



## **Facebook in the Multicultural Society**

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**Abstract.** With little exaggeration, the 21<sup>st</sup> century could be called – the network era. The use of social networks has begun to dominate human lives. Parallel with this domination, there is continuous debate on the upsetting effects of the social networks. That is why Facebook will be the central analysis of this subject related to the psychology of the social networks and differences in a multicultural society such as ours. *The Case* was the Republic of Macedonia and the *Critical event* was: the incident at Skopje’s Kale Fortress where the rival fan groups ‘Komiti’ from one (ethnic Macedonian) side and ‘Sverceri’ and citizens of the Fortress’s vicinity from the other (ethnic Albanian) side clashed and the police could not prevent the close contact between the supporters and opponents of the construction of the Church-Museum building. The analysis shows that the real war with words was on Facebook. New sites dedicated to the Museum-Church at Kale Fortress were being opened with offensive language, vulgarities, threats and calls for revenge, for a ‘final fight’, photos from the 2001 war conflict in Macedonia and photo montage. The analysis also showed that the good side of the humans ‘loses the battle’, at least when we speak of issues connected to the differences in such a multicultural society like ours. This paper discusses the reasons for misbehavior in cyberspace.

**Keywords:** Social network, Hate speech in Facebook, Multicultural society, Misbehavior in cyberspace

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## Introduction

### *New Social Information – Communication Structure*

With little exaggeration, the 21<sup>st</sup> century could be called – the network era. New media such as social networks are becoming the backbone of society and one can easily expect this infrastructure to have major influence on the social and personal life of humans. In this sense, the term “information highway” is quite appropriate. The design of these basic infrastructures is of key importance regarding the opportunities and risks that may occur in the process of online networking. The potential consequences of choosing a certain communication infrastructure and embedding it in someone’s social and personal life might be less visible, but even so, not less serious.

Continuing this line of argument, not only the ecology of nature is taken into account, since the information and communication transfer will partially substitute the transport of people and goods – but also the ‘social ecology’ as well. In the 1980’s, when the new media were introduced, certain people started talking about ‘pollution’ of the human social environment by those new media that were entering everyone’s private life. According to them, the new media reduced, diminished and even destroyed the quality of face-to-face communication and formalized relations at the work place (Kubicek, 1988 – quoted by van Dijk, 2006). It was assumed that these changes would result in a decrease in privacy and total control “from above”. In the 1990’s these views were replaced with some utopian views on the new media that they will significantly improve the quality of life and in particular, the quality of communication. Debates on this subject still continue and opinions regarding the social ecology, ‘new economy’ and the new era of prosperity, freedom and online democracy are still very much alive (van Dijk, 1991).

The use of the Internet social networks exploded in popularity during the last several years, as well as the means, mainly in the hands of the younger population, to present some information about them and to communicate with others. One of the most popular sites is Facebook, which was initially created as a students’ forum, and today is used by people of all ages throughout the world. Its popularity at the beginning was supported with the perception of the students and other youngsters that it was something ‘private’, a forum with limited access to those who were enrolled in a college or university (Russell, 2011). Thus, the site users felt quite free to post personal information about themselves and their social lives, looking at this as a means of attracting and developing relationships with their peers.

However, very soon after its creation, the appearance and the function of Facebook were changed. Questions were being asked related to the use and appropriateness of the information on the site from other persons that were not students, and how this usage would bring to making decisions that would have

negative influence on the students' population. For example, a large number of colleges and universities suspended students that had sent racially-threatening or sexually inappropriate information on their Facebook profiles (Mendelson and Zizi Papacharissi, 2011).

Since then, there is continuous debate on the upsetting effects of the social networks. That is why Facebook will be the central analysis of this subject related to the psychology of the social networks and differences in a multicultural society such as ours.

*Case: Republic of Macedonia*

*Inciting event:* The Government decides to build a Church-Museum on Skopje's Kale Fortress, where mainly ethnic Albanians live and work. The native population holds protests for a few days until the construction is stopped.

*Critical event:* February 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 is marked by an incident at Skopje's Kale Fortress where two groups of fans clashed. The "Komitis" (Macedonian fans) clashed with "Sverceri" (Albanian fans) and people living in the vicinity of the Fortress, while the police were unable to prevent the immediate contact of the supporters and opponents to the Church-Museum construction.

