Brokering friends: Exploring social capital and online privacy of Latin American immigrants on Facebook

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ABSTRACT

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Eduardo Fuenmayor Gauthier

In the networked society, migrations happen simultaneously offline and online. This thesis explores how privacy, our "portable territory of the self" (Fairfield, 2005), migrates physically and virtually, and describes the negotiations that take place when different notions of privacy converge on Facebook. By observing how Latin Americans aged 25 to 34 living in Montreal use Facebook to create social capital and how privacy implications impact on the creation of social capital on Facebook, this thesis incorporates cultural, institutional, and other contextual (offline) factors into the analysis of online privacy. Finally, this thesis proposes the concepts of *instrumental privacy* and *expressive privacy* to explain how goals, strategies, and actions for successful socialization are implemented on Facebook to create social capital.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .... **VII**

LIST OF FIGURES .... **VII**

INTRODUCTION **1**

METHODOLOGY 5

THESIS STRUCTURE 9

CHAPTER 1. IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CANADA **14**

1.1 SOCIAL CAPITAL: INTRODUCTORY NOTES 14

1.2 IMMIGRANTS, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND FACEBOOK 21

1.3 TRUST, MISTRUST, AND LATIN AMERICANS 29

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL NETWORKS, STRUCTURAL HOLES, AND FACEBOOK **35**

2.1 NETWORK THEORY OF SOCIAL CAPITAL 35

2.2 STRUCTURAL HOLE THEORY 40

2.3 DOES FACEBOOK CARRY SOCIAL CAPITAL? 47

2.3.1 Structural holes and social capital on Facebook *51*

2.4 THE LANGUAGE DIVIDE 56

CHAPTER 3: PRIVACY DYNAMICS AND THE CREATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON FACEBOOK **61**

3.1 PERSONAL SPACE, PRIVACY, AND CULTURE 61

3.2 PRIVACY IN A NETWORKED PUBLIC SPHERE 67

3.3 EXPRESSIVE AND INSTRUMENTAL PRIVACY 72

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS **81**

REFERENCES **88**

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT'S PROFILES 100

APPENDIX 2: STANDARD QUESTIONNAIRE 101

LIST OF TABLES

1 - Examples of expressive and instrumental actions on Facebook ……………….. 42

LIST OF FIGURES

1 - Brokerage and structural holes on Facebook …………………..………………. 45

2 - Structural holes (bridges) and strength of ties (horizontal clusters) .……………49

INTRODUCTION

I immigrated to Canada in 2010, after living for 34 years in Venezuela, lately one of the most dangerous countries in the world.[1] Ever since Facebook became popular in there (around 2007) newspapers have been reporting on its use to commit different crimes, specially kidnapping, which is a major concern for Venezuelans.[2] Kidnapping has impacted my family directly, and it made me realize that if I was going to use Facebook to socialize and maintain my social capital online I needed to create a personal privacy policy to reduce the risks that using Facebook in such environment entails. Consequently, I decided that I would not: accept friend requests from people I do not know; share photos of my family or myself; tag anyone or allow others to tag me in their photos; share photos that show where or how I live; disclose my marital status, etc. I do not protect my privacy to prevent Facebook from becoming richer or knowing what I do online; in a context like Venezuela, what Facebook does or does not do in the latter respect is the least of anyone's concerns—in that context, we need to protect our privacy, or certain

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[1] The Venezuelan Observatory of Violence (*Observatorio Venezolano de la Violencia*) has released a study on homicides during 2012 putting the national homicide rate at 73 per 100,000 of the population, with Caracas registering 122 per 100,000. As a point of comparison, neighbouring Colombia, still in the midst of the civil conflict, last year registered just over 31 homicides per 100,000 (McDermott, 2012). As the organization In Sight Crime (Wells, 2013) puts it, the figures are yet more damning evidence of Venezuela's spiralling violence, which 19 different security plans implemented during Hugo Chavez's 14-year presidency failed to curb. Murder rates doubled or tripled over a decade from 1999, depending on different figures, with Venezuela now one of the most dangerous countries in the world.

[2] The Government of the United States warns Americans planning to visit Venezuela: "Violent crime is a serious problem, and the capital city of Caracas has one of the highest per capita homicide rates in the world. Kidnappings, assaults, and robberies occur throughout the country; no areas are safe… According to the Venezuelan National Counter Kidnapping Commission official statistics have shown alarming increases in reported kidnappings throughout the country since the commission's founding in 2006. According to Venezuelan government statistics, 583 kidnappings were officially reported to officials. Police sources indicate that as many as 80% of kidnappings go unreported, meaning that the official figure of 583 kidnappings in 2012 is likely much lower than actual numbers" (U.S. Department of State, 2013).

aspects of it, to maximize the possibility of interacting with people that we know and trust (to some extent) but also to prevent strangers from hurting us.

I moved from a context of endemic violence and mistrust like Venezuela to a context of systemic trust like Canada, where insecurity is not an immediate concern and people can walk in the street without fear. But although I am physically in Canada, my mind is always in Venezuela. This is not just a cliché, a corny statement that all immigrants say about their country—my mind is always in Venezuela not only because all my family is still living there, but also because most of my Facebook connections are Venezuelans that, like me, use the site to share news and articles about and comment on the political situation of Venezuela. And I connect to Facebook everyday to participate in these discussions.

In the networked society, migrations happen simultaneously offline and online. Thesis explores how privacy, our "portable territory of the self" (Fairfield, 2005), migrates physically and virtually as well, and explains the negotiation that take place when different notions of privacy (i.e., Latin American - North American) converge on Facebook. By observing how Latin Americans aged 25 to 34 living in Montreal use Facebook to create social capital and how privacy implications impact on the creation of social capital on Facebook, this thesis attempts to illustrate how culture, institutional frameworks, and other contextual (offline) factors make people interpret and experience privacy in multiple ways, in turn generating specific engagements with Facebook, social media, and technology in general. Talking about privacies, in plural, and not privacy, in singular, is key to accurately map cultural and social boundaries delimiting personal spaces online. It may well be the case, as my findings suggest, that one person can have

more than one way to understand and put into practice his or her privacies. Observing how social capital works on Facebook allowed me to identify certain dynamics that have been normalized despite the multiple political economic aspects mediating those dynamics.

In general terms, social capital refers to the advantage, power, or resources that are embedded[3] in our networks of relations. The idea that people draw on their social connections and other resources in order to achieve their goals is not new. Mark Grannoveter and Richard Swedberg (2011) point out that the economic benefits of participation in social groups, for individuals and communities, were already clearly noted in such classics as Alexis de Tocqueville's 1840's work *Democracy in America* and Marx Weber's *The protestant sects and the spirit of capitalism.* But the designation of these resources and participation as "social capital" has provoked enormous interest during the past fifteen years or so, sparked specially by the publication of Robert Putnam's book *Making democracy work*, where he argued that participation in voluntary organizations is beneficial to political participation and civicness more generally (Grannovetter and Swedberg, 2011, p. 89).

The first explicit use of the term in its present connotation seems to have been in the United States by Lyda Judson Hanifan in 1916 (Putnam, 2002, p. 4), but it was the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who in the early 1980s produced the first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital, subsequently developed in English by James Coleman (Portes and Sesenbrenner, 2011, p. 94). Originally a sociological concept, social

[3] Mark Grannovetter developed the concept of 'embeddedness' to explain that social structures can advance as well as constrain individual goal seeking and that they can even redefine the content of such goals (Portes and Sesenbrenner, 2011: 94).

capital currently occupies a prominent place in political theory, business, migration, urban, and media studies.

I focused on Latin Americans in Montreal for two reasons: first, because foreign-born communities provide a good setting[4] to observe how social capital is created; and second, because it allows me to reflect on my own situation as a Latin American immigrant in Canada and my particular engagement with Facebook.

By 2011, Latin Americans represented 7.5% of all new immigrants accepted by the province of Quebec, 67.9% of which established or intended to establish in the Montreal area. Also, 37.2% of all the immigrants establishing in Quebec were between 25 and 34 years old, making it the largest age group of newcomers in the province (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec, 2012, p. 62).

On the other hand, Facebook demographics have changed quite dramatically since its launch in 2004—teenagers grew up and adults joined the site in mass, depriving Facebook from its original high-school-like aura.[5] A recent study by the Pew Research Center shows that teens are even starting to express waning enthusiasm for Facebook because, among other things, there is too much "drama" going on, and "they dislike the

[4] "… [F]oreign-born communities represent one of the clearest examples of the bearing contextual factors can have on individual economic action. With skills learned in the home country devalued in the receiving labor market and with a generally poor command of the receiving country's language, immigrant's economic destinies depend heavily on the structures in which they become incorporated and, in particular, on the character of their own communities. Few instances of economic action can be found that are more embedded" (Portes and Sesenbreenner, 2011, p. 94).

[5] "As of May 2013, almost three quarters (72%) of online U.S. adults use social networking sites, up from 67% in late 2012…. Today, social networking site use is a major activity for internet users from a wide range of demographic groups. Younger adults are especially avid adopters, but social networking continues to grow in popularity for older adults as well. Six out of ten internet users ages 50-64 are social networking site users, as are 43% of those ages 65 and older" (Brenner and Smith, 2013).

increasing number of adults on the site"[6] (Madden *et al.,* 2013, p. 17). Most of the academic research about Facebook I consulted studied teens and young adults below 24 (in rare occasions also adults below 30), which does not reflect the current distribution of Facebook's demographics. This is why I decided to study adults aged 25 to 34 years old.

Why study Facebook? In addition to the fact it is the most popular social networking site in Canada[7] and the world, Facebook offers a vantage point to observe the complex merge of offline and online dynamics that the new information technologies permit, a phenomenon that seems to have permeated nearly every place in the world and that is impacting people and institutions in ways that we do not fully understand yet.

Methodology

The nature of this research is mainly exploratory. Using qualitative research methods such as semi-structured and in-depth interviews allowed me to gather detailed information about my participants' opinions, attitudes, and practices on Facebook. In order to observe more closely their engagement with Facebook, I requested them to add me as a Facebook friend. Most of them, except for one, granted me full access to their Facebook sites and allowed me to take notes on their particular privacy settings.

Daniel Miller's (2011) *Tales from Facebook*, an anthropological study of the social networking site in Trinidad, was an important influence for me. Miller interweaved biographical information of twelve Trinidadians with very different backgrounds,

[6] Also in Spain teens opine that Facebook is no longer "cool" (Jiménez Cano, 2013).

[7] Nearly 50% of all Canadians and 60% of active Internet users in Canada have a social networking profile, 86% of which are aged 18 to 34, and of those 86% with a social networking profile in Canada, it is with Facebook (Ipsos, 2011). Until 2011, Canadians had an average of 190 friends per user and 3.1 million (out of the 16.6 million) Canadian Facebook users resided in the province of Quebec (Thomas, 2011).

describing how they engage in Facebook very differently and showing how Facebook opened for them a wide range of opportunities and problems. Inspired by this approach and the heterogeneity of his sample, I decided to choose Latin American immigrants with very different professional, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds in order to find commonalities across their differences and somehow offset the limitations of a small sample. Adjustments in the notion of friendship; development of networking strategies; the use of Facebook to communicate with distanced relations and maintain weak ties in Montreal; the perception of Facebook as a fairly safe environment for socialization; the extended practice of photo sharing——all these are commonalities drawn from the interviews.

In total, eight people participated in this thesis—five women and three men. Participants were selected following Lisa Tillmann-Healy's (2003) "friendship as method," which involves the practices, the pace, the contexts, and the ethics of friendship (p. 734). Interviews were conducted at the participants' home, except for one (held at a meeting room at McGill University). I used the same questionnaire for all the interviews, asking additional questions in each case depending on the responses and the flow of the conversation (a sample of the questionnaire is included in Appendix B). Participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- Sample: 8 people (5 women, 3 men)[8].
- Age range: 25-34

[8] Efforts were made to balance the sample in terms of gender, but the many conditions I defined for selecting my participants made it difficult to achieve this goal.

- Ethnicity: Participants could have born in any Spanish speaking Latin American country or have been born in any other country but lived in Latin America before immigrating to Canada.
- Region: Currently living in the Montreal area.
- Immigration status: The participant must have been living in Canada for at least six months. He/she could be a Canadian citizen, a permanent resident, or an international student[9] planning to stay in Canada. I excluded refugees from this sample, despite the fact that they represent an important proportion of immigrants with Latin American origins in Quebec.[10]
- Facebook user or ex-user: Most of my participants (7) are active Facebook users, but I decided to include one former Facebook in order to observe the costs of non-participation.

In addition to the criteria above, my participants fit at least one of the following categories: businessperson, entrepreneur, or independent worker; skilled worker in the fields of natural or social sciences; non-professional/other workers; student/unemployed; artist. All interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish; the quotes included in the analysis were translated into English by a professional translator. Except for Toño,

[9] Students planning to return to their home country do not have the need to network and create the kind of social capital that another student planning to become a permanent resident of Canada needs to create (for instance, connecting with potential employers, continuing doctorate studies, marrying a Canadian, learning French, etc.). They set different priorities and develop different relational strategies.

[10] Between 2006 and 2010, refugees from South America (specially Colombia and Mexico) represented 23,4% of all refugees admitted by the government of Quebec, and 21% of this group were aged 25 to 34 (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec, 2012).

who expressly asked me to use his real name[11], all my participants are identified with pseudonyms (Marcela, Carmen, Gisela, Luisa, Vesubia, Pancho, Gustavo) to guarantee anonymity.[12]

One limitation of this thesis is the size of its sample. It was never my intention, however, to do quantitative analysis and measure social capital. My goal was to take a more microscopic view of my object study, and in general terms the method I chosen suited well for this purpose. Nonetheless, the strict criteria designed for selecting my participants made difficulty to find (in the time framework I had) people that fulfilled all the requirements, which in turn delayed the interviewing process. At the end of the analysis, I realized that it would have been useful to have a control group Canadian Facebook users in order to compare practices between Latin Americans and Canadians and see how social capital works in each case.

The fact that my sample is not statistically representative, however, does not mean that the observations stemming from my analysis cannot be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to a larger population. Although in specific occasions Facebook Inc. have granted a few scholars limited access to its database for research purposes, accessing detailed and updated demographic information on Facebook users is nearly impossible for most researchers. danah boyd (2008) faced this very problem while researching for her doctoral dissertation: "Because of differences in structure and access, it was not possible to get a random sample of Facebook profiles…. My sample on Facebook was very

[11] Toño is a nickname. I decided to use this nickname, and not his real name, to be consistent with the principle of protecting my participant's identity.

[12] Anonymity was offered so that participants could speak freely. Some participants allowed me to use certain information on the condition that anonymity were guaranteed.

limited and unrepresentative but, at the time, I was less concerned with Facebook profiles…. Only at the end of my fieldwork did I come to consider my lack of access as a limiting factor" (p. 63).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the University Human Research Ethics Committee examined this thesis and awarded it the Certification of ethical acceptability for research involving human subjects number 30000356.

Thesis structure

This thesis is organized in three chapters.

Chapter 1: Social capital and immigration in Canada introduces the reader to the concept of social capital and describes its positive and negative effects, highlighting its particular importance for immigrants in Canada. Relying on official statistics and different academic studies, this chapter profiles the Latin American community in Canada and the province of Quebec. It also explains what happens when Latin Americans migrate from contexts characterized for low levels of interpersonal trust (like most Latin American societies) to a context of systemic trust (such as Canada) and describes how the adaptation process is mirrored on Facebook.

Chapter 2: Social networks, structural holes, and Facebook introduces the two theoretical approaches to social capital this thesis relies on: Nan Lin's (1999; 2001) network theory of social capital and Ronald Burt's (2005) structural hole theory. It also includes a brief review of key academic studies on social capital on Facebook and proposes an analytical model to interpret, from a political economic perspective, the way

brokerage of social capital takes place on Facebook and describe the kind of advantage the latter produces.

