ARTIGOS

Teachers on Facebook: explorations on distance and proximity management faced by school audience[1]

Professores no Facebook: explorações sobre a gestão da distância e da proximidade diante do público escolar[2]

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Abstract:

The presence of social medias in teacher- student interactions raises questions on the collective work of managing proximity and distance. From teachers' testimonies extracted from a video documentary we sought to understand practices of management of school interactions on Facebook. The reports are analyzed in the light of two categories of analysis that, organized to apprehend everyday situations, gather the impressions teachers have when discussing Facebook use. The first one points to what we have called the "gathering of differentiated social circles", allowing us to recognize the uniqueness of a space such as Facebook in relation to the management of proximity and the distance of the teacher from the school public. The second is distinguished by the "technical conditions of discretion," signaling margins of maneuvers teachers can use on the online social network, establishing an ideal form of interaction with their students. These categories result in a reality in which teachers manage both their relationships with the school audience (and technology) as well as their personal images and the possible educational (dis)credits associated with them.

Keywords: image management, social networks, teacher role, Goffman

Resumo:

A presença de redes sociais virtuais nas interações entre professores e alunos permite interrogar o trabalho coletivo de gestão da proximidade e da distância. A partir de registros orais de professores extraídos de um videodocumentário, se procura compreender aqui práticas de gestão das relações escolares no Facebook. Os relatos são analisados à luz de duas categorias de análise que, organizadas de modo a apreender situações cotidianas, reúnem as impressões que os professores apresentam quando discorrem sobre o uso do Facebook. A primeira aponta para o que nomeamos aqui de "ajuntamento de círculos sociais diferenciados", permitindo reconhecer a singularidade de um espaço como o Facebook com relação à gestão da proximidade e da distância do professor diante do público escolar. A segunda se distingue pelas "condições técnicas de discrição", sinalizando margens de manobras de que os professores podem se servir na rede social on-line, estabelecendo uma forma ideal de interação com seus alunos. Estas categorias resultam em uma realidade em que os professores gestam tanto suas relações com o público escolar (e com a tecnologia) quanto suas imagens pessoais e os possíveis (des)créditos educacionais vinculados a elas.

Palavras-chaves: *gestão da imagem, redes sociais, papel de professor, moral, Goffman*

Introduction

The idea that the relations between teachers and students are established within certain limits of distance and proximity is very old. In the Middle Ages, for example, according to Léo Moulin (1994, p. 225), it was common that "the contact of students with the teacher, who would call them their "relatives" or "part of the family" as some would live in the same house as the teacher, was close and direct. They lived under the same roof, went together to the commerce or to the taverns". The invention of modern school, on its turn, presupposes a separation between the teacher and these random environments, establishing a more precise space for pedagogical relations. Consequently, school, as the official place of meeting between teachers and students, conditioned new ways of collective coercion, such as teachers' corporations which could decide *in loco* if the teaching was provided, to evaluate, reprimand, etc. (Durkheim, 1938). In this perspective, the history of education could also be understood as a long *history of separations*, foreseen the existence not only of a demarcation line between teachers and students but also the collective works of managing distance and proximity which define educational relations.

It is curious that, faced by this dramatic aspect of education, authors such as Goffman have occupied a smaller position when compared to other equally classic sociologists such as Durkheim, Elias, and Bourdieu. The reason for his timid influence is not simple but can be seen. Only few lines on Goffman deal with school relations, though works as *Asylums* and *Stigma* problematize boarding schools (Benelli, 2003; Guige & Boulin, 2016), as well as social inclusion and special education (Freund & Biar, 2017; Schilling & Miyashiro, 2008)[3]. Goffman, however, used other researches involving teachers' role to manage his concepts – as can be seen in the following excerpt, in *The presentation of self in everyday life*:

> The circumspect performer will also attempt to select the kind of audience that will give a minimum of trouble in terms of the show he wants to put on and the show he does not want to have to put on. Thus, it is reported that teachers often favor neither lower-class pupils nor upper-class ones, because both groups may make it difficult to maintain in the classroom the kind of definition of the situation which affirms the professional teacher role.

School situations are – as seen in the excerpt above – composed of more or less official audiences which act on teacher's behavior. However, Goffman's work can be understood under a less coercive aspect when we follow other works, such as *Encounters*, in which the notion of *role distance* translates the author's craftiness to suppose individuals able to relativize their own social roles from different forms to define the situation. This would suppose an induvial able to act differently according to his way to frame reality, authorizing, at the same time, the flexibilization of his role faced by different contingences. Teacher's role, in Goffmanian terms, can be relativized when a teacher, with no coercion from his audience, finds maneuver spaces to express his virtues as a social actor[4].

