media exclusion is thus directly dependent on the size and diversity of one's circle of friends and on one's relationship with them, which is reflected in the fact that an individual is allowed to see their posts and is included in closed groups. Exclusion from access to information on a social networking site also depends on algorithms that select and present content according to certain criteria, a phenomenon which is not observed either in direct or mass communication. According to the above definition, social media exclusion develops on the basis of media technology, leading to automatic selection of content and enabling self-segregation.

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Facebook as a New Source of Social Exclusion in the Web 2.0 Era

Social life in the twenty-first century no longer relies on direct communication alone, but also on technology-mediated one. Moreover, these two patterns of communication are both equally important. In the cyberreal world, the Internet is not only an equalizing force which diminishes traditionally understood social divisions and offers new technological opportunities, but is also conducive to the emergence of a new kind of social exclusion: the social media exclusion. The main aim of this article is to analyse Facebook from the point of view of mechanisms which exclude and limit access to its content, and to compare them with the traditional forms of social life and social exclusion.

Keywords:

exclusion, social network, Facebook

Facebook jako źródło wykluczenia społecznego ery Web 2.0

W XXI wieku życie społeczne opiera się już nie tylko na komunikacji bezpośredniej, ale jest również zapośredniczone cyfrowo, przy czym obie te sfery są sobie równoważne. W tak rozumianym cyberrealnym świecie internet nie jest wyłącznie siłą zacierającą tradycyjne podziały społeczne, lecz oferuje techniczne możliwości i sprzyja tworzeniu nowego typu wykluczenia – społecznościowego. Głównym celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza portalu Facebook pod kątem mechanizmów wykluczających i ograniczających dostęp do zgromadzonych w serwisie treści w kontekście tradycyjnych form życia i wykluczenia społecznego.

Słowa kluczowe:

wykluczenie, sieci społecznościowe, Facebook