Finally, *Chapter 3: Privacy dynamics and the creation of social capital on Facebook* discusses relevant aspects concerning privacy and online privacy in North America[13]. Here I propose and develop the concepts of *expressive privacy* and *instrumental privacy* to map the grey area where offline/online social capital and offline/online privacy intersect on Facebook. These concepts aim to help understand the negotiation strategies that Facebook users developed to deal with multiple dichotomies present in this social networking site: offline/online; participation/non-participation; public/private; (network) openness/closure; exposure/concealment; trust/mistrust; safeness/unsafeness; language inclusion/exclusion.

Findings suggest that socialization on Facebook is mediated not only by technological, engineering, and economic processes implemented to make socialization a 'transparent'[14] experience—it is also mediated by country-specific legal frameworks; decisions on the main language(s) of communication; level of engagement and quality of participation; negotiation about conflicting privacy boundaries; and particular expectations of expressive or instrumental outcomes. These mediations do not restrict people's agency, nor do they determine[15] the multiple ways Facebook can be used to

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[13] By North America I mean the United States and Canada.

[14] *Transparent immediacy* refers to human aspiration (so far utopian) for a true 'virtual reality' experience; that is, an experience in which the medium erases itself or renders automatic the act of representation, making us no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead standing in an immediate relationship to the contents of that medium (Bolter and Grusin, 2000).

[15] In a recent interview, Manuel Castells (Bilbao, 2013) said: "Internet is absolutely surveilled. But it is not controlled, in the sense that the message cannot be interrupted. The messenger can be detected and repressed. If you are the messenger, that is a problem—but the message itself makes its way through" (translated from Spanish by E.F.)

create advantage; but they do alter the kinds of advantage that social capital on Facebook can produce. Facebook facilitates social reinforcement; validation of reputational credentials; spontaneous organization; empathy towards common problems; transformation of latent or ephemeral ties into durable connections; and creation of bridges to span structural holes within and between networks. But it may reproduce and expand (in time and space) some negative effects: potential for surveillance facilitates group control; accepting friend requests out of a sense of obligation may restrict people's freedom in the site; rejecting friend requests creates a negative impression and may bring about conflict between actors involved; finally, not participating generates strong peer pressure to join or rejoin the site and creates an out-of-the-loop sensation.

Why does all this matter? For two reasons: firstly, because the conditions under which social capital is created on Facebook (productive participation, voluntary public exposure, direct or indirect surveillance, storage and marketing of personal information, little to no control over the use of that information by third parties, lack of legislation, etc.) is having a considerable impact on several traditional institutions. Most participants of my sample, for example, mentioned Facebook as their primary source of information, which suggests that the quantity and quality of information they receive by means of this site is considered satisfactory[16]. But what kinds of information do Facebook users consume, produce, and reproduce? How will the latter impact journalism and news production, for example? What impact does it have on the formation of public opinion

[16] A study for the Reuters Institute for Journalism reports that in the US 36% of news is accessed through social media, while Facebook is by far the most important network for news, accounting for 55% of all news sharing in the UK. Specifically for the UK, while 55% of the sample use an online news site for news, 30% use search engines, 22% news aggregators, and 20% social media (Siapera, 2013, p. 12).

and on democracy at large?[17] Social media has also created a whole new field of specialization in the domain of communications—community managers, social media "gurus," social media marketing firms, etc.—which is "professionalizing" social practices and normalizing monitoring mechanisms for all online activity. Online socialization has also generated a new sort of social etiquette: should I accept my boss' Facebook friend request? What are the consequences of not accepting her/him? Provided that I accept this person, do I restrict what she/he can see? What will the latter say about me? Secondly, this study may be of especial interest for those countries, cities, or places where dynamics involving language and multiethnic cultural identities are key components of the political and social debate. On Facebook, language creates an inclusion/exclusion logic based not only on the language proficiency of our online connections but also on the engagement and feedback that the use of a particular language facilitates or hinders. For example, since the majority of my participants' Facebook friends are Spanish speakers living outside Canada, sharing an article in Spanish about the drug war in Mexico, a municipal election in Peru, or even a news related to Canada but that is published in Spanish[18] is accessible for the majority of their Facebook friends, but not for the Canadian ones (most of which do not speak Spanish)—because of the language limitations, the latter group are automatically excluded from that particular discussion. My participants, however, do

[17] In August 2013 the world was surprised by the announcement of the sale of The Washington Post to Jeff Bezos, the founder of the web retail giant Amazon. "The sale price was set at $250m, a relatively small sum for such a legendary institution – 1% of Bezos's enormous personal wealth as put by Bloomberg at $22bn. The figure elegantly captures the dire economic state of many of America's leading news titles, coming as it does just days after the sale of the Boston Globe by the New York Times Co to the owner of the Red Sox, John Henry, for an even more paltry $70m," the note reads (Pilkington, 2013). The consequences of this acquisition remain to be seen.

[18] Since its launch in 2011, the news site Noticias Montreal (noticiasmontreal.com) has grown in popularity within the Spanish speaking community in Quebec and Canada.

speak and read English and French, so they can actually read and comment on whatever their Canadian friends post in English or French. This situation unbalances the communication flow, since the information exchange cannot benefit all member of the group equally.

In short, although people do not use Facebook to make new connections, they do use it to maintain and expand the benefits associated to the social capital they already have, as well as to take advantage of other benefits that are possible thanks to the trusting environment that Facebook stimulates. But making connections in the real world is still a prerequisite for successfully socializing on Facebook—and this first step remains as challenging as it has always been.

CHAPTER 1. IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN CANADA

In this chapter, I discuss the main implications of social capital for society in general and for foreign-born communities in particular. It also portrays the Latin American community in Canada and Quebec; describe the adaptation process that my participants experienced when migrating from a context with low levels of interpersonal trust (like most Latin American societies) to a context of systemic trust (such as Canada); and explain how the latter process is mirrored on Facebook. In this and the following two chapters, I alternate theory and analysis with examples drawn from my participants' interviews.

1.1 Social capital: Introductory notes

In *The forms of capital* Bourdieu (2011) defined "capital"[19] as "accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, exclusive basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (p. 78). Bourdieu argued that the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices. Bourdieu then identified

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[19] In an editor's note added at the end of *The forms of capital*, included in the book *The sociology of economic life,* Grannoveter and Richard Swedberg (2011, p. 89) remark that for Bourdieu "capital" roughly means "power" or "resources" and that it also comes in a number of forms that, under certain circumstances, can be transformed into one another.

three fundamental forms of capital: economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility.

Bourdieu defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (p. 84). Being based on indissolubly material and symbolic exchanges, the establishment and maintenance of which presuppose reacknowledgment of proximity, these exchanges are also partially irreducible to objective relations of proximity in physical (geographical) space or even in economic and social space. Bourdieu finally remarked that the existence of a network of connections is not a natural given but the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long terms: "The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed" (p. 85).

As Ronald Burt (2005) observes, social capital begins as a metaphor about advantage; but the novelty and heuristic power of social capital come from two sources:

first, the concept focuses attention on the positive consequences of sociability while putting aside its less attractive features; second, it places those positive consequences in the framework of a broader discussion of capital and calls attention to how such non-monetary forms can be important sources of power and influence (Portes, 2000).

In the 1970s, Mark Granovetter (1973) developed his influential theory on the strength of weak ties.[20] He suggested that weak ties (informal relations, acquaintances, former colleagues) play a role in effecting social cohesion because they are more likely to link members of different small groups than are *strong ties* (family, close friends, colleagues), which tend to be concentrated within particular groups. The paradox, Granovetter observes, is that while weak ties are indispensable to individuals' opportunities and to their integration into communities, strong ties breeding local cohesion lead to overall fragmentation (p. 1378). In a recent study, Sylvia Fuller and Martin Todd (2012) nuanced Granovetter's assertion by providing empirical evidence that social ties cannot always be transformed into social capital, since the structure of networks and the kinds of relations within them shape the nature and degree of assistance they provide.

Coleman (1990), in turn, argues that social capital is defined by its function and that it is not a single entity but rather a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspects of social structure, and they

[20] A pair of actors is said to have a tie when they maintain a relation. A tie is strong when actors maintain many relations, particularly when those relations include social and emotional support and intimacy or self-disclosure. Strong ties are likely to be reciprocal. Our strong ties are with people we refer to as friends, close friends, collaborators and colleagues. A tie is weak when little is shared and interaction is infrequent. Weak ties are maintained with people we describe as acquaintances, or someone we know from work. Those with whom we have weaker ties tend to operate in different social circles from us; the strength of weak ties (to use Mark Granovetter's term) is that they have access to different information (Haythornthwaite, 2007, p. 126).

facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. “Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence… Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons” (p. 302). He also contends that the potential for information that inheres in social relations is an important form of social capital, since information is important in providing a basis for action. This is one of the guiding principles of Burt’s structural hole theory, which is explained in detail in Chapter 2.

On the other hand, in *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy* Robert D. Putnam (1993) posed that one special feature of social capital, “like trust, norms, and networks, is that it is ordinarily a public good, unlike conventional capital, which is ordinarily a private good” (p. 170). Later, in the introduction of *Democracies in flux: The evolution of social capital in contemporary society*, co-authored with Kristin A. Goss, Putnam (2002) would stress that social capital can be simultaneously a private good and a public good. “Thus, in talking about different manifestations of social capital and changes in social capital over time, it is worth asking hard questions: Who benefits, and who does not? What kind of society is this form of social capital encouraging? Is more necessarily better?” (p. 9). These questions are relevant for the study of social capital on Facebook.

As per reciprocity exchanges, the predominant orientation of social capital is utilitarian (Portes and Sesenbrenner, 2011, p. 97) and provide four main benefits: information, influence and control, and social solidarity (Portes, 2000: 80). But the notion of social capital as something that is in the nature of a public good and whose effects on

society are predominantly positive has been widely critiqued. Martin Gargiulo and Mario Benassi (1997) warn about the "dark side of social capital," contending that the network that provides the actor with social capital may also encumber his/her ability to change the composition of this social capital as he/she sees it fit. Portes (2000: 56) lists four main negative consequences of social capital: exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedom, and downward leveling norms. First, the same strong ties that bring benefits to members of a group commonly enable it to bar others from access. Second, community closure[21] may prevent the success of business initiatives by their members. Third, community or group participation necessarily creates demands for conformity; dense networks tying inhabitants together also create the ground for an intense community life and strong enforcement of local norms, reducing the privacy and autonomy of individuals accordingly. Forth, when group solidarity is cemented by a common experience of adversity and opposition to mainstream society group cohesion is undermined; this results in downward leveling norms that operate to keep members of a downtrodden group in place and force the more ambitious to scape from it. "Social ties," Portes concludes, "can bring about greater control over wayward behavior and provide privileged access to resources; they can also restrict individual freedoms and bar outsiders from gaining access to the same resources through particularistic preferences. For this reason, it seems preferable to approach these manifold processes as social facts to be studied in all their complexity, rather than as examples of a value" (p. 58).

[21] "Closure" refers to the degree to which a particular collectivity forms a group at all, as opposed to a mere aggregate of individuals (Portes and Sesenbrenner, 2011, p. 101).

Miller (2011) poses that Facebook is hugely helpful in pushing us back to a more balanced and realistic understanding of the meaning and experience of close-knit community. It really does seem to possess the characteristic of most traditional face-to-face communities—"a good many of which are negative," he writes (p. 184). Aiming to encompass all the complexity that the study of social capital on Facebook entails, in this and the following chapters I attempt to illustrate how the positive and negative aspects of social capital manifest on Facebook.

Since this research studies Latin American immigrants in Montreal, a first question would be: How does social capital work in foreign-born communities in Canada? Liu Xue's research (2008) has provided robust evidence that social capital does have impact on immigrants' labor market outcomes in Canada for both males and females and that social capital affects female newcomers' employment entry to a greater degree than males. The study confirms some of the findings in the literature on social networks, such as the effects of weak ties (organizational network versus friendship and kinship networks) and network diversity, suggesting that friendship network is the most important relationship in the labor market entry outcomes. The study concludes that making the friendship network more ethnically diverse is much more beneficial to immigrants landed in the immigration categories other than the family class.

Fuller and Todd (2012) confirm many of Xue's findings. However, they warn that although social capital provides several immediate economic and emotional benefits to immigrants, social ties cannot always be transformed into social capital, and that the same ties that initially foster employment can actually disadvantage immigrants in the longer run:

> … some scholars find that jobs in ethnic niches facilitate exploitation rather than economic mobility, particularly for women…. In contrast, ties reaching outside one's ethnic group ('bridging ties') may be weaker and also provide more novel, and hence useful, information…. Canadian research finds that immigrants who maintain weaker ties to their ethnic communities tend to fare better in the labor market (p. 151).

My participants are aware of their need to create weak ties in Montreal. Like Toño, Pancho, Marcela, and Carmen[22], many Latin American immigrants enroll in a university program not only to obtain a degree but also to create a professional network. In this respect, Carmen says: "I listened to my sister, who told me that it was better to go to College here [in Montreal] if I wanted to stay and get a job here, and she was right… I'm already building a network that will be useful in the future—I am studying with the people that I will work with in the future" (Carmen, personal communication, November 11, 2012). Toño is of a similar opinion: "In the university, I would talk to the classmates that were already working in my field—my Colombian friends have not been helpful in getting a job" (Toño, personal communication, December 12, 2012). Others, like Gisela, followed different strategies: attending as many social invitations as possible, going to the gym and, in a very few cases, volunteering. Except for Gustavo, whose partner is a Quebecker, participants interviewed for this thesis are single or married to Latin Americans. But they all report that most of their Montreal connections are from Latin American origins.

[22] Toño, 32, holds a MSc of Civil Engineering from Université de Montreal; Marcela, 32, obtained certificates in Commerce and Public Relations from Concordia University; Pancho, 29, is finishing an MBA at McGill University, and Carmen, 25, is studying Fashion Marketing at La Salle College.

1.2 Immigrants, social capital, and Facebook

Canada has a long history as a settler society and currently has among the highest levels of net migration and foreign-born people internationally, with immigrants accounting for approximately 20 percent of the total work force, and over 70 percent of labor force growth, according to Fuller and Todd (2012, p. 139). These authors explain that Canadian policy privileges the admission of immigrants presumed able to integrate into the labor market following three logics: family reunification; humanitarian concerns; and economic imperatives related to increasing the competitiveness of the Canadian economy and meeting labor market needs. They also assert that, of the three rationales, the latter is currently paramount.

Before moving to Canada in 2011, Gisela, 28, worked for a multinational company specialized in logistics and international transportation in Guadalajara, Mexico. One week after arriving in Montreal, she applied for a job in the Montreal branch of the same company and received the position. She speaks Spanish, English, and French. Although she does not consider herself an outgoing person, she is very aware of the importance of networking and making new connections in her new hometown; for this reason, she accepts every invitation she receives to meet and mingle with new people—something she would rarely do in Mexico. In this process, Facebook has helped her stay in contact with her family and friends in Mexico but also keep track of her new acquaintances in Montreal.

> Most of the 480 friends I have on Facebook are from Mexico, and only 35 are from Montreal— friendships I have made recently. You go to a bar or a party, get along with someone and then add him/her to Facebook or get

invited to join on Facebook. Since you're here, what you want is to look for friendships, meet people, be open—that probably would not happen in Mexico. Here I can meet someone just that one time, spend a nice evening or afternoon and consider him/her a friend; in Mexico I wouldn't have done that—maybe he/she would invite me and I would not accept, while here I do. In Mexico you don't have the same need to make friends the way you do here (Gisela, personal communication, November 17, 2012).