Modernity is, after all, also a synonym of openness, so that acting as a teacher means acting through one of the many social roles in the individual's life. The teacher can enjoy life's pleasure which are not reduced to school, such as cultural and sport leisure, political demonstrations, family moments, and "Saturday night fever". Modern social life presupposes a contingent character, diverse and democratic, displacing the image of the teacher from an

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[3] These Goffman's works tend to present a more "tragic" side of his perspective, in which he highlights embarrassing, difficult situations. The epigraph of *Stigma* is an example, it shows a young woman that through a letter laments her facial deformation even questioning suicide.

[4] This characteristic would probably also condition the analysis of names as Plato, Boethieus, Abelard, etc. who eventually faced themselves with social structures hostile to their ways of teaching. Rouche (1981) uses this strategy, understanding that the " key objective of education, to tame desires, can only be reached with a voluntary attachement to the educational structure" (p. 667).

official situation (school) to other ones (family, culture, festivals, etc.) which probably do not require behaviors such as explaining an equation or a polished way of speaking with no slangs, used among friends. The issue on where "teacher's relations" start and finish can arise exactly when a teacher acts outside school boundaries, though continuing to be observed by his public of teachers, principals, secretaries, etc.

This teacher's displaced situation is approached here from an analysis of interactional conditions offered by technological means of communications. Would these means not be communication spaces that abstract school circumstances without necessarily hindering contacts between teachers and students? The analysis of spaces of virtual interaction, as Facebook, is precisely a way to find other circumstances, limits, and positions that can allow a possible educational relation on non-institutional spaces. Facebook, on this perspective, could be questioned not only in terms of "encounters" – sometimes tragic, as the sharing of a photo of a drunk teacher, or "forbidden", as in the United States, where schools impose rules on Facebook use to stop possible harassments ("Professora é demitida", 2017) –, but also as a space of (re)defining teachers' place faced by their school audience.

To this (re)definition we add the issue that, if pedagogical relations are also moral relations, teachers tend to maintain the commitment with their own personal images. The relations of proximity and distance can become everyday dramas as they question this image. These dramas perhaps presuppose teachers that are not only concerned with learning-teaching, but what their imagine can say about themselves, leading them to control the possible impressions students could have about them through Facebook. The issue, therefore, becomes less about managing student's impressions and more about teachers managing their own expressions, avoiding virtually problematic situations, such as photos in swimming suits, drinking alcohol, or linking certain contents.

Methodological perspective: examining a pre-existing register

The management of proximity and distance, as shown here, can be considered a macrosocial phenomenon observable in different contexts: public and private schools, in Brazil and abroad. In the context of Brazilian public policies in education, the use of online social networks is still an undefined question- though a project of law tries to regularize it ("Projeto de Lei", 2015). To explore the solutions reached by the school community, this article uses a documentary in which high school teachers from a state school in the region of Jacarepaguá (RJ) present different situations in the use of Facebook by their students[5].

The analysis of a pre-existing register, that is, the oral reports of interviewed teachers, require certain methodological stances. What would be the criteria of scientific validation given to teachers' discourses answering questions made by someone else and not the researcher? Faced by this obstacle, the question here was not to understand the motivations that produced teachers' testimonies but observing them when positioning themselves against or in favor of their impressions on Facebook. To give sense to the testimonies collected, regardless of their motivations, we can use what Goffman (1959) called "primary framework": an activated mental equipment, aiming to understand situations that take place in a certain environment and that, thus, helps teachers organize their experiences, managing their relations.

The primary frameworks, which are different depending on the everyday experiences of teachers, contain *realities* that are neither true nor false, but that could be deduced as plausible in the space of Facebook. Those realities, sometimes with exaggerations, may talk about what is more banal in this virtual space and, often, may only seem feasible when considering the common situations experienced by teacher. In the way of Erving Goffman, who used a broad repertoire of illustrations to manage his evidences – romance excerpts, newspaper articles, medical reports, etc. (Manning, 1992) –, using the documentary is a methodological choice to illustrate the realities of teachers' everyday lives. Teachers, representing themselves in the video, also represent a public image of the situation on the relation between school and Facebook.

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[5] The documentary *Uma escola entre redes* tries to "understand the daily live of social network use by high school teachers and students" in a state school in the city of Rio de Janeiro. (Carrano, 2013, s. p.).

Then, sociology of everyday life manifests its commitment to the realities that are not only common but publicly accessible. To emphasize the nature of virtual interactions experienced by different publics, it is important to deal with, even if in general terms, the relations between "place" and "space" that can be applied to Facebook. Goffman's work, therefore, will be used, with some alterations, so that the interactions on the internet can assume a perspective that does not oppose real and virtual…or the school on Facebook.