The severity of the event and the density of communication were sufficient incentives to presuppose a research question(s): *What was happening in the virtual space of Facebook in terms of quality of reporting differences in society and why it was happening.* Specifically, the objectives of the research were focused on the analysis of the content written by participants on the pages of Facebook designed for the Kale Fortress incident. What kinds of information were mutually exchanged between those who were 'for' (mainly members of Macedonian ethnicity) and those who were 'against' (mainly members of Albanian ethnicity) the construction of the Museum-Church Kale? It was expected to reveal the way of communication among the members of both ethnic groups in virtual space such as Facebook, which is nothing but an extension of the inner psychological world of the individuals.

As methodology, content analysis was applied to this research which no doubt allowed for qualitative data to be examined in a quantitative way.

The main reasons for the application of this method lay in the advantages of content analysis: its ability to objectively and reliably describe one or a group of messages and its application on advanced statistical analyses, as well as providing statistical and logical bases for understanding how messages were created. The main flaw of content analysis was that it required recording actual messages for analysis, so overcoming this by analysis of multiple levels and segments of the content written on Facebook – was a real methodological challenge.

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## **Theoretical grounds**

### ***The Cyberspace as Psychological Space***

The term 'cyberspace' is so frequently used that it can already seem too mundane and commercialized. Nevertheless, the experience created by the computers and networks in many ways can be seen as 'psychological space'. When users turn on their computers, start-up their programs, write emails or sign in their online services, they often feel, consciously or subconsciously, like entering in a 'place' or 'space' which is full of a wide range of meanings and uses. Many users that explore the World Wide Web will describe their experience as a 'journey' or 'going somewhere'. The special, spatial metaphors such as 'worlds', 'domains' or 'rooms' are commonly used in articulating the online activities (Suler, 2004a).

Furthermore, on a deeper psychological level, the users often describe their computers as an extension to their mind and personality, or as a place that represents their tastes, viewpoints and interests. In psychoanalytical terms, the computers and cyberspace can become one type of 'transitional space' that is an extension of the intra psychological world of the individual. It can be experienced as a transition zone between the individual and the others which partially belongs to them and partially to the others. As they read their emails on their screens, the group discussions or 'chat' messages written by their 'Internet friends', some people feel like their mind is 'connecting' or 'interweaving' with those of others (Suler 2002).

When one experiences cyberspace as an extension to their mind – as a transitional space between themselves and the others – the door becomes wide open to all kinds of fantasies and transfer reactions that are projected in this space. Ideally, people use this as an opportunity to better understand themselves, as a way to explore their own identity. In less ideal conditions, people use this psychological space for ventilation or better said they simply express, and "toy" with their fantasies and frustrations, as well as fears and desires which are propellants to those fantasies.

### ***Identification/management of identity in cyberspace***

One interesting thing about the Internet is the possibility to introduce oneself in different ways. Everyone has the opportunity to be themselves, to slightly change their style, or to experiment with their identity and change their age, biography, personality, physical looks, gender... The user name they choose and the details they share are important from the aspect how individuals distribute and manage their identity in cyberspace. Identity is a very complex aspect of the human nature.

John Suler (2002) lists several interrelated factors which are useful in the navigation of the labyrinth called cyberspace.

*Level of dissociation and integration.* The identity of a person is an embodied diversity. Everyone possesses many “sectors” in their personality and has various roles throughout their life – a child, parent, student, worker, neighbor, and friend. Cyberspace offers false opportunities to any of these specific aspects of oneself. Some people even speak of the possibility for the individual to reconstruct themselves online. We do not need to present ourselves entirely: how we see, how we talk, how we move, our history, thoughts, feelings and personality – we do not have to put everything in a big ‘package’. In different environments we can separate and present our characteristics in ‘packages’ of different sizes and contents. Thanks to the thousands of existing online groups, every individual dedicated to a certain professional, specialized, or personal subject can express, accentuate one side of their personality, while other characteristics can be completely omitted or neglected in cyberspace.

The wish to stay anonymous is derived from the need to eliminate those critical functions of one’s own identity that the individual does not want to show to a certain environment or group. The wish to watch without being seen points to the need of a person to separate their entire personal identity from their perception of those around them: wants to watch without being watched.