In Mexico, Gisela had enough friends and acquaintances to afford choosing or rejecting friend requests on Facebook. But this same abundance of relations had a downside—she did not want to mix personal relations with certain weak ties (coworkers, for example) on Facebook, but she also considered impolite and inconvenient not to accept a friend requests from somebody she knew, even if it was not a close relation. To deal with this situation Gisela decided to create a second Facebook account.

I created a second [Facebook] account a long time ago, mostly thinking in those friends I did not like as much, which I would then add to this account that I don't even use. Now I barely remember that it exists. That profile is still active, but that was my initial idea—to add all those I did not want to accept in my real account, where I have everything, to that second account that I no longer use. But it just didn't work that way. I still have around seventy people in that account, mostly from my old job, and I kept them 'stored' there in order to add relationships that I need to keep out of some sense of obligation. Nobody ever asked me why I never answered when they wrote to that site, but they did notice that I had another account and

> would then ask me to accept them in my real site (Gisela, personal communication, November 17, 2012).

Like Gisela, immigrants (irrespective of where they come from) need to rebuild their social networks in the host country. Because this process is key to achieving a successful integration into the new society, I wanted to explore whether Latin American immigrants were using Facebook to rebuild social relations in Montreal and what impact it could have on their respective processes of integration.

The frequent utilization of immigration in the theoretical literature on economic sociology and social capital is not surprising. For example, James Coleman (as cited in Portes and Sensenbrenner, 2011) used Asian immigrant families as an illustration of what he labeled "closure" of social relations. "[I]mmigrants' economic destinies write, "depend heavily on the structures in which they become incorporated and, in particular, on the character of their own communities," write Portes and Sesenbrenner (p. 94).

Immigration of Latin Americans to Canada has not been a matter widely studied, and today there are still many gaps in both qualitative and statistical analyses, as Martha Colorado, Patricia Díaz, Amantina Osorio, and Pilar Riaño-Alcalá (2008) note. These authors contend that Latin American immigration is related to countries' specific political situations and the responses that Canadian immigration policy developed to respond to those situations. Citing Allan Simmons, they observe that

> Within this system, migrant and refugee flows from Latin America to Canada depend on four main factors: (1) social, economic, and political conditions in the sending countries; (2) social, economic, and political conditions in the various potential destination countries in the system,

including Canada, (3) Canada's immigration and refugee policies; and (4) migrant social and kin networks (p. 22).

Colorado *et al.* assert that the category of economic immigrants showed a steady increase since 1998, and since 2003 this has been the primary mode of migration for Latin Americans—the profile of this immigrant is skilled workers and professionals who are seeking social and economic mobility through migration. As Adela Pelegrino (2001) also observes, for the middle class sectors of many Latin American countries, expectations as to social mobility based on education have been very important.

Violence is also a major cause of emigration for Latin Americans. Between 2006 and 2010, refugees from South America (especially Colombia and Mexico) represented 23.4% of all refugees admitted by the government of Quebec (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec, 2012, p. 62).

In general terms, the immigrating process involves proving that a better life is possible elsewhere. For many, especially those who in their home country enjoyed from a good social and economic position, proving that immigrating was the right choice to make can be a heavy burden. They must prove first to themselves, and then to their family members and friends, that renouncing their former privileges to start a new life from zero elsewhere without any guarantee of success is actually worthy. In this context, Facebook may become a natural ally ("I did succeed") or an extra burden ("Things are not going as I expected, but I must show that they are"). As Daniel Miller (2011: 182) points out, Facebook seems the end of what previously was the natural attrition of social networks: it brings all those once disregarded back into the frame of current regard; but it also brings back diaspora populations and ameliorates the effect of their residence in

different countries. Because most of my participant's Facebook connections are family, friends, and acquaintances that do not live in Canada, their Facebook walls work as vitrines through which they can carefully build the image about their life in Canada that they want others to see—reflecting success and happiness and hiding failure and sadness is key for this purpose.

Marcela, 32, is a Venezuelan entrepreneur that immigrated to Canada in 2009. She has a Bachelor of Marketing and speaks Spanish, English, and basic French. After doing a couple of poor-quality jobs in Montreal and obtaining a certificate in Commerce from Concordia University she decided to start her own business. Now she runs two small marketing companies and a jewelry business. I asked her whether, since she moved to Montreal, she had felt any pressure to keep the social and economic status she had in Venezuela.

> Pressure comes from ourselves. We are our own judges and we gauge our feelings. If I end up working in a restaurant as a waiter, I am not going to post that picture on Facebook. What I put on Facebook are the things that make me happy or proud. Some people are happy being waiters, but I will publish what makes me happy according to my own standards—if that made me happy, I would…. Whatever is closest to my aspirations (Marcela, personal communication, November 11, 2012).

Toño, 32, is the sole participant that is no longer on Facebook. He and his wife, also a Colombian, arrived in Montreal in 2007. He started using Facebook while already in Canada, but after two years he decided to close his account because he realized that he had no real control over who could see his information and how third parties would use it.

However, what triggered this decision to leave Facebook was the way some of his friends reacted with regards a group of photos he posted. These were photos of a trip to Africa; they were very important for Toño because they captured a special moment that changed his life. Toño is white-skinned, and since people in that African community had never seen a white man before, they felt the need to touch him to confirm that he was real: “I realized that I actually was the black guy in that community,” he says (Toño, personal communication, December 12, 2012). These photos also reminded him of a personal achievement: he had managed to do a difficult job in a very dangerous place without suffering any harm. So when he posted the photos on Facebook ‘friends’ he hardly knew, but that were part of his Facebook connections, started making unpleasant jokes and comments. That was it. After that experience, Toño became a kind of anti-Facebook activist. But by the time he was still a Facebook user, this platform did play a role in reassuring his family that he was doing well in his new home—even if it was not always the case.

> I created my Facebook account in 2007 and closed it around August of 2010. I created it here in Canada (I did not have Facebook in Colombia) and I did so because everyone had it; but also because, once here, I thought that it would be a way of showing my parents and close relatives, who worried so much when we came here, that not everything here was bad, and we tried to do so by putting up photos of our happy moments. My parents’ concern was that we would not eat properly, would not sleep well, the cold weather, that we would not be happy, that we wouldn’t find a job, that having built a professional career over there [in Colombia] we would end

> up cleaning toilets here [in Canada]…. They were skeptical that we could make a life here just like the one we had there (Toño, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

The skepticism Toño's parents show regarding the possibility of him making a life in Canada just like the one they had in Colombia is a reflection of some values and priorities that are ingrained in the Colombian and the Latin American societies. Immigrating involves negotiating old and new values, and constant expectation for success creates an unwanted extra burden for immigrants. In this situation, Facebook can become a useful tool to offset the inevitable gap existing between expectations and reality.

> So I used Facebook to send across the message that coming here was not a bad idea. There was no need to convey sadness, only showing that we were getting to know Montreal, going to the touristic attractions and so on, without reflecting the reality of our experience. It was always clear to me that I would not go back to Colombia with my tail between my legs, call it arrogance or will—the only way I could go back was with my university diploma in my hands. I was not going to return because the system beat me… Facebook helped me keep, more than create, the impression that here [in Montreal] everything was OK. Facebook probably was useful in that sense—to help me keep projecting that impression (Toño, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

Luisa, 29, is a professional Chilean singer, actress, and pianist who came to Montreal in 2012 with a special visa called International Experience Canada. Although

she have had a couple of gigs as a musician, her main source of income comes from baby-sitting, cleaning houses, and cleaning rooms in a hotel. In Montreal, she fell in love with a Quebecker. By the time of the interview she was planning her wedding, after which she would apply for a permanent resident visa. She agrees that most people use Facebook to show success and happiness, but she believes that there are very important achievements in life that simply cannot be reflected on Facebook.

> I use Facebook to post pictures so that my family can see where I go, but I haven't had many achievements here—my achievements are mostly spiritual, and that is something that cannot be measured. Many may think, 'this kid went in search of luck with her music and did not make it,' but the fact is that I actually found something much more important because in Chile I was always sad, had to see a psychiatrist, cried all the time, thought I would never fall in love, resented my parents…. [In Montreal] I found other things and these achievements cannot be shown on Facebook (Luisa, personal communication, January 18, 2013).

These examples illustrate three things. First, Facebook may represent a psychological burden for immigrants arriving to a new country—it highlights the "good things" that they have left behind or lost, avoiding those things that motivated them to leave their country. Second, Facebook creates an artificial need to show success quickly—other people are doing better and family and friends are watching. Third, the actual impossibility of reflecting certain very important personal achievements on Facebook, combined with the need to reflect success and

fulfill a minimum quota of participation, may lead to a frustrating experience and exacerbate feelings of underachievement.[23]

1.3 Trust, Mistrust, and Latin Americans

Trust plays a key role in the construction of social capital. As economists argue (Ablanedo, Layton, and Moreno, 2008, p. 45), trust reduces the "costs of transaction" of an exchange because trusting others exempts us from investing extra energy and resources in checking the background of the person we just met or in establishing control mechanisms to ensure that this person will honor the terms of a deal.

Although trust is a psychological state of individuals and social capital is a feature of social structure, Portes (2000) believes that trust and social capital are mutually reinforcing. "Social capital often generates trusting relationships, and the trust generated will in turn produce social capital" (p. 101).

Albert Hirschman (cited in Ablanedo, Layton, and Moreno, 2008, p. 45) contends that trust, like other moral resources, grows with use and decays with disuse: the more it is trust practised, the more trust it is generated. And vice versa: continually mistrusting others generates a vicious circle that is hard to break because mistrust prevents people from participating and getting involved in social experiences that invalidate that perception; it also obstructs or leads those experiences to failure, thus reinforcing mistrust. The strategy of "never cooperate," as Putnam (1993) puts it, is a stable

[23] A recent study by the University of Michigan (Kross, E., Verduyn, P., Demiralp, E., Park J., Lee D.S., *et al.*, 2013) that was widely publicized in the media suggests that Facebook is strongly associated with declines in well-being. Study leader Ethan Kross told the reporters that, on the surface, Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling the basic human need for social connection, "but rather than enhance well-being, we found that Facebook use predicts the opposite result—it undermines it" (Fox News, 2013).

equilibrium because "once trapped in this situation, no matter how exploitative and backward, it is irrational for any individual to seek a more collaborative alternative" (p. 177).

Interpersonal trust and trust in institutions are used worldwide as indicators of social cohesion in a society. Canada, according to a study conducted by Stuart Soroka and Sarah Roberton (2010), ranks amongst the top five most trusting countries in the world.[24] Latin American countries, on the contrary, show the lowest levels of interpersonal trust in the world. The Latinobarómetro Report (Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2011), a large survey conducted yearly in all or most Latin American countries, reveals that in 2011 only 22% of Latin Americans said they could trust other people. In the European countries, for instance, levels of interpersonal trust are about 70%. According to the report, this gap in interpersonal trust continues to be one of the main differences between Latin American and European societies. The report also shows that Latin Americans mistrust all the institutions measured in the study, which includes: church (the most trusted), radio, television, newspapers, military, banks, private companies, national government, local and municipal government, police, public administration, judiciary, congress/parliament, unions, and political parties (the least trusted). "The [Latin American] population faces a general disillusionment with regards the main institutions of our society," the report concludes (p. 49). Although the economy is mentioned as the primary concern (above all other concerns) people associate those economic concerns with the high levels of crime and insecurity characterizing most Latin

[24] The sources used include the World Values Survey spanning the years from 1981 to 2007 in up to 97 countries, and combined results from the Environics 2006 Focus Canada Survey and the 2005 Pew Global Attitudes Survey.

American societies. So in 2011, according to the same survey, 28% of Latin Americans considered that crime and insecurity were the main problems of their country; in Venezuela, the most extreme case, 61% of the population believed so.

Although insecurity is certainly a main concern for Latin Americans, the majority of my participants, with the exception of Gustavo, believe that exposing themselves on Facebook do not represent an actual (physical) risk for them. In 2008, Gustavo (29), a Mexican computer scientist currently unemployed, left Cuernavaca to visit Montreal as a tourist. In order to stay legally in Canada, he applied for and got a refugee visa, and a year or so later he obtained permanent residency. From all my participants, he is the one with the least Facebook friends (120), but also the one who spends more time on Facebook. Gustavo has restricted his Facebook account as much as the privacy settings allow him to. I asked him why he is so cautious:

> Because of the violence in Mexico—to protect my family, for security reasons or even extortion…. I have my family on Facebook, but I have not identified them as such. Some of my nephews have marked me as their uncle; Facebook sends you a message that they want to add you as family, but I do not accept them. It's more for security reasons than for privacy—I do it for my own security and that of my family because a lot of people in Mexico think that just because you are in another country you are a millionaire, and that perception makes you a target. Even if I live here [in Montreal], someone can extort me, get in touch with my family or with me and say that they have kidnapped my family. I cannot be sure whether it is

true or not, so the fear increases because I'm so far away (Gustavo, personal communication, December 12, 2012).

Surprisingly, however, Gustavo says that he does not feel surveilled on Facebook and that restricting his profile and selecting very carefully who can be added to his list of contacts is just a mere "precaution." Other participants acknowledged having heard stories about Facebook being used for kidnapping people or damaging someone's reputation, but they say that they have not experienced anything like that personally—that is why they do not feel at risk or surveilled.[25] The "Facebook world" is seen then as a safe place, in contrast to the "real world." Interacting on Facebook is also seen as a relatively low-risk activity, and this is the case even in contexts where offline violence and insecurity are actual threats and where Facebook is occasionally being used to physically harm people.[26] This probably responds to the fact that adults mostly connect on Facebook with people they "trust" because they have previously met offline. Most of participants connect to Facebook alone or in a private space (a bedroom, a cubicle at work, a table at a café, etc.), but more and more users are accessing the site through mobile devices.[27] Nonetheless, as access to the Internet goes more and more mobile users

[25] These results are consistent with other studies. For example, a recent survey conducted in the United States by the Pew Research Center shows that teen social media users "do not express a high level of concern about third-party access to their data; just 9% say they are 'very' concerned" (Madden *et al*., 2013, p. 2).

[26] In May 2013 a Venezuelan daily newspaper (El Universal) wrote about the murder of two young people (21 and 23 years old), victims of a gang who used a fake Facebook profile to set one of them up: "….what the police investigators are saying is that Daivin's enemies set a trap and used a Facebook profile to contact him and kill him. Daivin told a relative and a son of the DA that he had met a girl on the internet two weeks before and had wanted to meet her in person…". (Ramírez, 2013).

[27] As smartphones become more and more popular and people get more familiar with them, online privacy becomes mobile too. For its August 2012 "Innovation Report 2012 Trend Watch" report, Canadian telecommunications firm Rogers in July 2012 surveyed residents ages 18 to 24 and the parents of those in that group to get a sense of how the two generations were using mobile technology. Rogers found that 61% used their smartphone or tablet to connect to a social networking site. The same study shows that 61% of

start to show more concern about their online privacy worldwide. Surveys conducted this year in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, and Malaysia by GSMA (2013) show that the majority of mobile Internet users are concerned about sharing their personal information when accessing the Internet or apps from a mobile device, *but* the majority of them say they would continue using mobile Internet and the apps they wanted regardless. Thus, being aware or concerned about privacy does not necessarily mean that actions will be taken to protect privacy.

When arriving to Canada immigrants find themselves deprived from their social capital (family, friends, acquaintances, colleagues) and in need of overcoming this great resource loss. Studying, doing voluntary work, responding positively to multiple invitations, adding to their lists of Facebook friends people that they might have never accepted in their country of origin—these are all strategies developed to rebuild social capital which came up in the interviews conducted for this thesis. Creating social capital from scratch required from my participants to make adjustments to their traditional notions of 'friend' and 'friendship,' and these adjustments have impacted the way they use Facebook.

