Chapter Five.

Facebook Friends: Security blankets and career mobility

The prestige market of the big city is often a market of strangers, a milieu where contacts having relevance to prestige are often transitory and fleeting.
– C.W. Mills, *White Collar*

If you've got time to Facebook, you've got time to call your mum.
– Telstra advertisement, January 2009 [i]

If each generation has its age-defining moment, in years to come the summer of 2008 will best be remembered as the summer of Facebook. Over the course of this project, one social networking platform captured the interest of study participants and the wider public alike. In Australia as in many Anglophone counties, Facebook moved swiftly from a status of source of public panic – a cause célèbre for "old" media exploiting parental concerns about unknown strangers in the house (Baxter 2008) – to an eventual degree of mundanity as companies and households each came to terms with its potential opportunities and threats. Building on the business-based marketing for mobile devices discussed in Chapter One, which suited the priorities of a Frequent Flyer business audience, Facebook's massive uptake created the impetus for a range of advertising campaigns targeting a wider constituency. Teens and students were addressed by a range of images showing young girls accessing "Facebook on the go", particularly by means of the emerging range of "smart phones" from Nokia, BlackBerry and Apple. Telstra's 2009

campaign cited above even seemed obliged to remind young people to call home to check in with their parents. The ad's moralizing tone was a notable instance of business attempts to set the terms for appropriate etiquette in the face of new technology. The Facebook reference was targeted to the tension playing out in families across the nation where compulsive checking of online media appeared set to triumph over established forms of family connection and intimacy.

What the campaign failed to appreciate was that vast numbers of mothers were also joining Facebook during the same period with the distinct intention of keeping in touch with their children. Online social networking was routinely depicted in the media as the terrain of the young, single and carefree, perpetuating false notions of households generationally divided in their enjoyment of this new communication platform. As the demographic make-up for the website became clear, it was employers' desires to avoid time-wasting in the office that offered the most persistent front for public concern (Jenkins 2008). The success with which organizations developed an effective "social media strategy" – to keep employees content and harness the power of web 2.0 technologies for profit – became a new gauge of credibility that "Generation Y" job-seekers could add to their list of requirements.

Facebook stands as the iconic application for this book as a whole.[ii] Its popularity amongst a middle class, office-dwelling user base illustrates the seamless combination of professional and personal identity that is at stake in the shift to intimate work ("contact" = "friend"). Amassing these relationships in

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a unique biographical configuration, Facebook's rise to prominence reflects the significance of work in the lives of white-collar professionals. It highlights work's central influence on status and esteem on a daily basis, just as it demonstrates work's capacity to generate intimate relationships and pleasures to withstand these quotidian affects. Through "status updates", "posted items", "pokes" and "gifts" (the latter often specific to one's profession), Facebook users showcase their interests and obsessions to a cast of sympathetic onlookers. If Larry Grossberg described the mainstream appeal of rock music as "a way of making it through the day" (1997: 115), for desk-bound employees, Facebook provides a similarly reliable solace, especially when long hours prevent other kinds of connection.

At a time of increased social mobility, this chapter describes Facebook as the "security blanket" for workers conscious of the need to remain flexible, available and likable in a dynamic employment market. Facebook makes bearable all of the potentially overwhelming encounters of life online and on the job, as friends and family can be brought along as virtual company through a succession of non-continuing projects and positions. At the same time, social networking sites allow mobile individuals the benefits of a new form of prospective, affective labour increasingly vital for survival in a reputation-based employment market (Solove 2007). A Facebook profile and a set of contacts provides an ongoing character-based CV for workers to draw upon to withstand the instability of "flexible" careers. In this way, this chapter shows online communities serve as a grounding mechanism and reassuring presence that was previously provided by geographically proximate others.