*Positive and negative valence.* Personally, one individual can feel shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, and hate regarding some aspects of their identity, or acceptance and respect regarding other aspects of their existence. It is said that those who act in cyberspace, and in some way hurt or violate the rights of others, or hurt themselves, are usually discharging some negatively ‘electrified’ aspects of their psyche. This simply means that when individuals hurt, despise or offend someone else, they actually show that they have problems with some parts of their own personality. But this, purely cathartic act usually does not lead anywhere. The insecure and passively aggressive individuals most often stay in the endless river of online arguments. Others can use the Internet as an opportunity to manifest their positive characteristics or develop new ones in the process of “self-actualization”.

*Used media.* It is known that people express their identity through the clothes they wear, their body language, careers and hobbies they prefer. These things can be seen as a medium for communicating to the environment. Similar to this, people in cyberspace choose certain communication channels to express themselves. There are many opportunities and combinations of these, and each choice brings to accentuation of specific attributes of the identity. People who rely only on written communication prefer the semantics of the language and perhaps the linear, rationally-analytical dimension in them, which is manifested through the written discourse. They can be ‘verbalizers’ described in the cognitive psychological literature, in contrast to the ‘visualizers’ that enjoy in the more symbolic,

picturesque and holistic judgments that are expressed through the creation of video clips, videos, pictures, avatars, and web graphics. (Papacharissi, 2002)

*The online transfer among people.* The psychoanalytical concept of “transfer” is very important to understand the online relations. Because the experience with another person is often limited to the written text (a quite blurred situation), there is tendency on behalf of the individual, to try to interpret the behavior of others in cyberspace, to project their various desires, fantasies, fears, and viewpoints towards the ‘dubious figure’ on the other side. In the “interweaving” of one mind with another, as some users describe the experience related to cyberspace, this transfer process can be recognized. Actually some users describe this interweaving of the mind with the computer itself. The transfer with the computer or the other users can be in a very subtle and complex way. There is one generally familiar saying by one very passionate cyber-person: ‘wherever I go on the Internet, I actually find myself’ (Suler, 2004b).

The subconscious motivation related to the transfer will also affect this ‘filtration process’ that determines the choice made by the user while establishing online relations. Users might be surprised when they realize that their close friends they meet online, are the same types of people as them. This unconscious ‘home’ device can be very sensitive. Even when they communicate only through written text, individuals focus on relations and characteristics of other people that are some kind of hidden desire within them.

*Online de-inhibiting effect.* It is well known that people tell and do things in cyberspace that they normally would not do in the real world. Here they can relax, feel free, feel less inhibited, and express themselves more openly. Researchers call this the “de-inhibiting effect”. Nevertheless, this is a double-edged sword. Sometimes people share very personal things about themselves in cyberspace. They reveal their hidden emotions, fears, and desires or they perform some uncommon acts of kindness and goodness. This is usually called benign de-inhibition (Turkle, 1994). On the other hand, de-inhibition is not always that benign, thus profound language and fierce criticism, anger, hate and even threats are often used. Sometimes, in extreme examples, people start to explore the dark underground world of the Internet, visit pornographic and violent sites that they would otherwise never visit in the real world. This de-inhibition is called toxic and usually has one, simple, blind cathartic influence, as a means of releasing the unpleasant needs and desires with no personal growth (development) or growth of the others.

*Internet regression.* What is regression? Communicating on the Internet, people are in regress (going backwards), manifesting it with free expressions regarding sex and aggression that they would never do in face-to-face communication. The expressing of exaggerated goodness, understanding and tolerance is also considered as a sign of regression.

## **Acquired Data**

The focus of this research was the social network Facebook. Starting from 15.02.2011, after the critical event happened on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, 23 different pages were created on Facebook, in different ways connected to the Kale Fortress event.<sup>1</sup> These pages can be viewed by those who have their own Facebook profile by simply typing the words *Church of Fortress* in the search area. The research period lasted till the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, when the number of pages from 23 dropped to only four 'live' functioning pages. 'Live' and functioning were considered the pages with posts.<sup>2</sup> Considering the large amount of posts on all active pages, the one with the highest number of 'likes' (a Facebook jargon about the number of persons that declared that they like the page) was chosen for research. Regarding that the page with the highest number of likes was the one that promoted peace, love, collaboration and tolerance – which meant a 'positive page' – and since it was the only one of its kind, it was necessary to examine the posts on the page that was second in terms of the number of 'likes'. It was also important that it (the 'positive' one) was the first one in terms of the number of 'likes' in comparison to the other negative and still active pages. For clarification: out of the 23 pages which were created on Facebook related to the events that happened at Kale Fortress on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, 22 were negative and only one was positive. The positive one had far less posts on its wall in comparison to the negative pages. That is why analysis was conducted on the one and only positive page and the most visited negative page, in order to make comparison of the posts between them, having in mind that the positive page which promoted peace, love, tolerance, and coexistence was unique, and the only one among the 'mob' of pages that promoted nationalism, separation, intolerance, hate and aggression of the worst kind.