When Latin Americans immigrate to Canada they move from a social environment of endemic mistrust to a context of systemic trust; that is, a society where trust is not only a cultural value but also an institutionalized system of rewards and punishments. My own experience as immigrant tells me that it is easier to adapt to a context where trust is the norm than to a context where mistrust is the norm, but the

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smartphone owners feel attached and highly attached to their devices, 51% take their smartphones to bed, 83% to the bathroom and 65% even feel naked without their smartphone and Internet access (Rogers Communications, 2012). This bring us to the following questions: Is this making privacy mobile too? What implications would the latter have?

cultural clash is inevitable—adapting to the new context involves negotiating values and developing new attitudes to start practicing trust (with people and institutions). These negotiations happen mainly offline but end up somehow mirrored on Facebook in different forms. Perhaps the most important one is that it relaxes people's "natural" defenses against outsiders and strangers, this way making them more open to connect to new people.

As I have argued thus far, different factors impact the way Latin Americans in Canada create social capital: preferred language of communication, negotiation of social and cultural values, and changes to the notion of friendship are but some. Facebook can be a psychological burden for immigrants arriving to a new country—the extensive practice of highlighting happiness and success on the site artificially exacerbates feelings of nostalgia and underachievement. In Chapter 2, I introduce the two theoretical approaches to social capital this thesis relies: Nan Lin's (1999; 2001) network theory of social capital and Ronald Burt's (2005) structural hole theory. I also describe some political economic implications regarding the creation of social capital on Facebook.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL NETWORKS, STRUCTURAL HOLES, AND FACEBOOK

The only thing about social capital that scholars seem to agree on is that it is very difficult to measure. This difficulty stems from the metaphorical nature of the concept. The attempt to pin down social capital has produced a great deal of theories and academic literature from multiple perspectives. And the study of social capital on Facebook in particular has in occasion led to competing conclusions, as I show in Chapter 3. For this research I found of particular help what I see as two complementary theoretical approaches to social capital: Lin's (1999; 2001) network theory of social capital and Burt's (2005) structural hole theory. This chapter describes possible applications of the latter theories to Facebook. It also identifies some political economic aspects that are intrinsic to the process of creating social capital on this site.

2.1 Network theory of social capital

Lin (2001) posits that social capital refers to capital captured through social relations. In this context, capital is seen as a social asset by virtue of actors' connections and access to resources in the network or group of which they are members. For Lin, social capital includes the resources accessed through indirect or weak ties, since resources of direct or strong ties represent a relatively small portion of an actor's social capital. Such resources may be in the actor's possessions (their personal resources) or in his/her social positions (their positional resources). Direct ties represent a relatively small portion of an actor's social capital because social capital often activates chains of

multiple actors and in order to gain access to a certain resource (say, information about a job), an actor may go to someone who does not possess that information but who may know someone else who does. Both direct and indirect connections can afford access to resources, and through the direct and indirect ties of others an actor's social capital extends as far as their social networks. "That is, social capital is contingent on resources embedded in direct and indirect ties and accessible through these ties" (p. 44).

Lin's network theory of social capital suggests that actors (individual or corporate) are motivated by instrumental or expressive needs to engage other actors in order to access these other actors' resources for the purpose of gaining better outcomes. "The core proposition is that such accessed resources embedded in social relations, or social capital, bring about better outcomes" (p. xii). Social capital is thus useful, and it is ingrained in social relations and facilitated or constrained by them. For Lin, the premise behind the notion of social capital is straightforward: investment in social relations with expected returns.

In this context, *information*, *influence*, *social credentials* and *reinforcement* are elements that may explain why social capital works in instrumental and expressive actions not accounted for by forms of personal capital such as economic capital or human capital. Lin (1999) also observes that social capital is more than mere social relations and networks: it evokes resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions. She then defines social capital as "investment in social relations by individuals through which they gain access to embedded resources to enhance expected returns of instrumental or expressive actions" (p. 29).

Lin (1999) poses that *Expressive action* is taken to maintain valued resources already possessed by the actor, and it is assumed to be the more important driving force. Maintaining one's resources requires recognition by others of one's legitimacy in claiming property rights to these resources or sharing one's sentiments. There is no action required beyond this public recognition and acknowledgment of others. For expressive action, social capital is a means to consolidate resources and to defend against possible resource losses. The principle is to access and mobilize others who share interest and control of similar resources so that embedded resources can be pooled and shared in order to preserve and protect existing resources. Empathy and common concern promote this kind of interaction. Consequently, three types of return may be specified here: physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction. Lin mentions as examples a mother talking with another mother about her affection for her children or a man sharing his feeling of admiration for a woman with a friend. In these cases, the act of communicating serves as both means and goal.

Certain restrictions involving technological, moral, and legal aspects are impacting on the expressive actions some users take on Facebook. Luisa, for example, thinks that Facebook's main disadvantage is that users cannot talk about what they really want.

> You can't talk about just anything. I have been censored. When I was talking to a friend about drugs and such the message was erased and a warning came up. If you write the word 'heroine' the word is erased and the warning comes up with a red triangle. Or if you write 'marihuana,' the same happens. I was looking for my postings about Pussy Riot,

> Anarchopanda and *Anarquía por la Liberación* [Anarchy for Liberation]: they are no longer there. Everything related to anarchist revolutionary politics has been removed (Luisa, personal communication, January 18, 2013).

On the other hand, *instrumental action* is taken *to obtain resources* not possessed by the actor. This action can be seen as a means to achieve a goal (to produce a profit or benefit in any other way from accessing resources the actor normally does not have access to.) Lin (1999) identifies three possible returns to instrumental actions: economic return, political return, and social return. Each return can be seen as added capital. Economic and political returns are straightforward. However, social return is linked to reputation (defined as favorable/unfavorable opinions about an individual in a social network) as an indication of social gain. Following Granovetter's (1973) notion of *the strength of weak* ties, Lin emphasizes that weaker ties allow access to wider resource heterogeneity. Since bridges tend to represent weak links between two clusters, using a weaker tie increases one's likelihood of gaining access to a bridge[28].

In the context of Facebook, Marcela, the Venezuelan entrepreneur, illustrates this point as follows:

> Not knowing anyone weighs more than not speaking a language well. If you don't speak either language [English or French] perfectly, it's no big

[28] The concept of bridge refers to a strong or weak relationship for which there is no effective indirect connection through third parties. A social bridge represents the separation between nonredundant contacts and relationship of nonredundancy between two contacts. Bridges allow individual actors in one cluster to have access to resources embedded in nodes in another cluster that otherwise would not be accessible (Burt, 2005; Lin, 2001). In other words, bridge is a connection that can grant you access to a person or a group of people that you otherwise could not access.

> deal because there are many people in the same situation; but knowing people is key for a job and the rest of it—references, for instance. My language skills have not improved in the past years, but I do have more relations now, and this has allowed me to do much more than when I arrived. A middle level of languages and some good relationships can help you achieve more success (Marcela, personal communication, November 11, 2012).

Lin highlights that oftentimes returns to instrumental actions and expressive actions reinforce each other (i.e., physical health offers the capacity to handle the enduring workload and responsibility needed to attain economic, political, and social statuses). However, factors leading to the instrumental and expressive returns are expected to show differential patterns.

In the following table, I identify some common expressive and instrumental actions that corporate and individual actors take everyday on Facebook.

TABLE 1
Examples of expressive and instrumental actions on Facebook

Expressive actions	Instrumental actions
Expressing an opinion or sharing information (photos, comments, videos, music, articles).	Doing activism for a cause (politics, animals, environment, women, etc.)
Advertising events and activities expecting no monetary reward.	Advertising products, events, activities, or people expecting monetary or

	reputational rewards.
Sending or accepting friend requests to people we have previously met or that are referred to us by a person in common.	Searching for people that are out of our personal or professional network of relations with a specific (instrumental) purpose.
Tagging/untagging people in photos.	Creating multiple Facebook profiles or a profile using a different name or spelling as a means to avoid or manage compromising 'friend' requests.

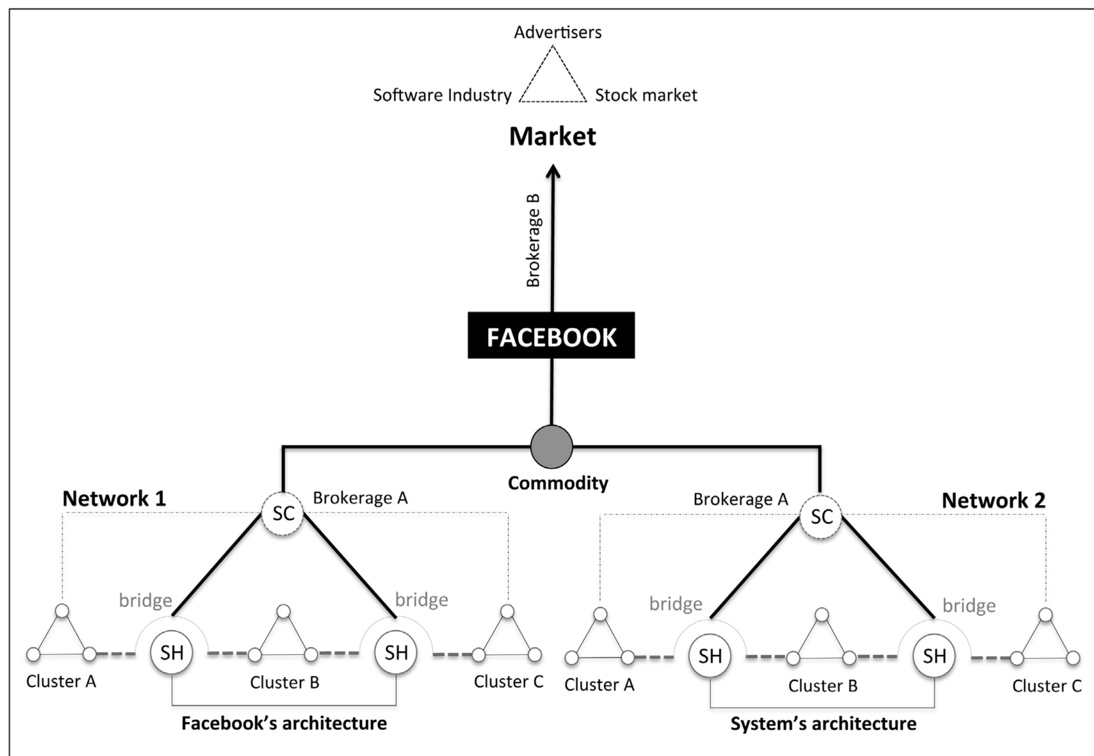
2.2 Structural hole theory

Burt's (2005) structural hole theory is particularly useful to studying social networking sites, for it helps understand the role that weak ties play in building social capital in horizontal and vertical structures of relations. It also provides a framework of analysis that suits well for explaining the processes of brokerage and commoditization of social capital that, I wish to argue, happens on Facebook, focusing especially on understanding the advantage that bridging gaps or "structural holes" existing between networks can produce. Furthermore, I see it as an interesting entry point to study the relationship between social capital and privacy on Facebook and to explore the particularities of this interaction in the light of some political economic mechanisms intrinsic to Facebook.

Burt calls "structural holes" those gaps existing between clusters of networks. A structural hole between two groups need not mean that people in the groups are unaware of one another—it means only that the people are focused on their own activities such that they do not attend the activities of people in the other group. "People on either side of a structural hole circulate in different flows of information. Structural holes are the

empty spaces in social structure. The value-potential of structural holes is that they separate nonredundant sources of information, sources that are more additive than overlapping" (p. 16). He observes that a wider diversity of information, early access to that information, and control over information diffusion provide an opportunity for information arbitrage: the strategic deployment of information to create value. For Burt, knowing when it would be rewarding to bring together separate groups within an actor's network of contacts gives him or her disproportionate say in whose interests are served when the contacts come together. The structural holes between this actor's contacts mean that he or she can broker communication while displaying different beliefs and identities to each contact. The actor's connections across groups also gives him/her/it an advantage in translating opinion and behavior familiar in one group into the dialect of a target group.

I will argue that Facebook's brokerage happens simultaneously at two levels: the first level responds to the vertical structure of Facebook as a for-profit corporation; the second level represents the horizontal interactions ocurring among users. 'Vertical' and 'horizontal' are defined here according to the relational dynamics Facebook's technology and business model impose. In Figure 1, I illustrate these horizontal and vertical structures of relations on Facebook, as well as the relationship between brokerage and commoditization of social capital among users:



SC: Social capital. SH: Structural holes.

Figure 1 - Brokerage and structural holes on Facebook

Brokerage A illustrates how technology allows Facebook users to connect with other users by bridging structural holes existing in and between their own networks of relations; in this process, users create online social capital by taking both instrumental and expressive actions. Brokerage B depicts Facebook's role as an intermediary agent between users and the market. In this process, users' networks are transformed into a commodity and presented in the form of demographics, products, or valuable assets to advertisers, the stock market, and the software industry[29].

[29] Under the section Data Use Policy of Facebook's Privacy settings, more specifically in the question "What are cookies, pixels, local storage and similar technologies?", the company explains how advertisers and the software industry relate through Facebook. The paragraph reads, "We and our affiliates, third parties, and other partners ("partners") use these technologies for security purposes and to deliver products, services and advertisements, as well as to understand how they these [sic] products, services and

Burt uses Georg Simmel's (1902) concept of the *tertius gaudens*[30] to explain who benefits from connecting (brokering) clusters and translating culture, values, and information from between clusters, and how this process takes place. For Burt, the *tertius* is an entrepreneur, a person who adds value by brokering connections between others.

> … a structural hole is a potentially valuable context for action, brokerage is the action of coordinating across the hole with bridges between people on opposite sides of the hole, and network entrepreneurs, or brokers, are the people who build the bridges. These network entrepreneurs operate somewhere between the force of corporate authority and the dexterity of markets, building bridges between disconnected parts of markets and organizations where it is valuable to do so. The social capital of structural holes comes from the opportunities that holes provide to broker the flow of information between people and shape the projects that bring together people from opposite sides of the hole (Burt, 2005, p. 18).

In this vein, it can be said that in the vertical relationship existing between Facebook users and the market, Facebook Inc. plays the role of the *tertius gaudens*: the third who benefits.

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advertisements are used. With these technologies, a website or application can store information on your browser or device and later read that information back" (Facebook, 2013a).

[30] Simmel (1909) introduced this phrase as part of his efforts to understanding competition and the importance of group size. "The most comprehensive illustration of the *tertius gaudens* is the purchasing public under a regime of free competition. The struggle of the producers for purchasers gives to the latter almost complete independence of the individual source of supply, although the purchaser is completely dependent upon the aggregate of sellers, and therefore a coalition among them would at once reverse the relationship. The former situation of independence permits the purchaser to make his purchases conditional upon satisfaction of his demands as to quality and price of the goods. His status thus has, moreover, the special advantage that the producers must even seek to anticipate these conditions, to guess the unspoken or unconscious wishes of the consumer, to suggest to him conditions that are not present, or to accustom him to desirable conditions" (p. 177).

In the offline world, structural holes represent a lack of information existing within and between networks. Knowing or not knowing how to bridge connections makes a difference in terms of how humans use relations to their advantage. On Facebook, however, structural holes are transformed into accurate information—Facebook's algorythms identify gaps in people's networks and encourages users to connect with them. Facebook's system makes it easier than ever to recover lost connections or get in contact with people that it would be hard to contact through other means. And the more actively people use and network on Facebook, the more valuable the information stemming from Brokerage B becomes.