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When work takes people away from an original foundational community, Facebook friends provide the continuity often missing as a result of “churn” (Delaney 2009) and “drift” (Sennett 1998). Across cities and countries, social networking sites have fast become the principal means by which upwardly mobile workers cushion the impact of unfamiliar surroundings. Online connections assist in the most ordinary day-to-day issues posed by a life of transitory home-making, from where to get a haircut to finding a reliable doctor.

Facebook offers a reliable locus for affection for the growing number of workers for whom traditional forms of community seem lacking. Comment sections, wall space, email and instant messaging are just some of the ways it incites convivial discourse that rivals the tonelessness of other communication platforms like email (see Chapter Four). Add-on applications allow gestures and mementos to accrue over time, acting as tangible evidence of friends’ ongoing presence – not to mention the potential for further “hook-ups” in future. It is this potential, and the constant and reassuring guarantee of presence, that is Facebook’s permanent consolation. Unlike the mass appeal of rock music however, Facebook’s popularity is highest among a particular subset of the knowledge class. Alongside Certeau’s notion of the “scriptural economy”, which the previous chapter used to explain office workers’ predilection for email, susceptibility to Facebook is governed by the possession of a set of mutually shared dispositions – a similar “habitus” (Bourdieu 1984). The most prominent of these is regular and prolonged internet use. Rules of participation and membership separate the casual

Facebook user from the larger community conversation. Even if there are different ways of using Facebook, structural constraints imposed by design innovations hamper efforts to veer from what are established as normative displays of affection and disaffection. Like all social networking sites, Facebook relies on an intricate combination of performance cues that are central to effective use and optimal enjoyment. The first of these is a certain comfort with sharing relatively personal information in a relatively public space that may be subject to outside manipulation. What I call the “broadcast impulse” explains the willingness to engage in these displays voluntarily, in spite of the possibility that others can make use of such revelations. As the YouTube slogan put it, to “broadcast yourself” on social networking sites is to recognise that what matters to oneself is at least as significant as any prospective engagement with others.[iii] Facebook’s interpellative address – “What are you doing, right now?” and the more recent, “What's on your mind?” – invites the user to share even the most minor thought or activity, and to believe that doing so is significant.

Those accustomed to a more traditional broadcast model for entertainment, such as Baby Boomers brought up on a diet of radio and television, find this the most disturbing aspect of social networking sites. The “new” of new media is defined by a recognition that messages no longer needed to be refined, limited or deemed worthy of broadcast by others. In the context of trends discussed in this book already, there is also a more encompassing reason that Facebook’s apparently “trivial” snippets of information prove interesting to an audience only slightly connected to each other. This is because structural

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developments in the workplace may in fact prevent the likelihood of more significant, long term connections beyond the computer screen.

Elective affinities

The work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu offers an astute register for understanding how online social networks attract and favour similar types. While they invite spontaneity, Facebook updates fit the “scriptural economy” (Certeau 1988) of middle class literacy in that the power to manipulate the written word is used with care. On social networking platforms, users craft their self-image through a process of fabulation (Crawford 2009). The broadcast dimension of status updates brings with it the expectation that the image projected is a favourable one. To the extent that individual focus of Facebook creates community, this is largely attributable to the logic of like attracts like. As Bourdieu explained this tendency of “elective affinities”:

> Those whom we find to our taste put into their practices a taste which does not differ from the taste we put into operation in perceiving their practices. Two people can give each other no better proof of the affinity of their tastes than the taste they have for each other (Bourdieu, 1984: 243)

The Facebook page is a marker of taste in that “it unites all those who are the product of similar conditions distinguishing them from all others. And it distinguishes in an essential way, since taste is the basis of all that one has – people and things – and all that one is for others, whereby one classifies

oneself and is classified by others" (Bourdieu 1984: 56). A key aspect of Facebook's appeal is to provide recommendations about useful or interesting information based on the security gleaned from personal networks. This recommendation process also extends to people, and the exclusive feeling of discovery that transpires when mutual recognition of shared taste leads to the "serendipity" of connecting with further, previously unknown, like-minded others.

