

## OPINION

# Just me and my 522 addicted friends

Will Facebook pay out? Who cares? But check out my clever status updates!

BY CLAUDIA GRYPVATZ COPQUIN

So the world's largest social network is finally going public today (sounds pretty redundant). For months, the pending initial public offering of Facebook has had investors giddy with excitement — but I get the sense that no one else cares.

Frankly, my friends and I are so over Facebook. By “friends” I mean 522 people I've mostly never met, and by “so over Facebook” I mean totally addicted. The hours are marked by compulsive status updates, which revolve around the frenetic creation of cute photo ops accompanied by clever captions. We post these relentlessly on our news feeds and then, vastly pleased with ourselves, wait hopefully for comments. Mere “Likes,” which equate to disengaged nods, are usually a disappointment, but they'll do in a pinch.

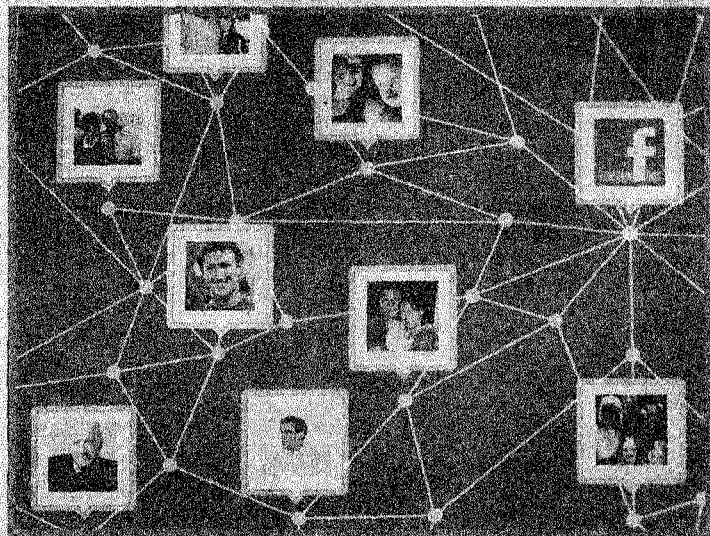
We brag about our kids' Little League games and SAT scores. We play silly farming games, celebrate birthdays,

share celebrity gossip, news, deaths, births, illnesses, and a ruthless amount of graphics involving cuddling kittens and dolphins. Speaking of which, people, can we all just agree that enough is enough?

Best of all, Facebook offers a discreet way to search former flames. And by “search” I mean scrutinize their photo albums, particularly the pictures of their spouses, which we then forward to our old best friends for their dissection via private message. “OMG — Look who he ended up with!”

Yes, Facebook reduces us all to college students, ironically Mark Zuckerberg's initial demographic. I'm betting eight years ago he never imagined an aging baby boomer parent like me would take to his invention like a moth to a flame, ignoring its Orwellian traits.

That wasn't always the case. Years ago, when my high school freshman twins wanted to join Facebook, I argued fearfully against it, listing stalkers, creepy friend requests and revealing too much personal information as a basis for staying



away from the fledgling network. Of course, those arguments fell on deaf ears, especially when just weeks later, I signed myself up. We laugh about that now, but all those scary issues are still valid.

Questions about privacy and data collection continuously plague Facebook, which has more than 500 million daily users worldwide. Then — a concern for all those investors — there's the way the company generates revenue, through supposedly customized advertisements. Consider the sponsored

ads on my homepage, theoretically designed to target me: a Dr. Oz ad on quitting cigarettes (I don't smoke); a sale on a garment called Zaggora HotPants (I would never!); and Learn Hebrew Online from eteacher-hebrew.com (Oy).

I also worry about social media addiction. According to the journal *Psychological Studies*, a recent study shows that the urge to log on to Facebook is as strong, if not stronger, than a hankering for alcohol and tobacco. So I'm taking comfort in another recent

study, this one from *The Hollywood Reporter*: It found that 88 percent of people consider Facebook to be entertainment. It's just good, clean fun — the television of our era!

And to those who express disdain about it — we all know they are lurking, secretly blathering about our goings on, if not to other Facebook users, then surely to their husbands and wives over dinner. “You should have seen my cousin's stupid/racist/boring/politically incorrect update. I really had to resist commenting on that one today!” They might be the same half of all Americans who in a poll released this week by Associated Press-CNBC suggest that Facebook is a passing fad.

They could be right. Today's Facebook IPO could be tomorrow's Pinterest IPO. I'm hearing a lot of buzz about that new platform. In fact, I plan on looking into it this minute. And by “looking into it” I mean going on Facebook to change my status update.



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