In Brokerage A, on the other hand, users' information is commoditized and brokered by Facebook in its condition as the *tertius gaudens*. *Forbes* collaborator Greg Satell (2013) gives an example of how Brokerage A works: "Facebook is a fabulous company, but I just can't see how it justifies its current valuation and even at its low the stock was still pricey…In my opinion, Facebook would have to start trading in the low teens to offer investors significant value."[31] Another example is found in John Koetsier's (2013) list of five "slicing mechanisms" that, according to him, explains Facebook's recent success capturing advertisers in its mobile version: affinity (what people like); behavior (what people do); social profile (who people are); customer relationship management plug-ins (finding your customers on Facebook) and retargeting (what people have been browsing outside of Facebook).

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[31] By March 9, 2013, Facebook's shares in the Nasdaq stock market had dropped from $38.23 in May 2012, when the company launched its IPO, to $27.96 (Stell, 2013).

A person whose network spans structural holes has contacts in multiple groups, and that contact across holes can be an advantage in terms of breath of knowledge, early knowledge, and opportunities for strategically coordinating across groups. “A hole-spanning network that provides these advantages is social capital. People who have the social capital of brokering connections across structural holes have an advantage in detecting and developing rewarding opportunities” (Burt, 2005, p. 55).

Figure 2 illustrates structural holes in a network:

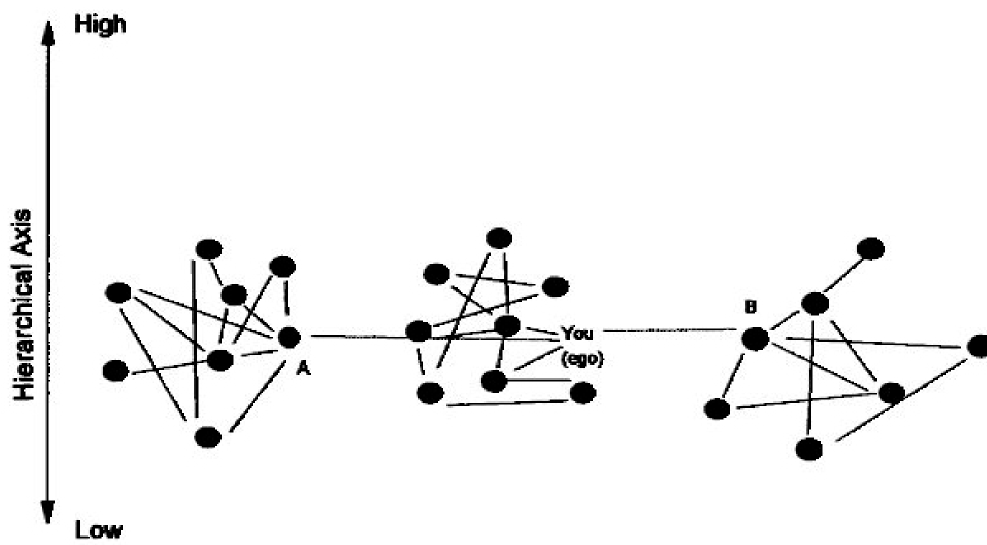

Figure 2 - Structural holes (bridges) and strength of ties (horizontal clusters) (taken from Lin 2001, p. 71)

Three holes are represented in Figure 2: between the cluster of ties around A and those around ego cluster, between ego’s cluster and the cluster around B, and between A’s cluster and B’s cluster. Lin (2001) posits that while the structural hole indicates non-redundancies or near emptiness of linkages between clusters, the connections—if they do exist—between ego and A, ego and B, and A and B constitute bridges.

Journalists are typical brokers of social capital: they have networks rich in structural holes and invest a great amount of time, effort, and resources brokering connections to get non-redundant information (news). It's no coincidence that journalists' most valued asset is their phonebook. In closed networks, like a corporation or a professional association, managers are people with networks rich in structural holes—they are better located to create bridges to different networks, get better information faster, gain access to multiple resources not at hand for everyone, build or expand their reputation through other networks, and keep or gain professional or economic advantage.

Facebook's algorithms facilitate brokering connections. In the offline world, it takes time and effort (talk, call, or meet in person) to find who has the information we are looking for. All my participants claim that they rarely check other people's profiles and that the information they consume on Facebook stems primarily from the Newsfeed. They produce less information than they consume—in other words, they are active consumers and passive producers. Their engagement with Facebook seems relatively passive when compared to what the Pew Research Center (Hampton *et al.*, 2012) calls "power users," which describes those users who specialize in different Facebook activities and participate much more than the typical user does. The study concludes that as a result of these power users, which range between 20% to 30% of users depending of the type of activity, "the average Facebook user gets more from their friends on Facebook than they give to their friends" (p. 3). Power users' active engagement is one of the ways in which brokerage of social capital works on Facebook. In this case, power users broker connections to generate opinion, get feedback, gain popularity, or simply increase participation, since in the end participation is what keeps information flowing and fuels

the attention economy on Facebook. Reciprocity is a valuable asset, for it contributes to give sense to the notion of community in the solitary world of Facebook. But brokers of social capital might use Facebook to achieve more instrumental goals: raising funds for a cause; looking for political support (politicians, activists); bringing together people with common interests, goals, or profiles (journalists, engineers, students, cyclists, entrepreneurs, etc.); promoting oneself (artists, for example). Brokers on Facebook then define goals, identify benefits for the group, encourage and/or moderate participation, and bridge structural holes to connect people from different networks. As Burt poses, the social-capital advantage of brokerage is manifest in recognition and resources, as well as in seeing who to contact for support, how to connect them, and when. "Brokerage is about coordinating people between whom it would be valuable, but risky, to trust, and closure is about making it safe to trust. The key to creating value is to put the two together" (p. 164).

2.3 Does Facebook carry social capital?

In 1999, Lin posed the following question: do cyber-networks carry social capital? She answered: "… indeed we are witnessing a revolutionary rise of social capital, as represented by cyber-networks. In fact, we are witnessing a new era where social capital will soon supercede personal capital in significance and effect" (p 45). In 2007, Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield and Cliff Lampe produced one of the first attempts[32] to study social capital on Facebook, focusing on college students. Their conclusions support Lin's predictions. Following Putnam's observations, these scholars analyzed the creation

[32] Ellison, N.; Lampe, C.; and Steinfield, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends:" Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* (12-4, article 1).

of bridging, bonding, and maintained social capital on Facebook and its main effects on the population studied. As the authors contend, bridging social capital is linked to what Granovetter (1982) and other network researchers refer to as "weak ties," which are loose connections between individuals who may provide useful information or new perspectives for one another but typically not emotional support. Alternatively, bonding social capital is found between individuals in tightly-knit, emotionally close relationships, such as family and close friends. Because online relationships may be supported by technologies like distribution lists, photo directories, and search capabilities, Ellison *et al.* contend that it is possible that new forms of social capital and relationship building occur in online social network sites:

> … we can definitively state that there is a positive relationship between certain kinds of Facebook use and the maintenance and creation of social capital. Although we cannot say which precedes the other, Facebook appears to play an important role in the process by which students form and maintain social capital, with usage associated with all three kinds of social capital included in our instrument (Ellison *et al.*, 2007).

The authors concluded that although there was clearly some image management problems experienced by students and the potential did exist for privacy abuses, their findings demonstrated a robust connection between Facebook usage and indicators of social capital, especially of the bridging type.

The latter conclusions were criticized by Thomas Sender (2007), who affirmed that the measures used by Ellison *et al.* "encourage inflated perceptions of whether e-connections are valuable, without any tethering to real world behavior to test whether

these inflated perceptions are valid to explore the creation of social capital on Facebook." Referring to the findings of the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey—where people were asked how many close personal friends they had who were African American, Asian, Hispanic, etc.—, he argues that people enlarge their circle of "close" friends to find bridging relationships. He also cites the preliminary findings of a study by Kevin Lewis, Jason Kaufman, Marco Gonzalez, Andreas Wimmer, and Nicholas Christakis (2008) to support the idea that social networks tend to lead to *bonding* social capital instead of *bridging* social capital (as Ellison *et al.* contended); that race and gender have the largest influence on who one befriends in social networks online; and that white students (especially men) have the least diverse social network in the United States.

This brief account of the academic literature about social capital on Facebook shows that the empirical evidence available is leading to competing conclusions. Whereas scholars agree that Facebook does "carry" social capital, what specific form of social capital predominates on Facebook is still unclear. But in any case, is it really possible to assert that thanks to Facebook and other social networking sites we are now "witnessing a revolutionary rise of social capital," as Lin predicts? I am not sure. People that are better connected (offline) have access to different kinds of resources that are embedded in the networks of relations they are part of. The possibility of influencing others and getting non-redundant information from our connections are key drives for creating social capital. But because resources are always scarce, access is restricted to certain members of the group; in other words, resources and the information that grants access to them are characterized by their exclusivity—the difficulty of accessing them increases their value.

Facebook has not altered that fact. On the contrary, since most of the information that is produced and circulates on Facebook is not intended to be exclusive, the high accessibility of the information that circulates and the types of resources that that information gives access to lowers their value. This does not mean that people do not benefit from networking and exchanging information on Facebook—what it means is that, in this context, *influence* and *advantage* work differently and respond to particular expectations and needs. Facebook has demonstrated to be an effective and low-cost promoting platform, and both individual and corporate actors are taking advantage, for example, of its convening power, be it for organizing a private party, the launch of a product, or a public demonstration. In their study on social networking groups and offline participation, Jessica Feezell, Meredith Conroy, and Mario Guerrero (2009) found that Facebook allows for the creation of online political groups that provide many of the benefits that we have known face-to-face groups to provide; they conclude that online political groups are effective in increasing offline political participation, but appear to fall short of increasing levels of political knowledge. "The information content and quality of most wall posts were found to be very poor, generally lacking support for their claims, incoherent, or simply opinionated. In other words, group members are exposed to little new or well-articulated information about the political causes around which these groups form" (p. 16). In this vein, when the Pew Research Center (Hampton, Sessions, Marlow, and Rainie, 2012) concludes that making friends on Facebook is associated with "higher levels of social support" and that those who make the most frequent status updates also receive more emotional support, can we consider this "support" real solidarity? Do the mass consumption of entertainment contents and the incessant small talk that dominates

interactions on Facebook actually represent a “revolutionary rise of social capital”? If this is the case, why are scholars (Kross *et al.*, 2013) concluding that rather than enhancing well being Facebook is undermining it? Does it mean that the negative effects of social capital are being reproduced more strongly and for longer on Facebook? These questions should be addressed before making any final claim about social capital on Facebook and other social networking sites. It is beyond the scope of this research to deal with them here, but I wanted to point them out so that they can be explored in further research.

2.3.1 Structural holes and social capital on Facebook

As Burt (2005) has argued, a person whose network spans structural holes has contacts in multiple groups, and people who have the social capital of brokering connections across structural holes have an advantage in detecting and developing rewarding opportunities.

On Facebook, corporate and individual actors become mere users; that is, on Facebook each online profile corresponds to just one identity (online persona): Eduardo’s profile corresponds to one user, and Canadian Tire’s profile corresponds to one user too, irrespective of how many people actually manage and produce contents for those sites. As a result, instrumental and expressive actions taken on Facebook are associated to the online persona and not necessarily to the actual offline actor. However, corporate and individual users relate horizontally only with regards to the expressive actions they take (the system’s architecture is designed to equal users in this respect; changing this feature is out of their control, only Facebook can modify it). When it comes to instrumental actions, offline inequalities and power relations between corporations and individuals

come to the fore. For example, I can post a negative comment on Canadian Tire's Facebook wall and they can censor it, but they cannot prevent me from posting the same comment on my wall, share it, and go viral because the system's architecture limits Canadian Tire's power in this respect. (The fact that an actor cannot fully control how other actor's information will circulate is one of the freatures that contributes to create advantange and exercise influence on Facebook.)[33] However, if I want to use Canadian Tire's Facebook account to get a job or to get information about people working in that corporation, I may be asked to follow the standard procedures (offline or online) established for that purpose.

Vesubia, 32, and her family (father, mother, and two siblings) emigrated from Peru in 1995, when she was 15. She holds a Cegep diploma in International Business and is currently working in a bank, but she also organizes parties for some discos in downtown as a side business. She shares an apartment with Cecilia, her best friend, and Cecilia's brother. Five years ago, Vesubia and Cecilia decided to buy a dog. And it was for their dog that they decided to be on Facebook. In 2010, Vesubia and Cecilia created a Facebook profile for their dog with only one purpose: to look for information on dog parks and Boston Terrier meetings in Montreal. In this case, two people were responsible for managing one site, posting comments, connecting with other dog owners, etc.; but the online persona that other Facebook users were seeing and connecting with was Vesubia's dog. Vesubia says that she had previously had a Hi5 account that never used and that she did not want to be part of another Hi5-like experiment. But her friends started pushing

[33] This is why Manuel Castells contends that corporations like Facebook, Google, or Twitter promote the free circulation of contents on the Internet because their businesses depend on generating more and more traffic; that is, on selling "free communication" (Bilbao, 2013).

her to create a Facebook profile, and she finally did it. The site, though, would be for Marley, their dog, and whoever wanted to 'friend' them on Facebook would have to do it through Marley's site. However, circumstances forced Vesubia to make important changes in 2011.

> Last year I changed the profile because of the parties I organize, since it was not convenient to promote them on Facebook with Marley's profile. In order to do this, I had to add my contacts, people I already new. It was easier to change an existing profile than to create a new one from scratch, so I started contacting everyone…. [Cecilia and I] did not want to waste time checking three accounts, and that's why we created just one for the three of us: Marley, Cecilia and I. About 80% of the friends related to this account are my friends, and about 20% are Cecilia's (Vesubia, personal communication, November 1, 2012).

Based on what I have discussed thus far, I want to suggest that Facebook encourages users to: i) maintain offline connections by taking expressive and instrumetal actions online; ii) recover lost connections or turn otherwise ephemeral connections into 'durable'[34] ones (irrespective of the type or frequency of the interaction or lack of it happening once the connection between two people is established on the site); iii) and

[34] Here, 'durable' does not mean close—it only refers to the actual possibility of keeping contact with people over time, regardless of how strong or weak the bond between two connections is and the intensity or frequency of interaction.

expand people's social networks through the creation of personal or corporate sub-audiences in order to use a low-cost[35] communication platform to deliver a message.

The gist of Burt's structural hole theory is that bridges are valuable for creating information variation, while bonds are valuable for eliminating variation and protecting connected people from information inconsistent with what they already know. In the context of Facebook, trust increases the potential to exercise influence—an information is relevant because a person I know, and not the newspaper or the television, says so. But it does not necessarily guarantee a better quality of information. Trust becomes instrumental on Facebook in the measure to which it is used as a selection creteria to accept or reject people. This instrumental aspect of trust is usually stated by Facebook users as 'I only accept people that I have previously met offline or that is referred to me by a common friend.' The Pew Research Center (Hampton *et al.*, 2012) has observed that it is commonly the case in people's offline social networks that a friend of a friend is your friend, too; but on Facebook this is the exception, not the rule: "The average Facebook user in our sample had a friends list that is sparsely connected" (p. 4). This may suggest that even if Facebook's system allows people to bridge structutal holes, users do not necessarily use it for that purpose.

[35] Dallas Smythe (1981, p. 26) asserted that the principal product of the commercial mass media in monopoly capitalism is audience power; that as collectivities these audiences are commodities, and that as commodities they are dealt with in markets by producers and buyers (advertisers). Although Facebook also produces audiences to market commodities, I consider it a 'low-cost,' and not 'free,' communication platform because in order to establish or maintain connections, produce/consume content and develop strategies to deliver messages more effectively on Facebook, users invest a considerable amount of time, effort, knowledge, and occasionally money (for example, to get professional advice for maximizing use of and returns from the tool). This is the cost users pay for participating on a 'free' social network site. This participation entails a certain amount of labour: "Facebook, a space where both leisure time is spent and labour is performed, is an example of how, in the social factory, general social relations become moments of production" (Cohen, 2008, p. 18).