It is both an addition and an endorsement to be allowed to join someone's Facebook community. This entrepreneurial dimension to friending practices was captured early on in the phrase "Thanks for the add": the ritual acknowledgement shared by MySpace users when someone "adds" you to their list of friends (Gregg 2007). Both MySpace and Facebook pivot on the invitation to display and market a coherent self that can be assessed and consumed by others (Hearn 2008). Due to the taste logic of these sites, the benefit that is recognised is that friendship allows one's own profile to be circulated for free to "a wider market of strangers" (Mills, 1973: 251).

It is in the very nature and structure of the profile page that social networking sites reveal their role as a marker of class position. The profile page invites us to create a succession of distinctions that define our identity against others. These distinctions nonetheless communicate that we belong to a particular group. In Bourdieu's terms, cultural capital arises in the combination of disposition and entitlement that provides the confidence in displaying our preferences to an audience. Entering tastes and favourite things to construct

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a profile page provides a readily available repository for others to appreciate our own distinguishing features.[iv] But beyond these gestures, users also demonstrate preferences explicitly by voting in polls, taking personality quizzes or simply clicking “I like” after a friend does something interesting or amusing online.

Facebook fosters a “cultivated disposition” in Bourdieu’s sense by naturalizing the arbitrary tastes and choices of a specific demographic. Taste is acquired not only “by moving in a universe of familiar, intimate objects” that the site provides, but by developing “a relation of immediate familiarity with the things of taste” (Bourdieu 1984: 77) through the sharing of gifts, links and preferences. Facebook’s homophillic tendencies are also shown in the forms of humour rewarded and encouraged by the site. A particularly instructive example during the course of writing this book was the popularity of an application called Bogan Gifts. In Australia, a “bogan” is an affectionate term for working-class, suburban dwellers with modest aspirations and simple tastes (much like the English expression “chav”). The premise of the Bogan gifts application was to allow users to send tokens to each other that were both iconic of bogan stereotypes but often familiar objects from childhood.

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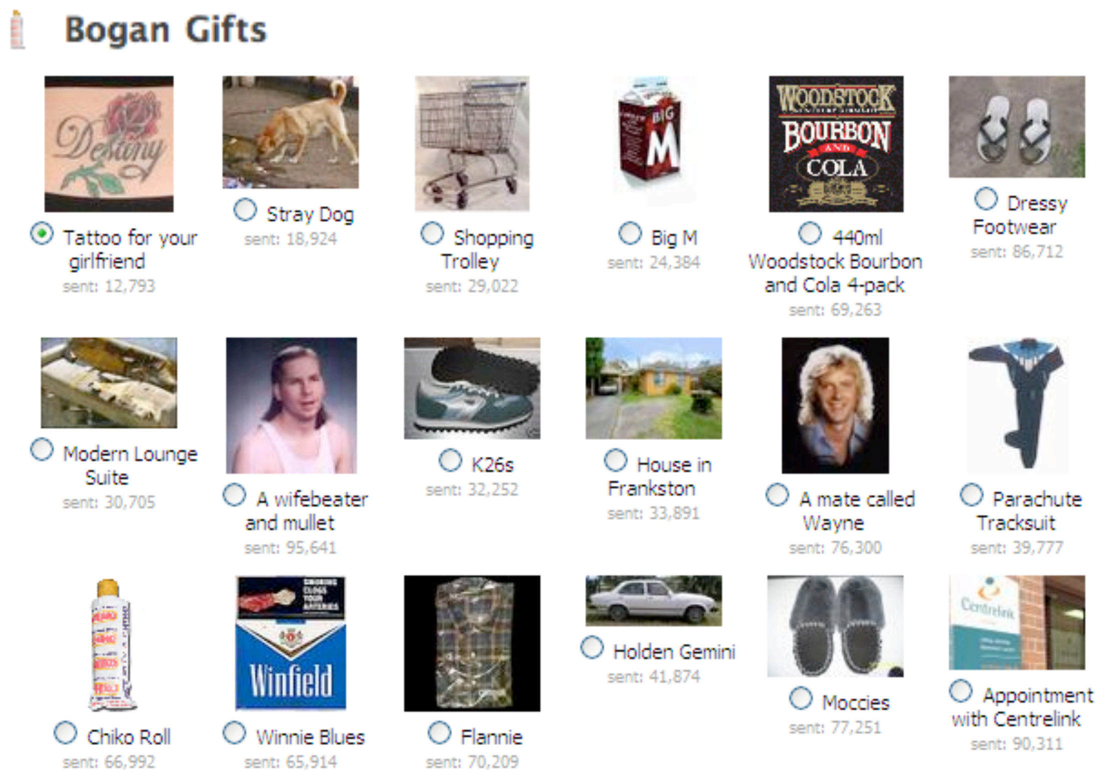