The place and the space (or the nature of virtual interaction in situational terms)

Undoubtfully, online social networks have conquered the daily life of a great part of individuals. Their numbers demand from sociology a theorization able to grasp its elastic shapes and dynamics of use. The words of Weber (2003) on sciences "to which eternal youth is granted", as would be the case of historic disciplines, "all those which the eternally onward flowing stream of culture perpetually brings new problems" (p. 120), seem stronger than ever. Scientists see themselves almost obliged to move between classic and contemporary texts to renovate sociological imagination. What would Goffman (1959) say, for example, about the personal "façades" that multiply themselves and establish complex expressive apparatus willing to impress an audience that watches all this from an apparently distant place?

Reading his work seems urgent in virtual contexts in which interactions become constant and start and finish on the margins of an everyday etiquette, after all, an email not replied is much more common than leaving a face to face contact unanswered. These situations, analyzed through a Goffmanian perspective – so common to the point it is not even questioned anymore –, maybe can undo the immediate misunderstanding about the supposed end of "private life" on internet. The notion of "backstage", for instance, allow us to avoid possible moral panics related to a society of transparency, as it foresees an area separated from collective observation (Aspling, 2011), where the preparation for a performance takes place[6]. Would this

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[6] The definition of *performance* in Goffman foresees a behavior or an activity in which a person presents to an audience. The performance then has social actors that create impressions of themselves to a certain audience, either easing their interactions, or establishing and transforming their ways of identification (Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2014).

private region– because it deprives the public of the other's presence – not also be one that allows someone to choose and carefully edit a photo before publishing it? Users can, thanks to this region, omit information such as work positions of low prestige, age, unstable love status, and, on the other hand, privilege others as their schooling level, musical taste, sport habits, etc., aiming to express values able to produce impression more or less predictable or desirable. Thus, users would be defining their Is in relation to others maintaining their private lives intact despite the intensive and ostentatious use of the internet. The individuals, creating their own expressions would be operating – still in Goffmanian terms – the representation of I in the everyday life and socializing themselves depending on a continuous transaction with themselves and the other.

However, Goffman's legacy has its limits. Goffman remembers, from the first pages of *The presentation of self*, that his perspective applies mainly to the analysis of interactions in physical places – places established by perceptions, wall, etc., seen as fundamental elements to define a social situation or a context of observing and observed individuals (Smith, 2006). Then, Goffman privileges moments that would be, in short, effects of presential and face to face interactions. These moments would tend to stay in constant transaction on a 'coming and going" movement of expressions and impressions generated by individuals (Burns, 1992). Finally, the sociologist established a way of analysis understanding the representation of the I in relation to moments, casual or solemn, that would be part of the experiences of everyday modern life.

The support of Giddens (1996) to Goffmanian limits seem key, considering that the separation between the "here" and the "now" corresponds to one amongst many "distinctive characteristics of modernity". The here as a place and the now as a time, in Goffman, were strongly connected, predicting an autonomous field of analysis called "interaction order". Giddens (1996), on his turn, aware of the dynamics that structure modern societies, reflected on a mismatch between the here and the now which would allow interactions not dependent on individuals engaged in co-present situations. The result of the same separation would consist, more clearly, in a transformation of the interactional condition that would no longer demand a common place for individuals to interact in the same situation. This condition allows us to

redirect Goffmanian sensibility towards interactions that happen outside places, or what can later be called extra institutional[7].

Nevertheless, Goffman supposed individuals whose abilities and quickness of thought could serve as ways to repair situations that could be always disturbed. Modernity would be then a stage of contingences, of interactions daily done and undone. It is a challenge the imperative to sustain the image itself. These contingencies authorize individuals to (re)create their interactional conditions towards building a common context– undone by the separation previously mentioned – whose example is expressed in the question over the phone "can you talk now?". Goffman and his attention to the little daily protocols, as is this question, allow us to approach other types of situations in which different collective conventions act to establish a certain interaction order[8].

Communication technologies brought to social interactions a singular elasticity, conditioning a game of impressions and expressions independent of local co-presences, but not independent of a certain order. The greatest example of this elasticity is the creation of interactional conditions that are less subjected to the coercions of place, due to their portable qualities– as the wireless telephone – allowing a conversation that changes from a field of collective vision and hearing such as a living room to the privacy of the bedroom. The virtues of portability in personal communication have relatively freed individuals from the observation of an audience that could influence what was been said to someone in the other end of the line. This interactional condition allows new performances– as a gang of scammers that, working from inside a prison, call the families of hospitalized patients pretending to be physicians and asking money for medicine ("Presos fingem", 2017).

The shapes of social control loosen up from the perspective of an observant public which tends to disappear in the interactions, which are then supported through performances

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[7] The tension in terms of place and space tend to happen, mainly, when both are connected to a person through the image of his/her face. The Elias's notes (1994) on "facial modeling as an example of the peculiarity of human individualization" (p. 160) contributes with the definition of a face as an irreplaceable, indistinguishable, and authentic image. This same condition makes the face a central attribute of a person, that can be valued through selfies or hidden in embarrassing situations, as can be seen in criminal news. The *nicknames* used in risky situations– as in extramarital relations– can also be seen as a way to protect someone through an avatar.