The negative page was personified as the Bad character, or simply the Bad One and the positive page was personified as the Good character or simply the Good One.

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<sup>1</sup> ([http://www.facebook.com/search.php?q=Crkva%20Fortress&init=quick&tas=0.34439117554163&search\\_first\\_focus=1302004773715&type=pages](http://www.facebook.com/search.php?q=Crkva%20Fortress&init=quick&tas=0.34439117554163&search_first_focus=1302004773715&type=pages). last visit on June 22, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> 'Live' page is actually a page with several posts on their walls monthly. The biggest numbers of pages were created in the period from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> of February; there are several records from this period and after that nothing is written on them. It doesn't mean that some of those inactive pages won't function in the future and won't have higher traffic of posting.

Content analysis was conducted on two levels. *The first level* of analysis concerned the analysis of the image, the photograph and the name that represents an individual that posts on the page. *The second level* of analysis involved analysis of ‘posts’ in terms of whether they contain text, image, video and / or a link. At this level of analysis the valence of the text was determined in categories: positive, negative and neutral (The categories were determined by the content of the text and key words). The categories of positive and negative posts were not predetermined but defined after all posts were read. Besides determining the valence of text, the content of clips was also analyzed. The presentation of results follows.

The ‘Face’ of the Bad One and the Good One were analyzed from a number of angles:

1. A picture, photo and name with which individuals that posted on the page represented themselves. How are the Bad One and the Good One represented?



The BAD One



The Church at the Fortress<sup>3</sup>

Starting from the critical event and until the 1<sup>st</sup> of May there were 357 “posts” on the “Bad” One (negative page). The analysis of all 357 “posts” showed that they were written by 145 different subjects. It is interesting to notice that 1/5 of the subjects wrote only once, and 1/10 wrote more than 5 times on the wall. The majority of those 145 subjects declared themselves as males (the profile is presented with a name and a surname in a male form) – 78% or 114 subjects; 10% or 14 subjects declared themselves as females (the profile is presented with a name and a surname in a female form); 7% are group subjects (names such as Komiti<sup>4</sup> West, Macedonian Brotherhood, United Macedonian Forces– Prilep), and gender or group is unclear with only 3% of the 145 different subjects.

The information regarding the usage of nationality and national symbols in the names of those who wrote the posts is also interesting. Namely, 8% of the subjects that posted on the wall of the Bad One were profiles in which the

<sup>3</sup> (<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Crkva-NA-KALE/203345869678866>- last visit on June 12, 2011)

<sup>4</sup> “Komiti” are fans of the Macedonian football club “Vardar”



nationality is clear, thus we can read: Alexander the Macedonian, Macedonian to the Bone, Macedonian Patriot, Proud Macedonian...

When our focus of analysis was the picture or the photo with which the persons that wrote the posts were representing themselves, we can notice that 60 out of 145 subjects represented themselves with a photo on which there is a boy (man) or a girl (woman). We did not examine whether it was a fake or real, personal photo. 21 out of 145 subjects used pictures such as national or religious symbols (the Albanian flag, the Eagle, the Macedonian flag / the actual and the Vergina Sun, the Christian Cross, pictures of national heroes); 8 subjects used military symbols (most common were soldiers of KLA, airplanes), and the remaining 54 subjects used group photos (photos with 2, 3 or more persons), actors of famous TV soap operas...). The two subjects that are missing in this group out of the 145 are those that represented themselves with unclear pictures or photos.



The GOOD One



Peace and love instead of a church and mosque on the Fortress<sup>5</sup>

There were 111 posts on the wall of the Good One starting from the critical event to the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. The analysis showed that 87 different subjects posted on the wall, out of which only 8 appeared more than once. The creator of the profile named Peace and Love instead of a church or mosque at Kale Fortress, wrote 17 posts him- or herself.

