

Project Sara Buter

Conceptualizing friendship through Facebook

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What is Project Sara Butler?

Project Sara Butler is a project through Facebook in which we designed an account for a fictional character (Sara Butler) and sent friend requests to students throughout our University of Oregon community to get a better grasp on why individuals seek friendship through social media, and why individuals are compelled to obtain friendships with people they don't know.

Overview

- The Process
- Creating Sara Butler
- Survey Questions
- The Response to the Project
- Interviews
- Conclusion

The Process


- Creation of Sara Butler
- Acquiring Friends
- Maintaining Account
- Surveying Friends of Sara Butler
- Interview Process

Creating Sara Butler


- Designed fake Facebook account
 - Had her "like" pages relevant to UO community.
 - Sent friend requests to students at UO.
 - Maintained Facebook account by posting status' and photos.

Creating Sara Butler






 **Sara Butler**
February 19 at 3:03pm · 👤

Could oregon get any prettier?! Perfect day to go on an adventure to Spencer's butte! 🌄



Like · Comment · Share

👍 Kearney Tate Newman, Aaron Alter and 2 others like this.

 Write a comment...  

- 🎒 Student
2014 to
- 🎓 Studies at University of Oregon
Attending from 2013 to 2017
- 🏠 Lives in Eugene, Oregon
- 📍 From Eugene, Oregon
Born on February 4, 1995 (20 years old)

 **Sara Butler**
February 24 at 7:51pm · 👤

Giving into cravings never tasted so good 🍦 — at Prince Pückler's Gourmet Ice Cream.

Like · Comment · Share

👍 Alysa Polvay, Paula Serafine LaMagna Chambers, Conner Richardson and 2 others like this.

 Write a comment...  

 **Sara Butler**
February 19 at 11:29am · 👤

What a great day on such a beautiful campus! Sun is shining and the weekend is almost here!

Unlike · Comment · Share

👍 You, Christine Lu, Holly Nuthmann and 2 others like this.

 Write a comment...  

Surveying Friends of Sara Butler

To get a better idea of how Sara's friends conceptualize friendships through social media, we sent out a survey and asked Sara's friends to participate in our study.

The Survey Questions

- What do you think of Sara Butler?
- What was it that made you accept this friend request?
- Would you be willing to be interviewed?
If so leave your name and UO email

Sample Responses

What did you think of Sara?

- "She has the most average facebook I've ever seen"
- "She was a very convincing college-age girl"
- "They are generally happy person but I don't think anything of her"
- "She seems very sweet and down to earth"
- "She seemed nice and normal but her smile looked like she was hiding something. She was chewing like she had a secret!"

Sample Responses

Why did you accept the friend request?

- “Because I had mutual friends and saw a mutual friend comment on her profile”
- “I thought she was in my sorority”
- “She had a lot of mutual friends and didn’t seem... creepy?”
- “I accept all friend requests sent to me when I have mutual friends”
- “She sent it and there was no reason not to”

Other Activity on the Account

- Multiple 'Happy Birthday' posts on her wall
- Messages sent to Sara from other people
- Four friend requests sent TO Sara
- Facebook sent Sara messages that adding friends was only for people you know
- Posts done by us on the Sara Butler wall and peoples responses to those posts
- Five people messaged Sara to asked how they knew her

People's Reactions and Interactions With Sara Butler

-  **Oriante Mendel** Mon
Hlw frnd how are you
-  **Project Sara Butler** Sun
Gabe: down
-  **[Redacted]** Fri
Plz come.
-  **Claude Belei** Feb 25
Salut
-  **Sara Butler** Feb 24
✓ Claude Belei sent frien...
-  **Jack Bloom** Feb 23
How do I know you?
-  **Alan Kelley** Feb 22
Have we met before?
-  **[Redacted]** Feb 19
hey sorry to ask but wher...
-  **Max Anderson** Jan 31
My apologies, but I don't ...
-  **Erika Dodge** Jan 30
Hey, do i know you?

 **Sara Butler**
Birthday: February 4

 **[Redacted]** **Sara Butler**
February 4 · 👤

Happy birthday!

Like · Comment

👍 Joel Jacobs and Maddie Cowen like this.

 **Sara Butler** thank you!
February 5 at 4:19pm · Like

 Write a comment... 📷 😊

 **[Redacted]** **Sara Butler**
February 4 · 👤


Happy Birthday!

Like · Comment

 **Sara Butler** thank you!
February 5 at 4:19pm · Like

 Write a comment... 📷 😊

Conversation started March 3

 **Najid Amin** 3/3, 9:36pm

Hi

Thursday

 **Najid Amin** 3/5, 5:26am

Hi sexy


Oo

😏

Aaaahhhhhh

.....

Friday

 **[Redacted]** 3/6, 8:28pm

Plz... aahhhahhh

Plz come.

📱 Sent from Mobile

Interview Results *Courtesy of J. Jacobs*

- Thoughts on Sara:
 - Similar looking girl on campus, thought she was in a sorority
- Why did you accept the request?
 - Mutual friends, saw her on campus
- Process of accepting request
 - Convinced she was real, mutual friends

Interview Results (Cont.)

“The only real friends you have on Facebook are the ones you have contact with and you go out of your way to talk to them and see them. FB is just a way to talk to a friend far away or acquaintances here and there.”

Interview Results (Cont.)

- Did you think she was real?
 - Yes
- Why?
 - Because people talked about her and she had a real life persona online

Fun Facts

- Peoples' thoughts about Sara:
 - 16% Thought she was in a Sorority
 - 41% Had mutual friends
 - 25% Thought she was in Marching Band

***Percentages come from those who were surveyed

Project Conclusion

While some people pay attention to who they befriend through Facebook, our research shows that many individuals add people that they have never actually met, especially if they have mutual friends in common with the individual. This shows that the concept of friendship is evolving into one in which physically meeting the individual is not necessary in order to interact and befriend them.