[8] Martuccelli (1999), when situation Goffman's and Giddens's work in one of the matrices of modernity called "modern condition", highlights this permanent instability in the shape of a constant search for solidity in spaces that are constant fluid, as if paraphrasing Marx saying "all that is solid melts in the air". The individual and modern means of communication could be considered one among this shapes that are able to order social interaction, but also to collapse them in a second, as it would be the case of leaking a secret information or a compromising photo.

derived from more unexpected places and, therefore, also silent and discrete forms of communication. The regions, places, territories, etc. can become, therefore, increasingly less dispensable to establish interactions as they can take place in "spaces" (Giddens, 1996) such as emails, telephones, of Facebook pages. These depend only on an internet connection and a technical device– thus it can be seen as spaces with a precise place, as they can be fully working even in an important business meeting or during university classes, detouring the focus on presental interaction or aiding the official situation (as a tool to get pertinent information to that context). Places become then cohabitated by spaces (and vice versa) and it is this cohabitation that we want to highlight to make clear the dynamic relations between a space called school and another called Facebook.

Sometimes these dynamics can be observed through disarrangements of work time in which individuals can show themselves receptive (or vulnerable to receive) tasks that were previously restricted by physical distances. These initial clearances about the relation is what make it common that when returning from vacation we open your inbox and see many messages waiting to be replied. That means that, despite being absent, we are always present thanks to these spaces of emails, which is indifferent to the time and the winding of ways and the diversity of places we walk in our daily life. The same can be said, with some reservations, to our regular mailboxes that fill up with letters when we leave on vacation and that, as the email boxes, presuppose that they are less or more accessed by their users.

However, both mailboxes, one in a "place", the other in a "space", have a key difference. The last one accepts that we check it even when we are not at home. The individuals can be found in an address regardless of their mobilities. This would be the case of a doctor that can receive an urgent call on his/her cellphone even if on a beach house or with the family in a Sunday morning. The result of a separation between the here and the now could not be, therefore, any other than producing interactions that are locally de-situated and spatially re-situated, as the doctor contextualizes his/her situation and this will condition (or not) an emergency care. The re-situation of an interaction in a certain space is what allows predicting a series of efforts put into practice by individuals trying to define what is going on between them.

The issue on how teachers can (re)situate their relationship with their students in another space, different from the school, from what was seen here, arises with a problem typical of virtual interactions. The problematization of Facebook in terms of "space" would be in fact a way to understand these (re)situations, without giving up a permanent tension with the "place" especially as individuals invest their faces in their personal pages. Then, we should present the singular characteristics and relatively invariable on the type of communication engendered by Facebook. Goffman's pages on the "representation of I", then, can only seem intelligible when related to the margins of maneuver offered by space elasticity. This elasticity is what makes us understand why teachers have such different experiences on Facebook– as we will see analyzing the following testimonies. What matters is to highlight from the start that they are, potentially, at least in the beginning, subject to perform a communication of "one-to-many" communication (Casilli, 2010), and this "many" would assemble different social circles that characterize the starting point of our following analysis.

Assembling different circles

The previous item tried to present some general characteristics of personal and technological means of communication. These implied a de-situation of place referring to social interaction and to which we now add a more particular characteristic, whose implications are proved by teachers on Facebook. The issue can be summarized in terms of a "displacement", as it decentralizes teachers of their places, creating a reasonably singular interactional condition. This phenomenon can be understood, with reservations, from the meaning that DaMatta (1997) gives to carnivals in Brazil: " more individualized moments, seen as property of all and as moments in which society is decentralized" (p.48). Carnivals, in this case, are marked by the generalized use of costumes, which presuppose that everyone can present themselves as characters nor foreseen by daily experience.

The fact is that, differently from Facebook, carnivals are temporal events situated in a place: they take place 40 days before Easter and on the streets and clubs of the cities. Facebook, on the other hand, lacks a precise time and place, following its de-situation of time. This characteristic allows us to understand why this space operates, from a start, enlarging the temporal dimensions, so that the definition of a school situation becomes more evident as

teachers "embrace" their own roles, investing their professional efforts also "outside" the school. Carina, a Biology teacher, in the documentary[9], says that Facebook

> is a way to be with the student at a time that he is not at school. Because they leave at noon, twelve and half, you known, I'm still here, I don't go home. But when I arrive at night, we can still decide something about a deadline, some doubt they might have close to a test. There are students who had a problem during the week and couldn't come, w absent…and we can solve this. I think it has helped; it has approximated a lot the relationship (14m 56s)[10].