Similar to the Bad One, the majority of those 87 subjects that posted on the wall of the Good One presented themselves as males (their profile is presented with a name and a surname in a male form) – 66% or 51 subjects, and 34% or 25 subjects presented themselves as females (their profile is presented with a name and a surname in a female form). One of the subjects is the creator of the page who presented him- or herself as Peace and Love instead of a Church or Mosque at Kale Fortress and one who presented him- or herself with the sentence: “Imagine no religion!!! Think....just think”.

When we focus on the picture or photo of the analysis, we can conclude that 53 out of 87 subjects presented themselves with a photo on which there is a boy

<sup>5</sup> (<http://www.facebook.com/#!/search/results.php?q=crkva%20na%20Kale&init=quick&tas=0.6645142424412307-> last visit on June 05, 2011.)

(man) or a girl (woman), assuming that those are their personal photos. One is the recognizable sign of the creator of the page, and the rest of the subjects used different symbols for their presentation such as: the peace symbol made of children's hands, flowers, a book, and a science mark, the Turkish flag, the SDSM flag... and the rest of the subjects used group photos (photos of 2, 3 or more persons, commonly a girl and a boy, or a grown up and a child next to them).

## **Type of 'posts' and their content**

### ***What do the Bad One and the Good One talk and show?***

#### ***The Bad One***

From 357 posts recorded during the research period, 41% of the posts were without any written text, or only had pictures, videos or a link to a video clip. What was interesting here, was that the other 59% or 210 posts that contained some type of written text. These written texts were analyzed from different angles, starting from their general valence. Their majority, exceeding more than 80% (a total 169 texts) were evaluated as generally negative, almost 14% were evaluated as being neutral and only a modest 6% were evaluated as written texts with positive direction. The neutral texts usually focused on building a Church on the foundations of..., and the positive ones were texts celebrating Easter. The investigation of the negative ones focused on whether there were any vulgarities – and if so, then how many – in the posts. What type of hate speech is present and to what degree, whether calls for war, clashes, nationalism, and murder are noticeable and whether there is self-glorification or highlighting personal strength and power evident in the written text.

The data in the table illustrates the analysis of the negative texts having in mind these four components.

Table 1. Percentage of texts from the whole number of negative texts in relation to the type of negative posts

Vulgarities	Hate speech	Calls for war, fight	Self Glorification
51%	71%	47%	18%
86	120	79	18
Profound language, insults, mockery of physical appearance	Derogatory words that undermine, mock or ridicule a person or a group for their certain characteristics (race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, religion)	Words that call for conflict, war, clashes, murders, separations, dissemination of nationalistic feelings	Words for glorification of personal greatness, strength, power and superiority

It is noticeable from the data that most of the negative texts contain hate speech. Macedonians are "Kauri"<sup>6</sup>, "Traitors", "Kauri's tribe", "Artificial nation", "Bulgarians", "Wicked creatures".... From the other side, Albanians are "Shiptars"<sup>7</sup>, "Traitors", "Wicked Shiptars Tribe", "Turkified bastards", "Foes of Macedonia", "Dickheads", "Shiptars - Arnauts", "Albanians - kachaks"<sup>8</sup>, "Shiptars cattle", "Incest nation", "Godless", "Shipoi, Dogs".

The presence of vulgarities is approximately the same (by percentage) as calls for war, clashes, nationalism, separation, and murders. Vulgarities are very extreme and we will not analyze them since their description is far below the level of this text. We will only mention that they are combinations of profound language, insults, mockery of the physical appearance and threats in which the sexual act is present in a most vulgar and monstrous way (see the link to Facebook page).

Calls for war, separation, murders, nationalism was present in at least half of the posts. We will mention only the most common words and sentences used in this context: "Die Bulgarians"; "Death for the rotten faithless"; "Death for the Kauris"; "Go to Albania"; "Big Albania!"; "Big Macedonia!"; "Dead Shiptar – Good Shiptar!"; "We will annihilate you all"; "Macedonia is Bulgaria"; "Go away from Kale Fortress or I'll f.k you all"; "Clean Macedonia"; "Let's slaughter Shiptars"; "Shiptars in Pcinja (river)"; "Mass grave for Shiptars"; "Gas Chamber for Macedonians"; "We'll slaughter, we'll burn mosques"; "Long live Ahmeti, he'll annihilate you all"; "Death for all Macedonians"; "You all will come to an end – we'll murder you all like we did in Brodec"; "Go away from here – this will be Great Albania"; "Destroy the filthy Albanians"; "Macedonian brothers, let's fight for the motherland....."; "Macedonia belongs only to the Macedonians".