[Figure 5.1: Selection from “Bogan Gifts” Facebook application]

Sharing these objects, humorous precisely because of their status as the opposite of taste, is a way of expressing affection and affiliation between friends. Bogan Gifts elaborates Bourdieu’s claim that for those adapting to a middle class lifestyle:

the ‘horrors’ of popular kitsch are easier to ‘recuperate’ than those of petit-bourgeois imitation, just as the ‘abomination’ of bourgeois taste can begin to be found ‘amusing’ when they are sufficiently dated to cease to be ‘compromising’ (Bourdieu, 1984: 62).

Class mobility is central to Bogan Gifts’ appeal and success. The program

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operates on the pleasurable relief that opportunity has placed users at some distance from the “horrors” of childhood objects. Its regular reflection of the “abominations” of taste provides a stage for friends to express their relative distance from previously compromising elements of an inherited lifestyle. Games provide an outlet for discussing the similar class background that individuals have been able to escape through educational and employment mobility. The rehabilitation of such objects in this new space becomes a further badge of membership, familiarity and humour, although there is poignancy at play. The self-reflexivity Bogan Gifts summons from users regarding their relationship between present and past recalls the feeling of displacement that, in another context, Richard Hoggart described as the melancholic fate of the Scholarship Boy (1956; see Gregg 2006).

Bogan Gifts is just one of a number of examples that reveal Facebook’s popularity with a particular demographic at a time when class mobility is commonplace, if not also a rational expectation. Facebook and its many applications and quizzes provide an encompassing venue to play out the anxieties of the beneficiaries of cultural capital and career progression. While not all users come to such applications with similar experiences, Facebook’s wider mandate to connect similar types makes it a venue for users with a shared habitus. As the following sections will highlight, Bourdieu’s writing is helpful in recognising that “the principle of the pleasure derived from these refined games for refined players lies, in the last analysis, in the denied experience of a social relationship of membership and exclusion” (Bourdieu, 1984: 499).

Facebook intimacy

Another of Facebook's consolations therefore is that it promises to be immersive. This is the basis of its appeal for users with the relative freedom to have the platform running throughout the day and in to the night. It also explains the resolve expressed by many in this study who were bent on avoiding its time-consuming obligations. Engagement with the site must be performed in ritualistic ways to signify investment and reciprocity in others, otherwise the experience as a whole risks being voyeuristic. In the context of workloads already discussed in the book so far, such expectations appeared to many as just another online obligation.

The pressure to respond to friend requests was mentioned by Peter, a 57-year-old university lecturer who felt his use of the site was "restricted" because his name was so recognised. His measured approach to the site was to "try not to let it run ahead of me… Work is for the soul, but not beyond a certain point". Others opted out of Facebook due to a similar lack of time. Tony, an Associate Professor of Education, knew the site was popular with his kids and his students, but didn't use Facebook himself: "I just feel that everything I do – to do another thing would be just too much".