This "approximation", when grouping teachers and students around the same spatiality, despite different locations, creates an assembly with no further adjectives. The fact is that this assembly only starts to encompass different social circles as Carina continues her observations. The social network is, therefore, a space where Carina also "learn a bit about their lives" (14m 56s) – what she considers to be "very important in a relationship with the teacher" and the would hardly be seen in official teaching situations. The proximity becomes then a condition for the accumulation of new impressions, as – in the role of observers – teachers can, even anonymously, access their students' pages. Céu, a Geography teacher, details:

> I log in eventually, have a look, and we discover who they really are, sometimes the behavior is different from the classroom, you know, you see religion, you see affection, you see rebellion, so you discover another side, and he [the student] by himself is different. We know that. You take a bus with him or chat with him in a trip outside the school, it is something else. This approximation that we do outside the school, we can also do it on Facebook (16m 02s).

These assemblies, done by Carina or Céu, allows us to see that close bonds are kept not only within Facebook. The bonds, in a broad ephemerous sense, also have their importance, producing society as a dynamic exchange of expressions and impressions. These bonds notably fleeting however should always have to deal with a decrease on the quality of their contents. This would be Simmel's (2006) formula that, on his turn, starts from the following principle: differentiated individuals can only find something in common among themselves as they use more rudimental contents, that is, contents that can be understood by a broader number of people despite all their mutual differences and indifferences, as in the case of posts about daily events, selfies, funny contents, etc. The ordinary is, then, what belongs to all, what, in short, lacks more qualities and, nevertheless, still creates a society as it is identified.

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[9] Teachers' names were intentionally changed. We are using pseudonyms chosen by the authors.

[10] The documentar and times of each excerpt can be found in Carrano (2013).

This would also be the case of "knowing" a student outside school, in the scope of a type of lasting surface filled of opportunities to establish "sociations" . Carina adds:

> Sometimes, we can on a Facebook page, in a relationship, have students coming closer to us, who wouldn't approach us if we were only in the classroom space because the classes are very big. We end up establishing a contact with some, the closest one, the ones, you know, those who sit very far…then we can reach there….Everything gets better (16m 45s).

Simmel (2006) invested in his intellectual construct believing that, even where society-making may seem impossible, the sociations are always possible despite its fragile and fleeting character. The *The New York Times*, in 2016, released some changes foreseen by Facebook developers regarding the types of content that would be privileged by their algorithm system (Isaac & Ember, 2016). Those responsible for the change argued that the content about family and friends would be prioritized, that is, more automatically shown at the expense of news and publications copied from other sites. Simmel, through his intellectual construct, allows a conceptual anticipation of this decision, Facebook would try to make even more efficient the tendency already latent in its structure.

The fact is that a technical maintenance that privileges personal content only makes sense as it exposes contents that are more pre-disposed to sociation. The characteristic of assembling in one space different social circles from the same individual is not exclusive to Facebook. This same grouping can also be relatively enabled in events such as weddings, birthdays, and funerals which would tend to unite different people of your circles of belonging, that is, a here and now connecting one to another. However, contrary to Facebook these occasions are exceptional, extraordinary, having clear separations to the daily world to which Facebook itself does not. Those separations that guide daily life, before being on Facebook, are on the own definitions of reality operated by teachers. Carina, in this perspective, is willing to incorporate the space of Facebook in her own professional role, saying:

> I think that nothing substitutes the space of the classroom, the moment in the classroom, to be there with the student at that moment. But I think it can be a support, yes, you can have social networks like…a…a way, a way to be with your student, to be with him there. They spend so much time – if they spend much time, why can't they spend time working, watching a class, paying attention in a content, in something, researching…I reckon we can think about this (4m 55s).

Facebook, by undoing this separation conditions a reality in which social roles are not necessarily supported by a (school) situation. What happens is that, by occupying the Facebook space, Carina is not necessarily follow the reason of her own assembling, after all, what the students do on Facebook can be different from what they do at school. Thus, the reason for this assembling would only tend to be reestablished as the users contextualized (redefined) what takes places in their pages, from the publications they post. Carina, as other teachers, more specifically, presents herself through contexts published and liked by her circles that, on their turn, apply an interpretative framework of reality that is not necessarily reciprocal[11]. Because of that, Carina expresses the need to regularly define the situation of Facebook in a school relationship:

> At first, I was a bit afraid, that I would post tasks or "…do your exercises…" I thought "this won't work", I was concerned. But on the contrary, all, well most, the number of students who did the [the exercises] was higher than when we demanded [the students to do the exercises]. I teach Biology, so I have two periods a week, I'll only see them in the other week…and to be there…just letting it… "It's there...I've posted there...don't forget". Things worked better. Most did it because they saw it all the time… (6m 20s)

Then, what drastically changes in a space as Facebook regards the agreement between the individuals implied in a certain situation. The assembling, by gathering a specific type of audience, tend to force teachers to constantly determine what is happening in their students' pages. This condition may lead us to question a principle of Goffman sociology that would start from the assumption that only a part of ourselves could be presented to the individuals we meet daily. Goffman (2002) quoted William James to illustrate this sociological concept:

> [...] we may practically say that he [the individual] has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups. Many a youth who is demure enough before his parents and teachers, swears and swaggers like a pirate among his "tough" young friends. We do not show ourselves to our children as to our club companions, to our customers as to the laborers we employ, to our own masters and employers as to our intimate friends.(p.52)

These "individualities" referred by James are created by moments, that is, by presential defined assemblies, supposing a specific and segregated circle of people. Then, individuals are conceived as beings established by parts that could be as numerous as are the moments and

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[11] It is this framing freely operated by the observer that maybe justifies the performative success of selfies, in which the pure and clear exhibition of the face would be subjected to different forms of interpretation that would represent, at the same time, the face of a "son", a "friend", a "relative", an "artist" and so on.

circles in which they are involved. The fact is that this is exactly the type of interactional condition that Facebook communication helps to undo. After all, the moment loses its reference of place and, by losing it, the different circles are led to accept as interaction contents mainly what is published by the observed individual. The social circles can be suppressed by accessing information on someone that they could not phantom. This audience can, finally, see itself faced by the revelation of an event that unfolds in a place to which it would not have immediate access, as on a "trip outside the school" , reminded by Céu in her testimony. The audience can be satisfied then by a reality that lays on the surface of the visible, as they cannot access a reality composed by elements that could only be offered by the locality of interaction[12].

The trump of technical discretion

Our path until here considered Facebook as a space willing to keep educational relations, even if with a margin of undefinition derived from the own contingencies of virtual relations. This condition of apparent normalcy, sometimes, relies on users with different interests, even unreconcilable differences: it would be the case of a teacher that is unwilling to keep a relationship with students online. This forced coexistence, sometimes also cordial, would probably not be possible if the space did not offer something very peculiar, which we will call "technical conditions of discretion". How would discretion be related to the different forms of creating a society on Facebook, or more precisely, with school relationships?

We explain. Dostoiévski (2009) saw something on the Crystal Palace, built in iron and glass for the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 that could also be attributed to Facebook: it was the virtual inexistence of its walls that, being transparent, would supposedly be able to show everything individuals did inside. This condition would be similar to the principle of transparency which Breton (2012) showed to be compatible with the history of communication development through the internet. This principle would be supported in groups of individuals, both technophobes and technophiles, supposing a society whose information would never

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[12] Berger and Luckmann (1967), on the same line, could define a reality *par excellence* also founded in the here and now, whose sensitive data, as gestures, tone of voice, glances, establish a complex material context involving individuals engaged in an interaction. These details contribute to the definition of what is known as real. However, real can also be virtual if we understand that the sensibility of Goffman can be used to clarify not precisely what the individuals *are* but what they *can be* according to the margins of maneuver, always latent in his work and that, though not analyzing a combination between place and space, that would foresee that any assembly would be subjected to receiving a minimal definition on the part of individuals from the senses and information equally or unequally distributed.

scape a great tracking system. The concerning issue becomes, therefore, "who" operates this strange system: when the defenders of the mystery, the secret, etc. would tend to oppose it, other, defending objectivity and the revelation of things, would exalt its value.

What seems to be sociologically interesting refers exactly to the threat represented by these systems to individual autonomy. Autonomy, after all, would tend to be subjugated by information databases that would register individuals' actions to the point of predicting their steps and consequences. Individuals then would have nothing to hide as all would already be incorporated to a system and– as in Dostoiévski's (2009) impression on the palace at which "you can never stick out your tongue furtively nor make a rude gesture, even with your fist hidden away"– discretion would not be a possibility of existence. In this sense, Luísa (17m 05s), as if school visibility operated on her over Facebook was something undesirable, show a certain indecision regarding the place students can occupy in this relation: " I don't know what to do…I have students on my Facebook, I don't know if I unfriend them. I'm always in doubt. Because there is the personal thing, my personal life is open to the students as well".

Technical discretion can then be suggested as a resource of school social interactions, however, always depending on its use by individuals. Simmel (2006), especially, talked about the role of discretion as something that would benefit social maintenance, an aptitude which individuals would use to define their situations towards others. Its role, as the "sense of tact", would be to establish "the limits of individuals' impulses, the emphasis on the I and the spiritual and extreme ambitions, perhaps being the specific action that supports the legitimacy of the other" (Simmel, 2006, p. 66). Human abilities to manage distance and proximity remain, then, impossible without the techniques of discretion, or if Facebook does not prevent that the principle of transparency is generalized in its own space. Politeness, circumspection, discretion why would they not be a performative way to establish a relationship?

Céu, using technical resources, gives a report in which discretion appears more evident. She talks about the creation of a "double", that is, a second avatar that, in parallel, foresees an exclusive relation with her audience of students in her personal page.