As it is true for social capital in general, bridging structural holes on Facebook can bring about positive and negative effects. On the positive side, users can easily search for and connect with strong, weak, latent or ephemeral ties at a distance and without much effort. Marcela and Vesubia have taken advantage of this positive feature. For them, Facebook has become the perfect means to span structural holes existing in the networks they wanted to connect with and reach people that otherwise they would have never been able to contact or that would have required more effort and resources to achieve that goal. In Vesubia's case, Facebook has become an effective way to promote her events almost for free and generate economic returns. She says that it would have been very difficult to promote her events without Facebook: in the old days, she used to print flyers and people would throw them in the garbage.

> I still print some posters, but now I cannot put flyers in cars because people write down the address and then the club gets a fine…. Facebook is free, fast, saves you the fines, allows others to resend your event, avoids problems; people can contact me directly, share their opinion, and the invitation goes straight to the people who are interested in this kinds of activities. I can also send the invitation to other people who are not friends of mine and whom otherwise I could not contact (Vesubia, personal communication, November 1, 2012).

Vesubia complains that Facebook prevents her from sending more than 30 messasges per day. "With 25 messsages it asks you to write in a password and then it blocks you because it thinks you are advertising. So Facebook can advertise but you cannot advertise through it. This happens every three hours, when you send messages to

people who are not your friends, people that I find in other Facebook pages related to parties, night events, etc.; that is to say, people who are interested in this type of information" (Vesubia, personal communication, November 1, 2012).

The negative side of bridging structural holes on Facebook, however, is that other users can do the same—searching for us with or without our consent. A certain level of 'closure' within a network is possible mainly in terms of the connections users decide to establish among them (and irrespectively of how sparsely or tightly connected that network is), but not so much in terms of controlling how their personal information will end up circulating beyond their circle of Facebook friends. Most likely this is why focus group discussions with teens are starting to show that "they have waning enthusiasm for Facebook, disliking the increasing adult presence, people sharing excessively, and stressful 'drama,' but they keep using it because participation is an important part of overall teenage socializing" (Madden *et al*., 2013, p. 2). Other examples of the negative implications of social capital on Facebook are Marcela feeling the need to act like a "stalker" to connect with famous people from the fashion industry in Quebec and build an influential site.

2.4 The language divide

José van Dijck (2012) contends that in the attention economy, popularity is created through engineered algorithms that prompt users to rank things, ideas, or people in relation to other things, ideas, or people, and that although popularity has no relation to values like truth, trust, objectivity, or quality, it is often equated to these values.

> … users trust their private profiles data to Facebook because they are invited to join the network by a 'friend,' often as part of a preexisting offline network community, and join other networks while online. Users gain popularity as they get involved in more groups and make more contacts. Popularity is rooted in relative connections between people; in the context of social media platforms, connectivity built on the basis of trust thus becomes a quantifiable commodity (p. 170).

van Dijck observes that social media's trade-off between disclosure and making connections is a grey area where laws scarcely apply and that while many people consider social media to be technical translations of human sociality, sociality is rather an engineered construct than a result of human social interaction (p. 168). It has been argued (Burn-Murdoch, 2013) that computers that learn from and repeat human behaviour save time and money, but they may also repeat flawed traits or errors thousands of times per second. For one British university, for example, what began as a time-saving exercise ended in disgrace when a computer model set up to streamline its admissions process exposed—and then exacerbated—gender and racial discrimination. Staff at St George's Hospital Medical School decided to write an algorithm that would automate the first round of its admissions process. The formulae used historical patterns in the characteristics of candidates whose applications were traditionally rejected to filter out new candidates whose profiles matched those of the least successful applicants. "The admissions data that was used to define the model's outputs showed bias against females and people with non-European-looking names" (Burn-Murdoch, 2013). Perhaps that is

why Miller (2011) concludes that the secret of Facebook's success is that it promotes conservatism rather than change.

The grey area between law, sociality, and technology is creating important challenges in many societies, but it is particularly interesting to see specific dynamics they are creating in multilinguistic societies. Think of India and most African countries, where official languages are not spoken by all members of those societies; where people communicate in different dialects; and where language, religion, and ethnic backgrounds create cultural conglomerates that coexist in tension with one another[36]. Think of Montreal or Barcelona, where the Catalan and French languages amalgamate cultural and political identities and generate social dynamcis that have become characteristics of those places (i.e., nation vs. province, sovereignty vs. confederation, independence vs. dependency, monolingualism vs. bilingualism, interculturalism vs. multiculturalism, etc.). In these cases, what legal framework applies to Facebook? Can the use of a particular language be legally enforced on Facebook? If so, with what political consequences? How is this conflicting area between law, sociality, and technology encouraging individual and corporate actors to engage with certain linguistic practices in detriment of certain others on Facebook? Think also of Miami and El Paso. By 2010 Census estimates, in Miami-Dade County Latinos represent 65 percent of the population, and in El Paso County, which borders Mexico, 82 percent is Latino (Constantini, 2011). Although in the United States English is the sole official language ('official' means that there is a legal framework restricting the use of other languages) in Miami and El Paso Spanish is the mother tongue of the majority of the population, which raises a major communicational

[36] Of course, unequal access to technology and technological literacy are two key aspects that need to be taken into consideration in these societies as well.

challenge for those regions. For example, a corporation in Miami or El Paso may find legal retrictions to advertise or interact with its Facebook audience in Spanish, even if this is the language that most clients use to communicate with the company. On the oter hand, how would the English speaking community of those places feel and react, online and offline, if the company suddenly decided to advertise or communicate publicly in Spanish based solely on the language that the majority of its clients speak?

I only partially agree with van Dijck's assertion that "sociality [on Facebook] is rather an engineered construct than a result of human social interaction," for it is clear to me that key aspects of online sociality (like language) respond to decisions that individual and corporate actors, and not technology, make every day. Technology allows or prevents users to do specific things on Facebook, but it does not determine every single aspect of sociality in that space. In multilingual environments, communicating in a language that is not spoken by all members of the group creates simultaneous inclusive and exclusive dynamcis within that group.[37] Connectivity is therefore key to building popularity and increase participation but so is implementing sucessful strategies for linguistic inclusion.

In this chapter, I argued that although expressive interactions still predominate on Facebook, changes in the site's architecture, the business strategies developed in its role as the *tertius gaudens*, Facebook's convening power; the potential for users to generate

[37] Like most of my participants, I deal with this very problem every day: if I publish something in Spanish, the majority of my Canadian connections will not be able to read it; if I post it in English or French, many of my Spanish-speaking Facebook friends (which represent about 95% of all my connections) will be in the same situation; if I post in French, most of my Spanish-speaking contacts and some of my English-speaking contacts will not be able to read it. Since I mostly publish comments and articles that discuss about the political situation in Venezuela and Latin America, which most of the time are written in Spanish, my main language of communication on Facebook is Spanish.

economic returns; and its effectiveness for bridging structural holes within and between networks, is rapidly turning Facebook into a useful platform for obtaining instrumental returns with a relatively low cost (it does require, however, investing a considerable amount of time). This brings about positive and negative consequences. Two main positive effects seem particularly valuable for my participants: getting first-hand information about people they care and themes they are interested in (especially, but not exclusively, related to their home country), and keeping open the possibility of interacting and developing a bond with new connections (weak ties) in Montreal. All my participants agree that the benefits of being on Facebook are greater than the risks, hence the interest in maximizing the benefits of the trust that glues their respective online networks. But as it was true for Marcela and her boyfriend (who initiated a love affair on Facebook) when trust is broken it is difficult to keep the situation out of the sight of other members of the group. Negotiating these positive and negative consequences is creating a new sort of online etiquette that is impacting offline relations, especially because successful socialization on Facebook requires that users disclose their "true identity." Finally, in a multilingual context like Montreal language generates inclusive and exclusive dynamics that my participants negotiate by taking expressive or instrumental actions according to specific goals. Developing strategies for linguistic inclusion is also key for generating participation and capitalizing benefits on Facebook. In the following chapter, I explore how the way users manage their online privacy restricts or increases participation, altering the kind of advantage that they can draw from their Facebook connections.

CHAPTER 3: PRIVACY DYNAMICS AND THE CREATION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON FACEBOOK

When a relationship ends in the real world,
it also ends on Facebook
(Carmen, personal communication, November 11, 2012).

Although Facebook does not replace offline socialization, it does create a parallel dimension of interaction where the notion of space is transformed and human's drive for territoriality is replaced by a sense of ownership towards the intangible assets that are constantly exchanged on the site. This final chapter explores how these changes are contributing to redefine privacy boundaries and how the latter impacts on the way people network and create social capital on Facebook.

3.1 Personal space, privacy, and culture

Private boundaries vary from one society to another. The concept of personal space refers to the preferred distance from other people that an individual maintains within a given setting, and it is defined as an area with an invisible boundary surrounding the person's body into which intruders may not come, as John Aiello, and Donna Thompson (1980) argue. According to these authors, different perceptions of space may often lead to different definitions of what constitutes an inappropriate interaction distance, or crowded living conditions; consequently, miscommunication can occur when individuals from different cultures attempt to interpret each other's spatial behavior (p. 109). In his famous book *The hidden dimension*, anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1969) proposed that cultures differ with regard to their use of space and the physical environment: "The relationship between man and the cultural dimension is one in which

both man and his environment participate in molding each other" (p. 4). Establishing it upon the notion that human spatial processes are determined by the drive for territoriality, Hall described Mediterranean, Arabic, and Latin American societies as highly sensory, "contact" cultures wherein people are more likely to live in close physical contact and exhibit close interaction distances. In contrast, northern European and Caucasian American societies are described as somewhat more reserved, "noncontact" cultures, which are more likely to display larger interaction distances, especially in public settings and with strangers. Hall also argued that people from various cultures not only speak different language but, what is possibly more important, they also "inhabit different sensory worlds." As an example, he described the introduction of Americans to the sensory world of the Arabs and indicated the kind of conflicting sensory messages that Americans confront—in public places, Americans are often "compressed and overwhelmed by smells, crowding, and high noise levels," whereas in private residential spaces, they often feel "exposed and inadequate because of too much space" (p. 154). In *The silent language*, Hall (1973) also suggested that in Latin America the interaction distance is much less than it is in the United States—people cannot talk comfortably with one another unless they are very close to the distance that evokes either sexual or hostile feelings in the North American.

Different ways of interpreting and experience personal boundaries are often mirrored in the legislation that regulates privacy in each country. In contemporary democracies, and especially in the United States and Canada, privacy is recognized as a basic human right—the 'right to be let alone,' as defined by Warren and Brandeis (1890) in their landmark Harvard Law Review article. It is rumored that Warren was inspired to

write this article following intrusive news coverage of society parties his wife had thrown and that culminated with the press taking and publishing photographs from his daughters' private wedding party. At the time, he saw it necessary to assert the right to privacy, or, in their words, 'the right to an inviolate personality' given the prevalence of media platforms that could so easily render a private event, public (Papacharissi, 2010). In 1967, acting as Justice Minister, Pierre Trudeau also said these unforgettable words: "There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation" (CBC News, 2013). This led to the Omnibus bill, which called for massive changes to the Criminal Code of Canada and decriminalized 'homosexual acts' performed in private: "what's done in private between adults doesn't concern the Criminal Code," said Trudeau[38] (CBC News, 2013).

In his book *Public/Private*, Paul Fairfield (2005) argues that public concern over the decline of various forms of privacy began to emerge toward the end of the nineteenth century and increased steadily throughout the twentieth. He observes that the expansion in scale and number of both public and private institutions is among the leading causes of this phenomenon, institutions that through the twentieth century became increasingly reliant on information in ever-enlarging quantities. "Toward the end of the century, institutions and their publics had become mutually dependent to an unprecedented degree, with the appetite of such institutions for personal data seemingly insatiable and with their publics becoming increasingly habituated to the disclosure of such information" (p. 37).

Fairfield contends that this triumph of revelation over concealment has exercised a similarly profound effect on the political cultures of many nations, though it has been

[38] CBC Digital Archives (2013). Omnibus Bill: "There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation' *CBC*. Retrieved on August 6, 2013. http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/politics/rights-freedoms/trudeaus-omnibus-bill-challenging-canadian-taboos/theres-no-place-for-the-state-in-the-bedrooms-of-the-nation.html

epitomized in America. In his view, the popular sense that personal privacy is under threat is rooted not only in recent technological innovations and preoccupations with security but in a general culture of exposure and ubiquitous normalization; nonetheless, the important matter of the threshold that distinguishes privacy violations from lesser intrusions is not altogether fixed but is contingent on how and where individuals establish boundaries. Since ours is a “culture of exposure,” the author suggests, the interpretive standpoint from which questions of public and private may ultimately be viewed is afforded by a dialectic between revelation and concealment.

> Metaphorically, privacy is a ‘portable territory’ of the self, analogous in this respect to personal space. It is not an enclosed domain within which one may oppress another with impunity, nor is it a realm that one enters or exits. It is a right of personal security broader in both its meaning and its application than the familiar right to ‘security of the person’ (primarily the right against physical assault) [p. 28].

“Facebook is mine,” says Vesubia, “but what I put in it everyone can see it—unless I restrict who can access. It’s better to think of Facebook as a public space” (Vesubia, personal communication, November 1, 2012). On Facebook, “personal space” is but a metaphor—an illusory territory delimited by technological imperatives, representational strategies, and productive participation. So why do people who see Facebook as a public space still refer to it as “my” space?

On Facebook, “space” has been taken out of the equation of online socialization—since it is no longer a limitation for interaction, and since the transparency of the medium gives the impression of a face-to-face communication, the notions of

territory and territoriality are inevitably transformed. On Facebook, I want to argue, territoriality is replaced by a sense of private ownership with regards the intangible assets that are permanently exchanged: users own their identity, the personal information they share, the time and effort they invest on the site, the connections that conform their online social capital, etc. Consequently, privacy boundaries become directly or indirectly delimited by the way users experience and internalize this sense of ownership. This relates to Fairfield's (2005) contention that understanding privacy means understanding it in relation to *property*, not because the two notions are conceptually nondistinct, but because comprehending their distinction and interrelations affords some clarification to the notion of privacy itself (p. 102).

Unwanted disclosure of private information, in offline and online contexts alike, can impact people negatively, especially in closed networks where social control is greater. But on Facebook, as opposed to offline settings, the effects of that unwanted information last longer because once in the net it is very difficult to control how it is going to be used. This creates different levels of awareness about the risks of disclosing personal information on Facebook, produces different strategies for visibility, and contributes to determine the openness or closure of a user's network on the site. As Fairfield poses, "the ethical and existential project of self-fashioning, or self refashioning, is not realized in a social vacuum but crucially involves the free negotiation of proximity with others in social space" (p. 123). Biography, he says, is a particular example of the revelation imperative that is noteworthy for both its positive and its negative aspects. But what is the source of the biographical imperative? Fairfield asks. What impulse or

passion transforms admiration of an individual's work into a need to know about the personal history and histories of one's life?

On Facebook, the section in which users post their personal information (name, date of birth, marital status, contact information, educational background, and so on) is called the "profile." In the Spanish version of the site that section is called *biografía* (biography) and not *perfil* (profile), but the purpose is the same: encouraging users to disclose personal information and create a public persona online. Fairfield remarks that skilled biographers do not reveal indiscriminately every scrap of information that they uncover about their subject—biographers must negotiate the distinction between disclosure and reticence, revealing only that which is relevant to the character of the subject and to the unfolding of the narrative. Something similar happens with the way Facebook users create their public persona and manage the information they share on the site, only that in the latter case they are their own biographers and no special merit is needed to deserve visibility—anyone is encouraged to disclose information.