Self-glorification of personal strength, power and ability is present in a smaller percentage than the general negative texts and is about calls that: "God is with us", "Macedonia is Eternal", "We are the strongest – you Macedonians cannot do anything to us", "Long live all Christians".

### *The Good One*

39 out of 111 posts recorded in the research period had no text, and the other 72 had written text. The most interesting ones here were the ones that contained text. The text was analyzed from the viewpoint of the key words that were carrying the main message of the post. Thus, the most common were:

<sup>6</sup> Kauri is a Turkish word for Orthodox. The word used by Albanians when they want to offend Macedonians

<sup>7</sup>"Shiptars" a pejorative name used by the Macedonians for Albanians. Otherwise the word derives from the Albanian word for Albanian, only the Albanians themselves pronounce it differently

<sup>8</sup> A Kachakis an originally Turkish term for *rebel* or *bandit*

- posts in which the text was dominated by the key word PEACE (sayings such as: what is peace; message for peace; “Peace”; “Peace at home – peace in the world”; “Only peace and respect”; “There’s no good war nor bad peace”; “Let’s be champions of peace and love”; “Peace and love – forget the church and mosque”; “There’s no way to peace – peace is the way!”; “Make love not war”.)
- the second type of posts were the ones which praised the initiatives for creating such a page, praising everyone that supported the page and welcoming the idea to write something smart on Facebook.
- posts addressed to all regarding a better future (“Stop the violence”; “Let’s build the future, not the past”; “Give us science, education”; “You don’t have to build religious objects – let’s build discotheques and cafeterias at Kale Fortress”; “We have too many religious temples – we don’t need more”)

### *Visualizations regarding the Bad One*

From the total number of posts on the wall of the Bad One, 52% were without any picture, photo or video clip – there was only text, while 46% had video clips. Photos were rare (only 4), as well as links – a total of 3.

Video clips, which were numerous, were analyzed in detail. According to their content, they were divided in several groups:

#### *Videos with military content were most numerous:*

- Soldiers of KLA<sup>9</sup> (2001); Soldiers of KLA singing military songs; Military operations of KLA; Demonstration of the weapons used by KLA; Celebration of the victory of KLA; Celebration of the day of liberation of Kosovo; Short movie for the army of KLA in Kosovo; Kosovo War 1999- KLA destroys a church; KLA- Black Tigers; Albanian Special Forces. There were 23 video clips with this type of content.
- Macedonian Wolves killing Albanian terrorists, videos from Brodec, Tetovo 2001 – Macedonian soldiers killing 2 Albanian terrorists, Macedonian sniper, March of the Macedonian army. There were 8 videos like these.

#### *Music, videos:*

- A song regarding the events at Kale Fortress (7) – hip hop song: “Go away from Kale Fortress if you don’t want me to f...k you all”; hip hop song: “F...k Serbia”;

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<sup>9</sup> Kosovo Liberation Army

- Songs for the Wolves - Macedonian sons (3); song for the Tigers; song for the Macedonian traitors: F...K Greece; Macedonia forever; song for the Macedonian special forces; rap song for the Macedonian soldiers;
- Original ethnic Macedonian song: Macedonian Girl (Македонски девојче), If I Die or Get Killed (Ако умрам ил загинам), Macedonian Nation (Земјо македонска); The first hymn of the Republic of Macedonia from 1923 – Rise, Dawn of the Freedom (Изгреј зора на слободата), the present hymn of Macedonia
- Albanian folk music.

*Calling on history and bringing out historical facts regarding recent or ancient history:*

- The real origin of the Albanians; Who are Albanians (Alexander the Great was Albanian by origin); Albanians – the oldest nation on Earth; the history of the Albanian keche<sup>10</sup>;
- Historical facts that Macedonians are Slavs and not Ancient Macedonians and

*Football matches and video clips of football games:*

- Komiti supporting FC Vardar during a game; celebration of the 20-year anniversary of Komiti; Komiti going to a game – street fights; A football stand in Serbia with a transparent that reads: “Kill the Shiptars”; cheering of the fans during a Vardar – Skendija game; a video clip titled: “Komiti beat Shiptars”;
- Empty stadium with no Komiti (only Albanian supporters);

*Natural beauties of Macedonia:*

picture of the ruined mosque in the city of Prilep (3); pictures of Seselj in the Hague (2); Video clips of rituals where people are accepting Islam; the Macedonian flag with the Vergina Sun....