> I had no student on my Facebook, nor in Orkut, I had no students. "Do you have it? No!" because I used it to talk with my friends. Then, this year, when I started, three high school classes, juniors, all of them had a group. I saw on my colleague's Facebook that there was a "class 2008", "class 2009", "class 2010". I said to myself " it is a communication channel. I'll try it. So I created a Facebook only for my students. Then I added than and it is working as work communication channel, because we see each other only once a week" (14m 18s).

Discretion should be understood here as trump, and it is strange not to accept that different forms of use are possible, be it a special Facebook function or devices in which it is installed. This would be the case of message that can be read by the recipient without the sender knowing it– as well as the lurkers who read the conversations on a collective group without showing their opinions, supposing they are going unnoticed. The lack of space to maneuvers as this can lead us to think that it would be much harder to accept on Facebook people with whom we have certain reservations (as accepting requests of people that we do not really consider friends and, thus, we label "restricted "). After all, discrete individuals are not those that are least worried with other might think or feel about their expressions? These people can act in silence, and unnoticed, as a man who, eager for the visual pleasure of women's bodies at the beach, gives himself the right of quick glances as a form of coercion over his desire[13].

Discretion as an interactional resource is not, however, exclusively technical. Solene, for instance, instead of operating selectively over a possibly immense panel of buttons offered by Facebook, uses more personal solutions, saying: " I policy myself…because I also want to like silly things from time to time, then I end up holding myself back" (17m 20s). The possible impressions that school public can produce are shown by Solene through her own expressions. She, as other users, does not use the automatic mechanisms of discretion, and its more prone to find personal solutions in her management of distance, especially on the more "public" spaces of Facebook.

On the table below, we present three spaces of communication, the "public", the "collective", and the "private", which belong to the broader space of Facebook. The technical conditions of discretion can be measured by the number of mechanisms which transmit automatic information on the interactions. These are unevenly distributed among these spaces that thus condition a greater or smaller number of information exchanges among individuals. Its distribution is more effectively in spaces as "inbox" which, on its turn, suppose a more "one-

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[13] The use of discretion is also a common ability among pickpockets that, sensitively and in a special way, rob with no use of violence. Their robberies tend to be less traumatic and it is a *way to protect the other* that discretion can be seen as a virtue even if in illicit or reprehensible practices. .

to-one" relation than a "one-to-many". Inboxes generally suppose personalized relations, as the "other" represents someone particularly meaningful.

Table 1 – Facebook spaces followed by their variations regarding technical conditions of discretion

Space		Expression	Impression	
		Time the message was sent	Message received and seen	Time the message was seen
Public	Wall	Yes	No	No
Collective	Group	Yes	Yes	No
Private	Inbox	Yes	Yes	Yes

Through the table we can also see how the expectations of reciprocity vary among the spaces, that is, the more the spaces are composed by transparency mechanisms (as the private space) the more then tend to test the consonance between the contacts. The existence of a technical transparency is exactly what would condition the following question: "why didn't you answer my message, as I know you've received and seen it?". Individuals aligned with others, after all, would have nothing to hid, so transparency in private spaces would not be seen as a problem to continuously test the authenticity of relations.

This performative alignment, however, is also based on what is "not-said", secrets that are kept by Facebook's discretion itself, as the automatic answers bellow that, among others, are given to users:

Figure 1 – Two messages from "Time" which is responsible for Facebook's privacy

do autor
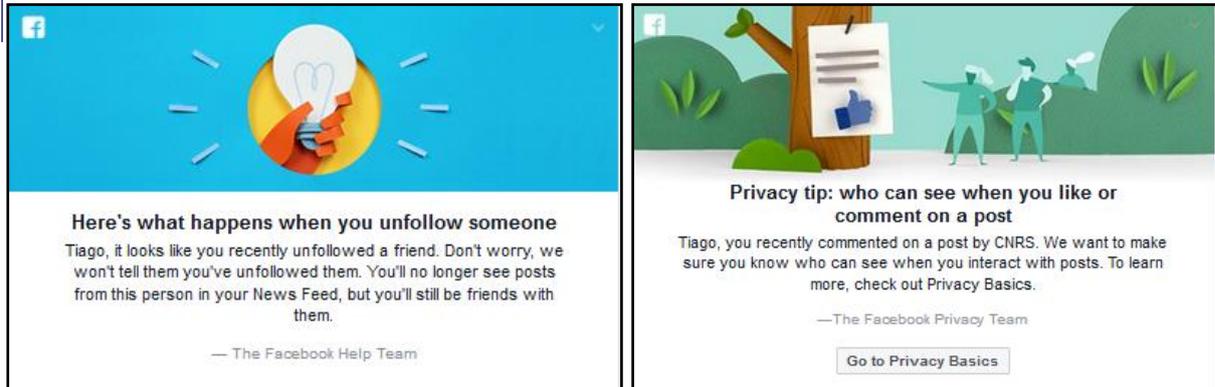
Source: author's personal Facebook page

These reminders, as technical forms to keep privacy, though in a larger or smaller degree, ensure a relation of distance between users, they can also be obsolete hen teachers are in a framework of identity revindications. Teachers can, after all, find themselves in the acceptable condition to consider they have nothing to hide – including "silly things" –, as the following example of Mariana. This way, Facebook,

> is an opportunity we have, and we can't miss this opportunity to teach our students and everyone to be respected by what we are. I don't see this difference....like...I am not "a teacher" and a "not a teacher". I am me, Mariana. I am. You know? (17m 38s).