Based on what has been discussed thus far, it may well be the case that privacy on Facebook is not longer understood as "the right to be let alone"—more precisely, it is *my* right to expose myself in front of those, and only those, that I choose for that purpose: it is my right, in short, to *own* a private audience. Or as Carmen puts it, "The 'Share' function is the essence of Facebook and the reason why you are there" (Carmen, personal communication, November 11, 2012).

3.2 Privacy in a networked public sphere

In Miller's (2011) view, an anthropological starting point in understanding Facebook would be to appreciate that each and every individual was quite literally a social networking site long before Facebook existed and that the normal distinction between public and private does not work for Facebook.

> The 'public' represented by Facebook is better understood as an aggregate of private spheres. It consists of all the people one knows privately, but in one place and open to each other…. The bacchanal and discomfort that derives from Facebook are often the consequence of the way transient feelings and actions, once inscribed in text, come to have longer-term effects than intended (p. 175).

In 2006, Yochai Benkler (as cited in van Dijck, 2012, p. 163) launched the term "networked public sphere" to proclaim the new non-state, non-market sector of information and emphasized the Internet as a technological infrastructure that facilitates the unfettered exchange of voices and opinions.[39] But at the level of political economy, as van Dijck (2012) has claimed, it is impossible to disregard the influence of the market in defining the meaning of this new realm of communication. "The internet in general—and social media platforms in particular—is not just a vehicle for facilitating connections but

[39] Later on, boyd (2008) coined the term "networked publics" to allude to publics that are restructured by networked technologies. As such, they are simultaneously 1) the space constructed through networked technologies and 2) the imagined community that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice. She asserts that MySpace and Facebook are networked publics and people connected through networked technologies like "the blogosphere" are publics too, "just like those connected by geography or identity are" (p. 15).

also manifests itself as a medium for forging connections between people, ideas, and things (p. 164)

van Dijck states that strategic styling of a private self into a public persona is hardly a new phenomenon and that social media platforms are not inaugurating a new public sphere—they are just communicative instruments that formalize and inscribe a heretofore informal discourse that was always already part of the public sphere, hence reconfiguring our norms for sociality and social conduct. For her, the novelty of social media platforms is not that they allow for making connections but that they lead to engineering connections, since by virtue of their technological capabilities, social media sites connect data that users consciously or unconsciously provide. “But in consciously deploying the tactic of disclosing private information to boost one’s public persona and to build relationships, Facebook users do not fundamentally change the relation between the private and the public sphere in setting the norms for sociality—what does challenge these norms is the fact that Facebook triggers the disclosure of personal information in exchange for participation” (p. 167).

Privacy on Facebook, one may say, is as private as a private party: our private space is open to a group of guests; we may be able control who gets in the party, but we cannot control the information that our guests share with others during or after the party. Facebook did not become popular for protecting peoples’ privacy but for precisely the contrary: it allowed people to become more visible and access personal information of other members of the network. Most Facebook users, however, expect this visibility to be

restricted to a limited number of people.[40] That is why Carmen refers to her Facebook site as "publicly restricted" (*público restringido*): "I decide who can enter and see what I want. What restricts [my Facebook site] is the number of people entering my space; that's why I don't consider it an invasion of privacy—because I allow people to see what I post."

Marcela, the Venezuelan entrepreneur, wanted to build a strong Facebook site for her company Las Meninas. In order to do this, she spent a considerable amount of time researching online in order to find out who is who in the fashion industry in Montreal and Quebec. She started sending invitations to people she did not know but who could be interested in the products (jewels) she promoted or the articles she posted regularly on Las Menina's Facebook wall. Surprisingly for her, most of the people she contacted accepted her invitation. This way, she managed to create a contact list of around 1,000 key professionals related to the fashion business. That list has become of interest for other people in that sector as well, who find it very useful. This is what makes Marcela see her corporate Facebook site as an intangible but valuable asset of her company Las Meninas.

> Before I didn't like adding unknown people, but by now I have already added more than a thousand, from which I know less than 20%. Facebook has been useful in contacting stylists and people who work in fashion; knowing what bloggers are talking about, who the biggest designers are, where the events take place; whether a store is having a runway show, a

[40] boyd and Marwick (2011) assert that teens "want to be recognized and validated, but only by certain people. This is not a contradictory stance; it parallels how people have always engaged in public spaces" (p. 25). This is also true for Latin American adults interviewed for this thesis.

> bazaar, or any event related to fashion: Facebook lets me see who their friends are, who is in the photos.

When Marcela's corporate Facebook profile went public she started adding people from Venezuela so that Las Meninas' site "would not look empty." But as the portal gained popularity and professionals from the fashion industry in Quebec accepted her invitation, she stopped adding people from Venezuela and kept populating the site with people from Quebec. "It surprised me that 90% of the people accepted my friend request even without knowing me." She says that, in one occasion, someone contacted her to ask whether they knew each other because they have many friends in common; then she asked Marcela how she managed to put together in one place "the elite of fashion" in Quebec and create a very valuable Facebook site. "I took the time to see who was in the picture, what comments people made—I felt like a stalker. But at that time I didn't know who was who, and if I wanted to be successful I had to do it this way. It was very important for me to create that Facebook profile. It has not been definitive, but it has allowed me to have an idea of the fashion world in Montreal and in Quebec."

But whereas being proactive—almost "like a stalker"—turned out to be effective for promoting Las Meninas and building a valuable list of professional contacts, Marcela also had a bad experience with her personal Facebook site, which impacted negatively her last sentimental relation.

> Some of the problems in my last sentimental relationship were due to Facebook. My ex-boyfriend was super active on Facebook, regardless of whether he knew the people or not. He would add anyone who asked him to,

> and I did not understand that. While I was in Montreal and he in Caracas, he reconnected with someone and started a parallel relationship on Facebook. That was one of the things that triggered our breakup. He had no filter when accepting people, something I found extremely distasteful—it made me mistrust him; I did not like it at all. At the beginning of the relationship he was over there and I was here, and we were constantly surveiling each other on Facebook—who he tagged or not, etc. At some point I said to myself: this is unhealthy (Marcela, personal communication, November 11, 2012).

Another problem, Marcela says, was the relationship status (single, in a relationship, etc.) because selecting the option 'I'm no longer in a relationship' immediately turned a private matter into a public invitation to comment about it in mass. She then took the relationships status off and restricted the tagging part in the pictures.

> Even as far as work is concerned, what is posted there may have consequences because people don't filter, and that is beyond my control. With Las Meninas Facebook I feel a bit like a stalker: checking who is the friend's friend so I can add them. There is a surveillance component. And my two accounts clearly show both sides of this surveillance component—the one stalking (in my business Facebook site) and the one that does not want to be stalked (in my personal Facebook site).

In the case of Las Meninas, Marcela could add people she did no know because Facebook allowed her to span structural holes and create bridges between networks that were not previously connected. This made easier, cheaper, and faster for her to achieve the goal of creating a contact list of professionals and key actors of the fashion industry in Quebec. But does these Facebook connections carry social capital? Yes, it does. The social capital associated to Las Meninas' Facebook site generates two main kinds of advantages: reputation building and access to non-redundant information (eventually, it could also contribute to generate economic return, but at the moment of the interview this was not the case). This example illustrates how actions are taken on Facebook to achieve instrumental goals. Marcela set different goals for each of her Facebook sites, and these goals determined the actions that she took in order to create two differentiated sub-audiences. In Las Meninas' Facebook site, Marcela takes instrumental actions with the purpose of building an influential site. In this case, the expected return is building professional reputation; accessing non-redundant information through a network of carefully selected weak ties; and, eventually, generating economic benefits. In her personal site, however, she mostly takes expressive actions because her expected return is to give and receive emotional support from family and friends, maintain distanced relationships, and project happiness and success.

3.3 Expressive and instrumental privacy

Kate Raynes-Goldie (2010) proposes the terms social privacy and institutional privacy to differentiate concerns about controlling access to personal information on Facebook from how Facebook designers and their corporate partners might use that

information. “In the same way many people give away some of their personal information in exchange for the perks of an Air Miles card, users of Facebook benefit from their use of the site at the cost of their privacy.” She found that teens of her study are more concerned with their social privacy when using Facebook, rather than their institutional privacy, and this made her propose the concept of privacy pragmatism.[41]

Negotiating privacy on Facebook does require a certain level of pragmatism, especially when it comes to outweighing the benefits and risks of online participation. However, ‘social privacy’ and ‘institutional privacy’ are not well suited for studying the relationship between privacy and social capital on Facebook. Since privacy is by force defined in relation or in opposition to what is normatively accepted as public, ‘social privacy’ neither unpacks that opposition, nor does it show how private/public boundaries are negotiated. On the other hand, Raynes-Goldie’s concept of ‘institutional privacy’ refers exclusively to how Facebook Inc. might use its users’ information, this way excluding how other corporate or individual actors might use that information as well. For these reasons, I propose two alternative concepts: instrumental privacy and expressive privacy.

Instrumental privacy relates to the strategies implemented to achieve specific goals and obtain instrumental returns on Facebook. These returns respond mainly, though not exclusively, to professional, economic, or political drives. Here, instrumental refers to a relatively low level of spontaneity and higher level of planning of the actions that are

[41] Raynes-Goldie builds on this concept from Alan Westin, an influential privacy researcher who in the 1980s conducted surveys which found that the public’s concerns about privacy threats had increased dramatically. For privacy pragmatists he understood people that were concerned about their privacy but that were willing to trade some of it for something beneficial (para. 8).

taken to achieve those goals. In this sense, instrumental privacy helps delimit the size and boundaries (closure) of our sub-audience, identifies the advantage that achieving those goals might generate in return, and determines the actions that need to be taken. For example, even if Las Meninas site is open to everyone, what adds value to the site is the professional network of contacts it provides. Marcela is not interested in populating the site with just any kind of people—she wants to attract connections that are well known or related to the fashion industry in Quebec in specific. Another example: before leaving Facebook, Toño used it frantically to promote a candidate he was supporting for major of Bogota. For weeks, Toño bombarded his Facebook friends with articles, messages, propaganda, and personal comments to persuade them to vote for his candidate. During that period, the time that Toño spent on the site (including his half-hour lunch time at work) was dedicated almost exclusively to do political activism. Some of his Facebook connections started to complain about Toño's unrelenting propagandistic actions, but this did not stop him. His candidate finally lost the election.

Expressive privacy, on the other hand, negotiates the boundaries between disclosure and reticence in order to fashion or refashion our public (corporate or individual) persona on Facebook. It is mainly, though not exclusively, at the level of expressive privacy where the decision-making processes concerning the kinds of information that users will or will not share, the time that they will spend on the site, and the kinds of interactions that they will have with other users take place. Expressive privacy produces strategies for managing visibility, reputation, and maintenance of social capital on Facebook. Here, expressive refers to actions showing relatively high levels of spontaneity and low levels of planning.

Luisa, for example, fell in love with a Quebecker during her first year living in Montreal. By the moment of the interview, she was planning her wedding, after which she would apply for permanent residency sponsored by her future husband. By the time I interviewed her, she had a tourist visa that was about to expire. The transition from one legal status (tourist) to another (permanent resident) was a delicate and stressful matter. I asked Luisa if she believed that her private information available on Facebook could represent a risk in any way, and this is what she said:

> Yes. When my partner proposed to me I posted on Facebook that we were engaged. And then I thought that I shouldn't have done that because the government could think that my wedding had been planned in advance and that I had lied to Immigration authorities. Then, while dealing with the immigration process, I spoke with a lawyer and that Facebook posting became a threat because anyone could see it. When you get married Immigration authorities ask for proofs of the relationship: photos, e-mails conversations, etc. So if I included as a proof [of our relationship] the information posted on Facebook, Immigration authorities could then say that I had lied to them. This scared me, and I finally removed my "engaged" status…. Now that I'm going to get married, I also unsubscribed to two websites: Anarchopanda and Opération Révolution France. I'm not an anarchist, but I like to read different things. In any case, I don't want the government to relate the two and think that I'm going to be a threat (Luisa, personal communication, January 18, 2013).

Luisa first posted her marital status in a very spontaneous way because she wanted everyone to know that she was happily engaged. Later, she reflected about the negative consequences that his expressive action could generate and decided to remove the information about her marital status. Whether the Canadian government does check new applicants' Facebook profiles or not, what matters is that Luisa believed that posting that kind of information on Facebook represented a threat with potentially serious implications for her and her fiancé. She also unsubscribed from the websites *Anarcopanda* and *Opération Révolution France* in order not to give "the wrong impression" to the Government. This self-imposed censorship did not change the normal interaction between Luisa and her sub-audience, but it did make her redefine her strategies for visibility on Facebook.

Expressive privacy also involves negotiating pros and cons of participating or not participating on Facebook. It defines the strategies and actions that are needed to protect our personal information and online identity. The reason why Gustavo, for example, considers Facebook a public space is because anyone can hack his personal site and access his personal information. "I cannot do it myself, but I know that there are people, even among my friends, who can violate your privacy and go into your information [on Facebook]". Only in the event that Facebook were absolutely invulnerable to hacker attacks, he would consider it a private space. This is precisely what happened to Vesubia's brother:

> … someone hacked into his Facebook account and started posting stuff. My brother was really upset, so he created another Facebook profile and started fighting against his own Facebook persona, the one that had been

> hacked, where someone was still posting photos and stuff. So I ended up blocking my own brother's hacked account. It's weird because he had a long and complicated password that he did not share with anyone (Vesubia, personal communication, November 1, 2012).

Creating a second Facebook account for self-monitoring is another strategy commonly implemented; its main purpose is to control the risks of spontaneity, avoid unwanted exposure, and take corrective actions when needed. As Luisa puts it:

> I created another Facebook account with my second first name and second last name to see what others could see in my main profile. The account is still there but I don't use it—just created it to see what image my main Facebook profile was projecting and make sure that people could not see my pictures. Personal image is very important to me—it's my image, and I am a very spiritual person.… I know other people who have two Facebook accounts (Luisa, personal communication, January 18, 2013).

Since productive participation is required to successfully create social capital on Facebook, a minimum level of visibility and exposure is required. boyd and Marwick's (2011, p. 21) observed that the complexity of achieving privacy in networked publics has motivated countless teens to act assuming that they are being surveilled[42]. But except for

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[42] In June 2013, the media confirmed that government surveillance was more than a conspiracy theory: the US National Security Agency (NSA), its wiretapping agency, has been monitoring communications between the US and foreign nationals over the Internet since 2007, under a project called Prism. The US government confirmed the existence of the scheme and its application. Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, Paltalk, YouTube, Skype, AOL and Apple were among the list of companies included in the scheme. According to *The Guardian* (Arthur, 2013), Prism can collect email, chat (video, voice), videos, photos, stored data, VoIP (internet phone calls), file transfers, video conferencing, notifications of target activity – logins etc., online social networking details" and another category called "special requests". Two months later, the New York Times confirmed that the N.S.A is searching the contents of vast amounts of

Gustavo, participants of my sample are not particularly worried about being surveilled. They acknowledge that exposure on Facebook entails risks but believe that those risks do not represent an actual threat to them—again, the benefits of being on Facebook are greater than the risks. I asked Pancho, 29, a Venezuelan Industrial Engineer finishing an MBA at McGill University, whether he believed that his personal information available on Facebook could represent any risk for him: "I don't think it's my case, but it may be the case of someone who is politically active and suddenly pictures come up of a time when this person was 20 doing something dumb; also, in your work environment… The disadvantage of using Facebook, which I think is minimum, is that your information becomes public, but I think it's a small price to pay for accessing to Facebook, which gives you the tool for staying in contact [with friends and family], regardless of the distance" (Pancho, personal communication, January 31, 2013).