Despite these hesitations, particularly from older workers, the number of people using Facebook in the study increased over time. While some participants had stopped using it before we met, no one who using it at the

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start of the study had stopped, and several who had claimed its irrelevance in initial interviews were using it regularly later. Clive, a university professor in charge of a research centre, was one of the growing number of Facebook enthusiasts: “I resisted getting on Facebook for a long time, but then I got on and I can see how infectious it is. It’s true”. One of the benefits he appreciated was the way that it could show another side to the colleagues he usually only saw in serious, professional settings. One high-powered diplomatic official he was friends with showed a particular fondness for Scrabulous, and this was something he enjoyed seeing. He also noticed that other friends spent a lot of effort “demonstrating how engaged they are with all of the big issues all of the time”, and was worried that he might be seen to do the same: “People realize I’ve been reading *Liquid Fear* by Zygmunt Bauman for about two weeks now”.

Clive considered Facebook “a leisure thing”, and “a break from the normal routine”. He felt “uncomfortable using Facebook at work”. The significance of the site was that: “All of my colleagues on Facebook, who are indeed work colleagues, will now see that at certain times of the day I’m prepared to be frivolous and non-serious and will take the film test and things like that with everybody else”. These distinctions were important even though they were not necessarily shared by all users. For Clive, this came to prominence when a colleague “caught him out” using Facebook rather than responding to a work request. The person wrote to say “I see that you scored 79 per cent on your Disney test, what about my proposal?” For Clive, this was “an interesting jumbling of the private and public” where he was reprimanded “for being frivolous”.

As an expert in international affairs, active in both NGO and scholarly settings, Clive recognized more than most the difference between Facebook's trivial and serious potential. His global connections made him "more and more persuaded" that social networking sites can "become powerful means of influence". Clive's comments are an interesting indication of the potential for new media to expand the audience for political issues, and improve communication between traditional audiences for academics. In the wake of social networking technologies, he told us:

if I wanted to put something serious in an area where I think it would be read by a lot of people, I wouldn't necessarily go straight to a journal. I might actually contemplate putting a sign on my Facebook… saying I've just got this information, you might want to follow it up. If you look at my Facebook, you'll see that the second secretary of the New Zealand High Commission was giving me updated briefings on what was happening in the Solomons. So, somewhat trivial technologies are actually becoming quite serious.

In other professions, such as journalism, Facebook was also used to enhance the possibilities for communication that were already a part of the job. In his role as assistant producer for the Breakfast program, Patrick would often check the news circulating amongst his network of friends to get a sense of popular issues and to have something to offer as a story idea. The presence indicators in Facebook's chat function were another way journalists used the site to organise stories to deadline. As the following chapter illustrates, these

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work-based applications for social networking sites were a mundane dimension of the job in industries focused on engaging with the public. But as Patrick discovered, using Facebook for work raised problems in terms of balancing a professional identity alongside the more relaxed persona he sought to enjoy by using the site.

Not only did Patrick use Facebook for his job as a producer, increasingly it was part of his work as a professional musician. Navigating the changing audiences for MySpace and Facebook as he tried to promote his live performances made his use of technology seem at times overwhelming:

I feel as though I need to be using it. If it weren't for music, to be quite honest, I think I would be a lot more judicious and harsh with my use of technology at home. Obviously I want to be in touch with people, but I feel as though technology is blackmailing me. I'm feeling as though if I don't maintain some kind of – especially with music – online hyperactive presence, not that I aspire to this but just my impressions, that suddenly everything that's dear in my life would just sort of go away and disappear and vanish, that I will have no friends, that no one will turn up to my gigs and then I will practically cease to exist. I mean, that's kind of the reality, that's the threat that I feel with technology at the moment. It's a terrible thing.

Patrick's feelings of pressure reflect the situation many scholars have identified that online platforms encourage an entrepreneurial subjectivity. In creative professions especially, users engage in a form of prospective labour

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in the sense that they spend time performing their endearing personality in an effort to captivate their friendship groups towards profitable ends. Using online platforms to generate a fan base for one's work is a legacy of initial patterns of interaction established in MySpace, as its largely music-oriented demographic developed an ecology of support and sustenance for emerging independent talent. With the mainstream uptake of Facebook, however, a widening audience for self-broadcasting posed a new kind of conflict for Patrick.

