

# Opinion

## Parents miss the mark by joining Facebook

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Facebook has a few new wrinkles. Wrinkly users, that is.

When Mark Zuckerberg and co-founders Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes and Eduardo Saverin created Facebook in February 2004, their target

demographic was their peer group at Harvard University. It wasn't until May 2005 that they extended Facebook to over 800 college networks, according to Facebook's Timeline.

From 2004 until today, Facebook's social graph, or the pixilated map of people's real-world social connections, expanded to include members of all ages. The youngest Facebook user emerged from the womb with an established Facebook account created by the child's parents to keep family and friends updated on the pregnancy's progress, according to The Daily Mirror. A quick Google search concludes that the oldest Facebook user is 102.

Although the 55+ demographic only makes up 2.3 percent of all users, it is steadily increasing at a rate of 513.7 percent. The 34 to 55 age group doesn't lag too far behind with a growth rate of 190.2 percent, according to a study completed by iStrategyLabs.

With these numbers and updates, the bottom line is that most of us are friends with our aunts, uncles, parents and possibly even grandparents. I lucked out that my parents don't possess the computer skills necessary to create a Facebook account. I am, however, friends with an aunt, an uncle, an ex-second cousin, a pastor, mother's friend, my roommate's mother, a high school teacher and of course, our current president.

It's hard to determine whether the middle-age demographic is cool for having Facebook or just trying to be cool by having a Facebook account. One supporting reason is simply that age discrimination is wrong. Just because they didn't grow up with computers doesn't mean they can't utilize social networking now. On the other hand, that doesn't mean they have to invade ours.

Facebook, especially with the older users, can be a useful device to keep you in touch with family you usually wouldn't. The only downside is that it can keep you in touch with family you usually wouldn't. It made for an awkward Thanksgiving dinner with my aunt after she saw some pictures from my first semester of college.

Another advantage is that it can help you get to know people you barely would have remembered without Facebook. Of course, it's not a double-sided mirror; they can also get to know you better. For example, I got into a skirmish with my mom's friend. She's a very conservative Christian, and I am not a very conservative Christian, as my Facebook page accurately represents. I had kept that part of myself separate from our relationship until our Facebook connections merged. You'll be happy to know we worked things out, but I can't help but think how much easier everything would have been had she not joined Facebook.

I have very mixed feelings about the increased age of Facebook users, because sometimes it can really be annoying, like the time I accidentally got my friend in trouble. I had old pictures of the summer parties before our freshman year of college and when my old youth pastor became my friend, he saw my friend holding that ominous red plastic cup. After he confronted her, she presented me an ultimatum: delete the pictures or deleted the pastor. I opted for both.

Sometimes I can't help myself. I think friends getting back in touch after twenty or more years are pretty cute. Even more impressive to me is that these middle-age adults are learning the new technologies, because as I said, my parents aren't.

The tipping factor in the decision of my opinion is that my grandfather, who died seven years ago, would most likely have a Facebook if he were still alive. He worked at RCA most of his life and loved computers and technology. And you know what, I'd definitely add him as my friend.

## White House a little too close for comfort

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I've always had the theory which states you can't judge a person by looking at them, but you can judge a person by their MySpace. Web Sites like MySpace aren't exactly notorious for being a reliable resource. Isn't Myspace

where Tila Tequila claims some of her fame?

What happens when the White House joins MySpace? Does that same theory apply? What about when the White House joins all three social networking Web Sites in vogue right now? MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter, oh my! What does that say about our country? Better yet... what about our culture?

In China, Facebook is blocked by the government. Chen Yang, a foreign exchange student from China I worked with over the summer told me that. Yang was here for the summer working to get job experience in America as well as to experience the American culture and history.

So in her country, the government prevents people from accessing Facebook, meanwhile our country not only condones the use of Facebook but endorses it as well. The White House has a Facebook page, a MySpace profile and Twitter account! Does this make our government is hip to the max or does it decrease the credibility of our government?

Is our culture that hooked on social networking that the White House uses strategies to and creates accounts to all of the trendy social networking sites? The Administration calls expanding communication with the public via social networking Whitehouse 2.0.

Whitehouse 2.0 was announced on The White House's regularly updated blog in The Briefing Room. A blog post by Macon Philips on May 1 informed the public of Whitehouse 2.0. and Philips indicated the White House is taking steps to expand how the Administration communicates with the public.

President Obama in his April 25 weekly presidential address spoke about the ways in which the government communicates, "To help build a new foundation for the

21st century, we need to reform our government so that it is more efficient, more transparent, and more creative."

First one, calling it Whitehouse 2.0 sounds juvenile, or it sounds like some kind of crazy government human tracking computer program. I understand the idea behind trying to embrace social networking, but does that require joining the social networks? Trying to brand this idea is a bad move on the behalf of the administration. Just leave it at that; we've sold out and started taking down your information.

The White House kind of reminds me of those parents who smothered their children by being involved in too many aspects of their children's life. Because when your parents like the same music and movies as you, it's just not that cool anymore. It's good to be supportive, but too much invasion can be a problem.

Call me a liberal, but shouldn't we be worried about what kind of information the government is trying to get from us? I mean, we're told not to post anything personal or private on our Myspace,

Facebook, and Twitter, but that doesn't stop some people. I'm sure the government wants to see pictures of all those 20-year-olds posting pictures of their underage drinking or pot smoking.

My concerns are justified. As to be expected the White House enforces a privacy policy regarding the information on its social networking profiles. On Facebook, The Whitehouse's profile "Something about yourself" section reads, "This is the official White House channel on Facebook. Comments posted on and messages received through official White House pages are subject to the Presidential Records Act and may be archived. Learn more at <http://www.WhiteHouse.gov/privacy>."