The demand of a common value – the "respect to which Mariana refers – could be translated in terms of social formations, as a "team" (Goffman, 1959) in which players support one another. Mariana claims then new peers– her students – inviting them to take part in a common principle of social cohesion. The tale " The Loss of a Halo" by Baudelaire (1996) sheds a light on Mariana's testimony. In it, there is a situation in which two characters are in front of a *mauvais lieu* (in the English version " a den of iniquity"), insinuating a brothel. The fact is that, to one of them, the meeting is taken as a surprise "What! You here, too, old pal?". The other, on his turn, tries to ease the situation, claiming his right to be just one other person and thus doing "whatever nasty things I like, indulging my vices just as lesser mortals do.". He would like then to enjoy the night as if he were someone unnoticed, valuing to a certain extent the role of anonymity.

Baudelaire seems to be representing the obscure areas of desire which can exist in unexpected individuals, as well as the demand for discretion inherent to modernity. Discretion would be a way to detour observers' eyes willing to make objective definitions. This condition would only be possible as if the observer clean the slate of the protagonist's "insignias", making it acceptable and common the fact of frequenting a *mauvais lieu* thanks to the "team" formed by both. The discretion reclaimed by the observed-protagonist can be considered then a way to have an advantage on the eyes of the observers, that creates a solidarity bond with the observed, rebalancing the interactional game.

Therefore, Facebook interactions do not scape the rule of a *dramatic* relationship between the I and the other. Goffman would probably not be contrary to an inflection on his analysis framework, as all he had considered as physical establishments or places could be added to the notion of space as pendular motion of impressions and expressions is still working. Goffman, however, has never spoken on "technical mechanisms of discretion" but of circumspection, discipline, the team spirit of a group. The fact is that on "spaces", discretion is highly conditioned by technical devices– as it would be in the daily life the use of devices such as binoculars, mirrors, or keyholes.

Final remarks

The analysis done here presupposed a dynamic relation between "place" and "space", aiming to highlight the state of local de-situation that promote interactions between individuals sometimes in a state of mobility: traveling, working, eating, resting, etc. This de-situation is what allowed the advancement towards an arrangement of "assembling different social circles" that contrasts with other forms of daily sociability: meetings, ceremonies, classes, etc. These assembling can be considered the main reason why teachers perceive this injunction of managing a relation of proximity and distance with social circles that were previously separated (as they were locally situated).

The peculiarity of Facebook was then in forming a communication of "one-to-many" so that the interactions counted as a constant pendular movement of expressions and expressions commonly distinguished. Goffman (2002) considered impression management a way to exercise autonomy, as it supposed an individual capable of defining himself thanks to

the control he had over the look of the other. The look of other on Facebook is still, virtually, heterogenous and, because of that, it is possible an inflection on the sociologist's perspective. This would be the case of privileging an analysis not on the manipulation of the impression of the other, but on the management of the expression of oneself, revealing practices of anticipating impressions induced by mechanisms of transparency.

The relation between a sociology born on the second half of the 20th century and an educational problem on the 21st perhaps is only possible thanks to conceptual re-articulations, conditioning then a certain scientific renovation. On its turn, contemporary sociology of education has the task to analyze, and value, current social components that make the relations of proximity and distance an object worthy of scientific attention. The lack, for example, of a history of education that focus this object, certainly makes this study harder, but not impossible, as empirical sources on the management of teachers' images can be found in ethnographic, cinematographic, and journalistic sources. These materials maybe condition studies in which the relations of proximity and distance also say something about charisma, authority, and credibility involved in teachers' roles.

The analysis on the relations of proximity and distance are not related to the moral assumptions that would frame the pedagogical relations within certain limits. What is important to know is how these relations would be possible without discrediting them. What for a teacher would represent a relation of distance, with no accessibility, for the other could mean a relation of proximity with no intimacy, maintaining both plausible pedagogical bonds. The fatality of a discredited pedagogical relation, temporarily shaken by a misunderstanding online, would require a sociology of daily educational life able to analyze not only the tension, but also the personal or institutional resolutions that, probably, would reestablish the order in the interactions between teachers and students.

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