The GOOD One

15 out of 111 posts on the wall of the Good One had pictures, and 34 had videos.

Pictures appearing on the wall of the Good One were: symbols of peace; peace – not war; children from the entire world embracing Earth; open hands from everyone; sun, flowers, rainbow; Christians are protecting Muslims praying in Cairo; “peace and love”; “faith, love and peace”; “peace and love”;

<sup>10</sup> Albanian traditional hat

Only 5 of the video clips attached to the profile of the Good One were not songs and were related to various sayings regarding love, the life of Mother Theresa, different pictures showing love and unity. The most often promoted songs on the Good One's wall were the songs of Michael Jackson: We Are the World, the song of John Lennon: Imagine; furthermore there were songs such as: Peace from Depeche Mode, We Are the Champions from Queen, Be My Brother, Be My Friend from Non Stop, Love Is All from Yanni, All You Need Is Love from The Beatles, Let the Sun Shine In from the movie Hair, Heal the World from Michael Jackson, the songs For All the Children and Skopje Joyful You Will Be – from the Festival "Golden Nightingale", Let's Save the World from Karolina, Toshe and other Macedonian singers...

## **Discussion**

The image, photography and the name that represent those who left posts on Facebook pages give us an insight into the way participants in cyberspace manage their own identity, or more specifically in this case, according to Suler (2002), speak about the level of dissociation and integration of the identity of individuals.

Since our research analyzed the identities (pictures and names of those who were posting) both at the Bad and the Good One's pages, we can say with a high degree of certainty that those who prefer the Bad One are individuals that want to stay anonymous to a higher degree and/or to accentuate only one aspect of their personality (more often they used blurred names, pictures, pictures of actors, group names...thus, showing dissociative behavior), while the individuals active on the Good One's page, were feeling freer to show their personality, from the viewpoint of managing their own identity. In psychological terms they show integrative characteristics. The two groups were different in terms of the types of symbols which they used: the activists on behalf of the Bad One often used national or religious symbols, while the activists on behalf of the Good One used symbols like flowers, books, children hands...

According to Suler (2002), one of the phenomena in the context of determining identity in cyberspace was the emergence of positive and negative valence. Positive refers to those who use cyberspace as an opportunity to demonstrate their positive features, and was typical of individuals who posted on the Good One. Negative valence refers to those who offend and hurt others in the same space. This is seen as a cathartic act where the insecure and passive-aggressive individuals often remain trapped in the endless river of online arguments. The existence of this negative valence was undoubtedly demonstrated by the huge percentage of negative posts, hate speeches, calls for war, murder... as well as the endless controversies, deceptions, and insults recorded in the Bad One.

The occurrence of positive and negative valence proves the existence of the online disinhibiting effect: that people will speak and do things in cyberspace which they would normally not have done in the real world; and the existence of online regression, which meant the return of some lower, less mature, less critical forms of functioning and behavior online. The regression and toxic disinhibiting which contribute to the release of unpleasant needs and desires are probably responsible for the vast amount of profanity, insults, and threats ... posted on the wall of the Bad One. Benign disinhibiting, however, which usually manifests itself through the expression of unusual acts of kindness and generosity, understanding and tolerance, are clearly seen in the Good One. It is impossible and unnatural for an individual to have such understanding, support and tolerance of a complete stranger, is it not?!?!?

Besides managing their identity online, another important aspect was expressing their identity through a medium that can communicate with the environment. In cyberspace people choose a specific communication channel with which to express their selves, and that is why they have many options... The data showed a greater usage of video clips on the Bad Profile and a greater usage of written text on the Good Profile. That would mean a greater presence of “visualizers” on the Bad Profile and a greater presence of ‘verbalizers’ on the Good One, and the conclusion that maybe the rational-analytic dimension is on the side of those active on the second Profile. However, deeper observations will require profound analysis.

The contents of the video clips, however, illustrate the projected needs, frustrations, and desires which bore witness to the militaristic impulses of the individuals who posted on the Bad Profile, and the peaceful needs of those who posted on the Good Profile. Unfortunately, the ones that dominate are the former.

This analysis started with one main research question of what was happening in the virtual space of Facebook in terms of the quality of reporting the differences. Specifically, the objectives of the research were focused on analysis of the content written by participants on the pages of Facebook designed for the Kale Fortress incident, an event that touched the two largest ethnic groups in Macedonia, and at one point, threatened to disrupt peace and stability in the country.