The thing about Facebook for me was I liked the idea of having something that had nothing to do with music, because MySpace for me is to do with music. So I like the idea of my Facebook profile being non-music orientated. I've since noticed, and I've kind of been taken against my will, that people have been abandoning MySpace and now Facebook is increasingly for bands and solo artists and [is also] music orientated. So now I've just kind of had to accept my fate that I have nowhere to hide, that my music will fucking just invade every single part of my life and I have no private life except the face to face interactions in real life.

The further complication in Patrick's use of Facebook was that he also considered it the place where he could escape the feeling of pressure to perform his professional persona with the broadcaster, his "day job". He knew, for instance, that the broadcaster had its own group on Facebook, but claimed: "I just don't know why you would want to join it". On the whole, he chose not to become Facebook friends with people from the radio station "unless they're actually genuine friends".

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Everyone else who is just an acquaintance or a colleague at work… I haven't befriended because I can't think of anything worse than them kind of being in every part of my life and commenting on my fucking status. I think I would just keel over. I can't bear that thought.

The network of friends Patrick has developed on Facebook is presented here as something valuable that is worth protecting. His resistance to be exposed to the scrutiny of work colleagues shows the function of this online community as a place of respite from the expectations of his job. To make sense of the contradictions in his use of the site, it is worth remembering that as a part-time musician in a relatively small city, Patrick saw little hope in having an audience for his shows beyond his actually existing friends. In any case, the multiple identities he occupies in using Facebook for different purposes at least complicates any simplistic reading of the site's manifold functions.

Young workers regularly pursued complex patterns of management and control in juggling their online and professional identities. Angela used Facebook "for social e-mailing", to keep a distinction between work and personal life. She used Facebook as a safe space for chat during the work day, one that was protected from the surveillance of formal email, and had the advantage of being available in her multiple workplaces. In Sam's case too:

I try to have some degree of separation because there's a lot of personal stuff up there and because I'm a queer and so I go to queer radical sex events that

are often stuff that I wouldn’t necessarily show my workmates.

Sam considered her work colleagues to be friends “in real life”, but online the case was different: “I certainly wouldn’t actively seek out a connection with any of my work colleagues”. The “one or two” she had connected with were justified because “I know them well enough that they know me anyway [and] it’s not going to be anything shocking for them”. Sam’s perspective is interesting for the way that it places thoughts of others at the heart of her friending practice. She protects her workmates from exposure to her outside-work persona to save the embarrassment of others being offended.

It is hardly incidental that Sam and Patrick appeared the most articulate in describing their use of Facebook. The importance of an ongoing group of friends online bears direct relation to the fluctuating conditions of their paid work. As “creatives” employed in precarious positions, Sam and Patrick recognised that their bases for loyalty needed to reside elsewhere than the workplace. Their use of Facebook showed an awareness of the need to be prepared for unknown eventualities. While each maintained their profiles as opportunities to relax and communicate with friends, it's also clear that these small pleasures involved an intricate set of negotiations to audit their identity and present their lives in particular ways. By the end of 2009, as reports emerged that employers were asking for print-outs of Facebook profiles before short-listing for jobs, these modulations of self-image were only fitting.

Friends in need

Facebook friends are an index of the changing stakes involved in the shift to flexible work and contract careers. The selective use of Facebook for work purposes indicates that users exercise a degree of agency in allowing access to their "network capital". As Bradwell and Reeves (2008: 21) describe this term:

Being part of an organization is still hugely important for our sense of identity and how others judge our value, status and potential. But the role of *network* capital is increasing, and the influence of personal reputation, history and network presence will be vital.