Privacy boundaries on Facebook are delimited by social conventions and practices, but also by linguistic and legal frameworks. For instance, who owns the intellectual property of the information posted there? According to Facebook (2013b),

> While you are allowing us to use the information we receive about you, you always own all of your information. Your trust is important to us, which is why we don't share information we receive about you with

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Americans' e-mail and text communications into and out of the country, hunting for people who mention information about foreigners under surveillance. "The N.S.A. is not just intercepting the communications of Americans who are in direct contact with foreigners targeted overseas, a practice that government officials have openly acknowledged. It is also casting a far wider net for people who cite information linked to those. This "adds another element to the unfolding debate, provoked by the disclosures of Edward J. Snowden, the former N.S.A. contractor, about whether the agency has infringed on Americans' privacy as it scoops up e-mails and phone data in its quest to ferret out foreign intelligence" (Savage, 2013). Will this fact change users' behavior online? Will it impact the trusting practices on Facebook and in social media in general?

> others unless we have: received your permission; given you notice, such as by telling you about it in this policy; or removed your name or any other personally identifying information from it. Of course, for information others share about you, they control how it is shared. We store data for as long as it is necessary to provide products and services to you and others…. Typically, information associated with your account will be kept until your account is deleted. For certain categories of data, we may also tell you about specific data retention practices (Facebook, 2013b).

Finally, it is worth saying that instrumental privacy and expressive privacy complement each other and coexists in a dynamic continuum. The usefulness of these concepts is that they provide a framework to observe what it is that the "portable territory of the self" comprises on Facebook, and illustrates why we need to refer to privacies in plural. It also helps to identify goals and actions that are taken to obtain a particular returns. Accumulation, a key notion in Bourdieu's (2011) understanding of capital, is an important feature of online social capital too—accumulation of connections, accumulation of data, accumulation of exchanges (transformed into intangible assets), accumulation of labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form, as Bourdieu puts it), accumulation of benefits and risks. Based on this, I will argue that the creation of social capital on Facebook is linked to three main aspects: i) the perceived added value of the investment (time, effort, exposure, connections) made to achieve a successful socialization; ii) the return (advantage) expected from that investment (i.e., social support, validation of social credentials, popularity, influence, transformation of

ephemeral relations into durable relations, economic benefits, etc.); and iii) the strategies implemented to keep intangible assets (the self as "property") safe from intruders, as well as to avoid the disclosure of unwanted information and maximize the benefits of trust.

Both in Latin America, where societies show high levels of insecurity and low levels of interpersonal trust, and in Canada, where insecurity is low and interpersonal trust is high, maximizing the benefits of trust is key for socializing and creating social capital on Facebook. Migrating from one context to another made my participants aware of the need to rebuild their social networks and be more open to meeting new people; it also made them implement strategies to communicate effectively with a multilinguistic sub-audience. But moving from one context to another —despite the cultural, social, institutional, and legal differences—does not seem to have changed dramatically the way they socialize, pursue certain goals, and protect their privacy and identity online. Although the legal framework did not impact in any way on how my participants engage with Facebook, it does seem to be shaping the way corporate users act on Facebook (i.e., crisis communications and lawsuits may damage reputation and create economic losses). However, it may be just a matter of time before legal frameworks start determining certain aspects of socialization among individuals more directly. In Nova Scotia, for example, stricter cyberbullying legislation is now in place, giving victims the ability to sue alleged cyberbullies—if the alleged cyberbullies are minors, the new legislation allows victims to hold the bully's parents responsible (CBC, 2013).

Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez once said that everybody has three lives: a public life, a private life, and a secret life. Maybe it is a matter of time before our secret lives become networked, too.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

Overall, my findings suggest that recognition, participation, and reciprocity are important social-capital advantages that the Latin American adults studied in this thesis obtain from Facebook. Users may broker connections to achieve expressive goals (generate opinion, get feedback, gain popularity, or increase participation in order to guarantee the attention and information flow necessary to socialize online) or instrumental goals (raising funds for a cause; looking for political support; bringing together people with common interests, goals, or profiles; self-promotion). In all this process, Facebook plays the role of the *tertius gaudens*—the third who benefits. Facebook Inc. has managed to turn its users' privacy, social capital, and free labour into a profitable business.

Socialization on Facebook is mediated by technological, engineering, and economic processes, but also by country-specific legal frameworks; decisions on the main language(s) of communication; level of engagement and quality of participation; negotiation about conflicting privacy boundaries; and particular expectations of expressive or instrumental outcomes. These mediations do not restrict people's agency, nor do they determine the multiple ways Facebook can be used to create advantage; but they do alter the kinds of advantage that social capital on Facebook can produce.

All my participants agree that the benefits of participating in Facebook are greater than the risks and that surveillance is a low price to pay for all the good things that Facebook gives for free.

Miller (2011) contends that the single most important attribute of Facebook is the degree to which it seems to help us return to the kind of involvement in social networks that we believe we have lost. Facebook attaches my Latin American participants to their home country in different ways—by allowing them to maintain distanced relations; by engaging in discussions of public interest; by fueling nostalgic feelings for the 'lost' country and the good things that they are no longer able to enjoy.

The Latin American adults interviewed for this thesis use Facebook as a vitrine where happiness and success must be permanently exhibited. Often, this adds an extra burden to the already difficult process of starting a life in a new country. Being constantly exposed to other people's "success" and "happiness" can also exacerbate feelings of frustration and underachievement.

Since most of the information that is produced and circulates on Facebook is not intended to be exclusive, the high accessibility of the information that circulates and the types of resources that that information gives access to lowers their value. This does not mean that people do not benefit from networking and exchanging information on Facebook—it means that in this context influence and advantage work differently and respond to particular expectations and needs. Facebook has demonstrated to be an effective and low-cost promoting platform, and individual and corporate actors alike are taking advantage of its convening power. It is still not clear what are the real effects and benefits of the emotional support and solidarity that people receive through Facebook. Does it help people access to actual resources?

Perhaps the most disconcerting finding is that being exposed to an offline environment characterized by high levels of insecurity and physical danger (like many

Latin American cities) does not seem to alter the perception that people are safe on Facebook. Further research is needed to explain this paradox.

In my attempt to map the overlapping areas where social capital and privacy converge, I proposed the concepts of *instrumental privacy* and *expressive privacy*. The difference between instrumental and expressive privacy and instrumental and expressive actions is similar to that between policy and program: the first refers to ideas, principles, and strategies; the second alludes to the actions that need to be taken to implement the policy.

Instrumental privacy relates to the strategies implemented to achieve specific goals and obtain instrumental returns on Facebook (these returns respond mainly, though not exclusively, to professional, economic, or political drives.) Here, instrumental refers to a relatively low level of spontaneity and higher level of planning of the actions that are taken to achieve a specific goal. In this sense, instrumental privacy helps delimit the size and boundaries of our network on Facebook and define the kind of advantage the latter is expected to generate. In other words, goals and strategies determine personal or corporate policies for openness or closure of the network.

Expressive privacy negotiates disclosure and reticence in order to fashion or refashion our public persona on Facebook. In this case, expressive refers to relatively highly spontaneous actions and the strategies implemented to manage the consequences of those actions. Expressive privacy involves deciding the kinds of information that users will or will not share, the time that they will spend on the site, and the kinds of interactions that they will have with other users take place. Expressive privacy develops strategies for managing visibility, reputation, and maintenance of social capital on

Facebook. Expressive privacy involves negotiating benefits and risks of belonging and or not belonging to the Facebook community. It also defines the strategies and actions that are needed to protect our personal information and online identity.

These concepts provide a framework to observe what it is that the "portable territory of the self" comprises in the context of Facebook. It also helps identify goals and actions that are taken to access resources available through people's Facebook connections. In this sense, the creation of social capital on Facebook is impacted by three main variables: i) the perceived added value of the investment (time, effort, exposure, connections) made to achieve a successful socialization; ii) the return (advantage) expected from that investment (i.e., social support, validation of social credentials, popularity, influence, transformation of ephemeral relations into durable relations, economic benefits, etc.); and iii) the strategies implemented to secure intangible assets (self as "property"), avoid the disclosure of unwanted information, and maximize the benefits of trust.

One limitation of this thesis is the number of participants interviewed, which makes it difficult to extrapolate general conclusions from particular observations from a sample of eight people. The small sample does not allow me to make any conclusions in terms of gender. Including in the sample one former Facebook user gave me an idea of possible reasons that users would stop using this platform, but it is not possible to generalize from just one case. It would have been also useful to include a control group of Canadian Facebook users to observe similarities and differences. However, the methodology I chose allowed me to make observations concerning relevant political economic implications related to privacy and social capital on Facebook, as well as to

develop some concepts that could help understand the conflicting merge of worlds on Facebook.

At the end of this investigative process, some questions remain unanswered: If Facebook does contribute to create social capital, why are scholars (Kross et al., 2013) concluding that rather than enhancing well being Facebook is undermining it? Does it mean that the negative effects of social capital are being reproduced and having a greater impact on Facebook? It might be too soon to conclude that we are in fact witnessing a revolutionary raise of social capital thanks to Facebook and other social networking sites. Will Facebook become the center of the next battle for language control (who speaks what language in what context based on what legal framework)?

In developing countries, where institutional deficiencies and other contextual factors impose their logics of urgency in the everyday lives of its citizens, it is not difficult to see why privacy is not seen as a top priority or a matter of public debate. And yet, privacy, especially the lack of it, is partially responsible for many problems affecting that population directly, i.e., domestic violence, marital problems, early pregnancy, economic constraints due to oversize families, even freedom of speech. In poor houses, where three, five, sometimes ten people must share one room because the family income does not allow them to afford a bigger house (a common situation in Venezuela, for example), personal computers, cybercafés, and mobile devices may help them compensate their lack of physical privacy at home.[43] Also, while most Latin American countries have democratically-elected governments, few have traditions of strong privacy

[43] A study conducted by Charo Sádaba, Xavier Bringué, and Mariel Claderín (2011) shows that most (55,5%) Venezuelan teens between 10 and 18 years use cybercafés to connect to the Internet; home is the second (51%) preferred place access the Internet.

protections (Rodriguez, 2013). Intense political instability, internal wars, and military regimes have long established cultures of state surveillance in many countries. Colombia, Peru, Mexico, Paraguay, and other Central Americans countries have experienced multiple internal wars: the war against terrorism and the war against drug trafficking to name a few. These wars have created a reactionary climate and have bred a rapid expansion of surveillance architecture. On the other side of the spectrum, countries like Argentina and Chile have endured military regimes but have not faced similarly intensive drug wars and terrorism conflicts.

> Nevertheless, many such countries, including Argentina, have instituted compulsory national ID schemes and have stored the information in huge databases, opening the floodgates for privacy abuses. Those databases, which are themselves remnants of previous military regimes, are currently being 'modernized' to collect biometric identifiers in several countries in the region. Surveillance technologies have been repurposed to silence judges and opposition voices, demonstrating the ease with which they can be abused to subvert the rule of law in any democratic nation lacking robust checks and balances (Rodriguez, 2013).

The debate about privacy in North America has profoundly cultural, institutional, and legal roots that are specific to this context. Attempting to understand privacies in developing countries based on considerations that are particular of the United States and Canada is likely to lead to erroneous conclusions. In Latin America, disclosing certain kinds of personal information in public settings is a normal practice that does not

generate legal or moral sanctions—on the contrary, in certain occasions this behavior is expected and even celebrated. This could be one of the things that explain why Latin Americans have embraced Facebook and technology in general so massively and naturally without showing much concern about online surveillance or Facebook's business model. It could also explain why my participants agree that the benefits of being on Facebook are greater than the risks. This may also explain why Carmen says that the 'share' function is the essence of Facebook and the reason why billions of people, and not only teens and college students, are still there.

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APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT'S PROFILES

Participant	Gender	Age	Years in Montreal	# of accounts	Total of friends	Hours invested daily	Divice	Education	Occupation	Annual income (2012)
Carmen*	F	25	1	1	822	4	Ipod Touch	Highschool	Int. Student - Fashion Marketing / Work part time	<$20,000
Gisela	F	28	1.8	1 personal	486	1	Mobile phone (Blackberry)	Bachelor of Administration and International Affairs	Working in International transportation and logistics	$40,000
				1 personal	No access					
Pancho	M	29	1.5	1	975	1	Mobile phone (Iphone)	Industrial Engineer and Masters in Finance	Int. Student - MBA	$7,500
Luisa	F	29	1	2	949	1	Laptop	Singer, Pianist, and Actress	Baby sitting and house keeping	<$20,000
Gustavo	M	29	4	1	120	"A lot"	Laptop	Bachelor of Computer Science	Unemployed	$0
Marcela*	F	32	1.5	1 personal	865	2	Laptop	Bachelor of Marketing	Entrepreneur	$25,000
				1 company	1994					
Vesuvia	F	32	17	1	400	0.5	Laptop	Certificate in International Affairs	Working in the banking sector	$35,000
Toño	M	32	5	0	180 (aprox)	0		Civil Engeneer, Masters in Environment and Sustainable Development	Working in the mining sector	Over $60,000

*Carmen and Marcela are sisters

APPENDIX 2: STANDARD QUESTIONNAIRE

Age, gender

Country of origin

Marital status

Time living in Montreal

Current and past immigration status in Canada (since moving to Montreal)

Educational background

Current occupation

Annual income

When and why did you decide to immigrate to Canada?

Why did you settle in Montreal?

Did you use Facebook at any step of this process? If so, with what purpose?

What was your proficiency level in English and French when you moved to Montreal?

What would you say was your social status and quality of life in your country of origin?

What would you say they are now?

Have you felt any pressure to keep in Canada the status you had in your country of origin?

If so, can you say where this pressure comes from and how it is exercised?

How do you usually network in Montreal?

How easy or difficult is it to make new friends in Montreal?

Overall, do you mostly network with locals, Latin Americans, or people from other regions?

When you make a new friend, do you add him or her on Facebook? Why or why not?

What makes you want to add somebody to your list of Facebook connections?

Overall, how many of your closest friends, in Canada or elsewhere, are also Facebook friends?

How many of those Facebook friends are relatives?

Do you organize your friends on Facebook? If so, how?

What criteria do you follow to accept new friend requests?

Have you ever rejected a friend request or erased/blocked somebody from your list of friends? If so, did it bring any consequence?

What is your main language of communication on Facebook? Why?

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "Facebook?

How long have you been using Facebook?

What made you create a Facebook account?

What do you use it for?

What kinds of things do you like to post?

What kinds of things do you like and do not like to read?

Do you post comments in any language other than you? In this case, what kinds of information do you post and why?

What kind of feedback do you expect when you post a comment in one language or another?

How often do you check your Facebook account (average time per day)?

How often do you post news on Facebook?

What kinds of information do you usually read? What kinds of information do you usually share? What kinds of information you do not like/want or prefer not to read?

What kinds of information do you prefer not to share?

Have you ever closed or thought of closing your Facebook account? If so, why?

What would happen if you left Facebook today?

Have you ever felt surveilled on Facebook? If so, explain.

What do you think about Facebook storing all the information you post on that site? May that information entail any risk to you?

Have you ever used Facebook for business purposes or promoting events? If you had the chance, would you use it? Why?

Can you tell me some good and bad experiences you have had as a Facebook user?

Do you think Facebook is a public or a private space?

In your opinion, what is public and what is private on Facebook?

Have you ever read Facebook's privacy terms? Why yes or why not?

Do you think your personal information is safe on Facebook?

Have you ever changed your Facebook privacy settings? Why?

Where do you usually connect to check your Facebook account and interact with your online friends?

How often do you visit your friends' Facebook sites? What motivates you to do so?

How do you think other people see you when they visit your Facebook site?

If Facebook decided to charge a certain amount of money for keeping your account, would you stay?

On average, how many hours per day do you spend on Facebook?

Do you use any other social networking site? What for?