What happened in the virtual space of Facebook following the clash between the Macedonians and Albanians was a verbal and unscrupulous battle, a battle in which the participants were far from shy in using vulgarities, threats, and profound language... There were calls for war, clashes, nationalism, ethnic cleansing. Hate speech spread like a bushfire.

The majority of the people that actively participated in virtual space regarding the construction of the Church-Museum participated in the creation of the image of the Bad One related to the story of the Church. It is these people that tried to hide their identity online, and, thanks to the endless and open virtual space, without

major difficulties, they managed to express a myriad of insults, profanities, anger, violence.... Online democracy brought the disinhibiting effect and regression, and the hidden needs, desires, and frustrations simply exploded out in the air.

There were also those who participated in building the Good One in the story. They showed a greater incentive for integration, and they did not enter into the endless river of justifications and arguments, and they manifested kindness and generosity. They called for mutual tolerance and understanding but they were heavily outnumbered, losing 22:1.

If it is true that while searching the Internet we almost always actually find ourselves, then none of the participants were there by accident. The “accidents” are related to their common interests, hidden desires, and motives to manifest such behavior online.

The battle may have been in virtual space, but everything that was said was real. Cyberspace is nothing else but an extension of the intra psychological world of the individuals. Hence, anger, hatred, insults, expletives, urges for violence, and murder may not have been said in real life and on the streets, but they do exist somewhere in the psychological space and they transcended from computers in their homes in the form of a horrifying message. Computers are merely an extension of the human mind and personality, a space which reflected the views and interests of those who entered it.

The Republic of Macedonia is a multicultural society, which, unfortunately, in its history, both recent and distant, has witnessed ethnic disagreements, conflicts, and military clashes. Many experts have warned that ethnic co-existence is quite fragile, and that there is a real chance for a new conflict, far worse than the one 10 years ago. On the other hand, others assure that interethnic relations are stable and that we will not have similar incidents in the future. However, if we believe that social networks offer online democracy in the true sense of the word, and that virtual space is something where everyone can freely enter and express their thoughts and feelings, then it is just a matter of time before intolerance and aggression towards other ethnic groups online will also spill out on the streets.

## **Conclusions**

Current estimates show that 23 million people communicate via the Internet, and this number is rapidly increasing by 12% monthly. This increase is not planned or controlled by anyone. We stand in front of one of the most extraordinary and exciting technological achievements, one of mankind’s highest eminences on the crossover towards the third millennium. However, modern day Homo sapiens are known to return to their primitive, childish behavior. This applies to the differences as well. Why?



Internet communication has its pluses and minuses, good and bad sides. The pluses account for generosity, openness, tolerance and the support that they can offer to each other, even if it is between complete strangers in cyberspace. The good page in the analysis manifested itself through the face of the Good One. The minuses account for the manifested aggression, sexual assaults (attempts and threats regarding it), as well as increased vulnerability, hence, the face of the Bad One on Facebook is already recognizable. Actually, these are two sides of the same coin. The lack of inhibition, actually relates to the nonexistence of regulations and related bans and limitations. But at the same time, this is the main reason for misbehavior in cyberspace. The nonexistence of limitations makes the satisfaction of the human needs possible (communication needs are some of the many needs). However, they are different. Also, “anonymity” while managing the identity in virtual space implies the possibility of manipulation and distortion. The completely blurred space of the virtual world is an open opportunity for all hidden and suppressed needs, wishes, and desires. The undefined communication channels open the opportunity for projection, thus we can easily view others as aggressive, rude, arrogant or bad, instead of ourselves. The chances for the Bad One to appear are even greater because it is exactly the Bad One that is banned in official public space. Just because it is strongly suppressed by the institutions at all levels does not prevent its “explosion” on the Internet. The analysis showed that it has experienced an expansion on the social networks, since out of the 23 pages created regarding the Kale Fortress incident, 22 were a representation of the Bad One. The Good One stood alone and was less active. The only positive thing was that it was more praised in comparison to the Bad One, thus it had almost double the fans, at least formally. However, the main dynamics remained and will probably continue happening to the Bad One. The good profile “is losing the battle”, at least when we speak about issues regarding the differences in such a multicultural society as ours! And when the Good is losing the battle in multicultural societies, threats to peace and stability to one’s society are the harsh reality.

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