For workers like Sam and Patrick, network capital provides opportunities beyond the limits of the specific organizations that employ them. But it also brings the burden of managing their "network reputation". For employers, the dilemma this poses is that if an individual leaves an organisation, "they take their network capital with them", and often this set of relationships has been developed and maintained on company time. In this new work culture, online social networking is pursued "instrumentally for both work… and personal gain" (65).

To date, employers' efforts to capitalize on the network capital of employees while minimizing the threat Facebook poses to brand reputation have fluctuated between opportunism and punishment. Either response poses a threat to the site's current function in the white-collar workplace. In the context

of office cultures that require conviviality and teamwork in all online dealings, Facebook currently acts as the necessary safety valve for workers needing a place to vent the many negative affects accompanying office life. Social networking sites are a psychological buffer zone for a work experience that offers few avenues for ordinary sociability off-screen (Morris 2009).

Drawing on the work of Erving Goffman's classic study, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), many writers have worried that the effort required to project a polished, public image online through sites like Facebook threaten the possibility of maintaining a "back region" of behaviour that is, shall we say, "not fit for broadcast". In Goffman's theory the "back region" is where we let our guard down, where friends accept us for who we really are – "behind the mask" of public appearances. Critics fear that the move to embrace online social media means that individuals are becoming accustomed to the "deep acting" (Hochschild 1989) of professional work and that they may no longer develop the skills to switch back to the "genuine" self once reserved for intimate others. Evidence presented in this chapter shows something different. It is precisely the perception that Facebook friends are the more genuine that prompts workers to protect this online space from outside intrusions. It is the opportunity to engage in familiar exchanges with close friends during the work day that pushes many Facebook users online, since long hours at the office in many cases prevent the capacity to cultivate these friendships otherwise.

If "front region" behaviour did become more predominant in leisure as well as

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labour time, this would constitute significant grounds for concern, since the emotional labour involved in maintaining professional appearances attracts such dubious recognition. This is why Bourdieu's theories are important to read in conjunction with Goffman's, to isolate the specific class demographic that these discussions favour. As Goffman acknowledged, those further up the class hierarchy have always spent more time in the front region, since doing so is a direct reflection of their higher status. "The higher one's place in the status pyramid", Goffman wrote, "the smaller the number of persons with whom one can be familiar, the less time one spends backstage, and the more likely it is that one will be required to be polite as well as decorous" (Goffman, 1973: 133).

Social networking sites are one of the ways class and power are reconfiguring to suit a new economic formation. Here, digital literacy takes on the character of enfranchisement, since Internet access is only the initial step in a wider circuit of cultural capital set up to reward those who are familiar and comfortable with being online. The performance of presence on Facebook profiles can even be said to be replacing the Fordist face as tantamount to the parameters for participation and survival in the modern workplace. The homophillic tendencies these platforms favour makes them significantly implicated in extending the present digital divide. And Bourdieu's language of taste and affinity allows us to see how these activities relate to a longer history of cultural capital and the practices through which it is displayed and acknowledged.

Facebook's massive growth during the course of this study can only be understood in the context of increased class mobility that has come with broadening education opportunities and new forms of salaried work. These structural changes that accompanied the move to a flexible workplace required significant adjustments to service workers' needs for ongoing family and community support. The pleasures and anxieties that populate Facebook are the priorities of those who can take social mobility for granted. In this sense, it is important to note that the public friendships that Facebook makes possible aren't limited to the online era. For decades, the mobility involved in the pursuit of middle class security and patronage has brought accompanying requirements in the domain of friendship. In *The Organization Man*, William H Whyte spoke of the "outward personality" required of couples moving between company towns in the long march up the company ladder. The "web of friendship" he described in analyzing the social networks of dormitory suburbs in the United States is a precedent for the coercive friendships on the world wide web today. Whyte saw few alternatives to participation in the "outgoing life" of the neighbourhood for couples seeking a sense of belonging in unfamiliar locations. His analysis highlights the enduring problem for professionals seeking to recapture a lost sense of community when work leads them away from home, as well as the limited avenues for intimacy available to busy professionals.[v]

These first two chapters in the second part of the book show how online culture acts as the safe space for workers to manage the demands of the modern office. Facebook friends and messaging buddies take on the role of

collegial support when the workplace prevents such relationships from developing organically. Online friendships are the necessary recompense for a range of social and economic changes that include, the intrusion of work into home and leisure space, the isolation of precarious employment, and the long hours culture pursued by middle-class professionals. The extent to which people choose to conduct significant parts of their personal lives online, from finding the next book they should read to finding a life partner, says something about the opportunities for intimacy in a culture that is dominated by the schedules of office workers. It also questions the reliability of previous forms of social activity and affiliation in providing enduring and satisfying relationships.

At the same time however, the particular benefits of online intimacy have been shown to accrue in the performance and appreciation of shared habits and tastes. The use of social networking sites is a means of affirming participation in an emerging class of globally mobile information workers. Facebook's mission to "connect people" pivots on the early internet's novel promise to find ways of communicating with friends, as if no other medium had allowed this experience before. In doing so, it has consecrated a particular disposition or "habitus" assisting the class consolidation of the knowledge worker. In many ways this is fitting Facebook's original location in the dorms of Harvard University. The site cements existing networks of privilege in a very particular combination of textual performance, digital literacy and useful contacts. Celebrating this in the language of serendipity and democratic progress, Facebook is the latest means by which the middle class creates distinctive

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expressions of its own privileged position in social space as the command of virtual territories is increasingly crucial to the rewards to be won in society at large.

In contrast to teamwork's ultimately narrow objective, to ensure efficiency and productivity for the organisation, Facebook nonetheless makes us aware of a larger world, a wider community asking for our attention. Facebook opens workers’ horizons beyond the daily concerns of the cubicle to keep us connected to other things that matter. To be sure, many of these outside concerns also affirm already established tastes and dispositions, this being one of friendship's best qualities - to act as both conscience and consolation. But its performative nature and personal address is what makes Facebook synonymous with a new kind of presence, witnessing and responsibility within the otherwise anonymising forces of global capital.

[i] The accompanying text for the ad captures some of the wider conditions surrounding this chapter and the book as a whole: “These days it seems we have less and less time to chat. Yet, in the middle of this time crunch we still find hours and hours for things like social networking sites. There’s nothing wrong with that, just don’t forget to spare a little time to phone home. It’s one of the few pleasures that won’t break your budget in challenging times”.

[ii] Particularly in comparison to its main rival in Anglosphere nations, MySpace, which catered to a younger audience and one more explicitly gathered around music sharing and the promotion of various strands of the night-time economy. Wilson (2007) and boyd (2009) discuss class and age differences amongst MySpace and Facebook users, while Hjorth’s (2009) study of social media platforms in Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong and Tokyo is an important contrast to the Anglocentrism of much social media commentary.

[iii] This is different from claiming that social media are inherently narcissistic. Joanna Zylinska highlights the productive dimensions to the self-monitoring behaviour encouraged by social networking sites, with reference to both Levinas and a Foucauldian ethics of “care of the self”. Her critical perspective is a useful contrast to the many scholars investigating the rise of social networking sites on the assumption that the narcissism of online platforms is innate, obvious and appalling, highlighting the need for more philosophical studies of online culture.

[iv] Personal information on profile pages is also the major repository for targeted advertising, Facebook’s main revenue source, and a growing focus for critical scholarly attention (Andrejevic 2007).

[v] Whyte's analysis is also a precedent for understanding the limitations of online community. Like the couples dependent on the company, today's workers are dependent on Facebook to provide access to f social opportunities and sustenance. As Alan Liu (2004) has argued, the form of community afforded online is necessarily American; individualism is welcome to the extent that it does not disrupt the overall model and its accompanying avenues for expression.