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Gill Best
Victoria University, gill.best@vu.edu.au

Darko Hajzler
Victoria University, darko.hajzler@vu.edu.au

Geri Pancini
Victoria University, Geri.Pancini@vu.edu.au

Dan Tout
Victoria University, daniel.tout@vu.edu.au

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Being Dumped From Facebook: Negotiating Issues of Boundaries and Identity in an Online Social Networking Space

Gill Best, Darko Hajzler, Geri Pancini and Dan Tout

ABSTRACT

While Facebook, the world's most popular Social Networking Site (SNS), has been warmly welcomed by many commentators and practitioners within the educational community, its effects, impacts and implications arguably remain insufficiently understood. Through the provision of an anecdotal and experiential account of the authors' attempt to introduce Facebook into an existing Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) student peer mentoring program at Victoria University (VU) in Melbourne, this paper aims to explore and thereby explicate some of the issues inevitably arising in relation to the adoption and utilisation of social networking technologies in educational settings. While the authors' experiences of their own 'Facebook experiment' were somewhat ambiguous and ambivalent, this paper is intended to contribute to the ever-expanding body of literature concerned with the use of Facebook in education and to thereby assist in improving educators' requisite understanding of both the potential positives and pitfalls involved. On the basis of the authors' experience, it is suggested that careful consideration as well as explicit and iterative articulation and negotiation surrounding issues of staff and student expectations, boundaries and identity management in an online environment comprise the minimum requirements for the successful implementation of social networking into student peer mentoring programs.

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a largely anecdotal exploration of the authors' experiences in introducing Facebook, the world's most popular Social Networking Site (SNS), into an existing Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) student peer mentoring program at Victoria University (VU) in Melbourne. Specifically, it reflects on the complexities and contingencies arising as a result of their attempt to extend an already emerging community of practice arising amongst the program's staff and student team into the online realm as an additional method of, and space for, communication outside scheduled mentoring, briefing and debriefing sessions. Despite the apparent early success of this experiment, only one month after Facebook's initial introduction to the program, the two staff members directly involved had their access to the team's Facebook group revoked as a result of a unilateral decision by the mentors that the staff members' continuing presence was restricting student-student interactions on the site. By offering an anecdotal account of the authors' subjective experiences of being 'dumped' from the Facebook group they had consciously and intentionally introduced into what they perceived as a shared and collaborative community of practice, the primary objective of this paper is to explore and thereby illuminate some of the dilemmas and difficulties university staff members must

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inevitably confront when attempting to utilise primarily student-focused technologies to support them in their educational work.

While the authors' experiences of their own 'Facebook experiment' were somewhat ambiguous and ambivalent, it is hoped that by sharing these experiences and thereby adding to the burgeoning literature of both an anecdotal and research-based nature surrounding the implementation of Facebook in educational settings, this paper may contribute to increasing educators' essential understanding of both the positives and pitfalls involved. As Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011, p. 26) suggest, as "educators will be more and more inclined to incorporate Web 2.0 technologies, specifically Facebook … it is important that they understand how to do so effectively and also in a manner appropriate for their students." In retrospect, from the authors' experience, it will be suggested that careful consideration and open, explicit and ongoing articulation and negotiation concerning issues of student and staff expectations, boundaries and identity management in an online context comprise the minimum necessary requirements for the successful introduction or implementation of social networking into student peer mentoring programs.

Peer Learning Theory

Boud et al. (2001, p. 4) define peer learning as "students learning from and with each other in both formal and informal ways." Forming part of a general pedagogical push towards student- rather than teacher-centred learning, peer learning has at its heart the principle that students can help other students in an effective way to support and improve their learning. Fundamentally, student peer learning concerns students deciding what they want to know and other students in turn offering that knowledge in a consciously constructed, non-threatening way, turning hitherto teacher-directed modes and methods of learning into those that are student-controlled. The presence of a student rather than a teacher as a source of knowledge makes student peer learning a powerful way to learn and allows different sorts of interactions and learning to occur. This has led van der Meer and Scott (2008, p. 73) to call for "shifting the balance from an instruction focus of learning support staff to facilitating or supporting peer learning."

Peer learning is deeply rooted in socio-constructivism, specifically in Vygotsky's (1978) key concept of the "zone of proximal development"; that is, "the distance between the actual development as determined by individual problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). However, as Boud et al. (2001, p. 3) point out, "[p]eer learning is not a single, undifferentiated educational strategy. It encompasses a broad sweep of activities." Such is the case at Victoria University (VU) in Melbourne, where a variety of peer learning and student peer mentoring strategies have been combined within the overarching strategy of Students Supporting Students Learning (SSSL).

This transformative change has involved focusing on student peer mentoring, cooperative learning and collaborative learning programs and is founded on the notion that if learning to be a tertiary student consists of learning new practices and strategies through "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), then the advice of more experienced "near peers" will often be more appropriate and attuned to "where a student is at" than that provided by expert academic support staff. In the words of Longfellow et al. (2008, p. 95): "whilst teachers may be experts in their subject area, students are experts at being students, and thus are arguably better placed to lead novice students towards becoming expert students."

The Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) Program at VU

As the original pre-cursor to VU's overarching SSSL strategy, a student peer mentoring program has been running in one particular unit each semester since 2003 using an adapted version of the established PASS model (Martin & Arendale, 1992). The primary modifications to this model have involved the assignation of two Student Mentors to each PASS group rather than one and, until 2010 when student payments were first introduced, the granting of academic credit in place of cash payments as reward for the work of Student Mentors. Other rewards granted to Student Mentors have included certificates of participation; the opportunity to undertake the elective subject Business Integrated Learning (BIL), in which Mentors obtain partial credit for their mentoring activities; as well as specialised input from staff in Student Career Development. Student Mentors are requested to attend half-hourly briefing and debriefing sessions each week, while email provides the main form of communication outside these times. In addition, some Student Mentors volunteer to act as e-Mentors on the unit's Blackboard site and are rostered on for one hour per week to assist with student queries on WebCT.

The PASS program in question has consistently proven to be a successful strategy for increasing both the social and academic engagement of students involved and in 2010 was recognised by an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning. While the limitations of self-reporting data must be openly and explicitly acknowledged, over the eight years for which the PASS program has been running, an average of 91% of students have either agreed or strongly agreed that the program increased their knowledge in the subject, while an average of 88% have either agreed or strongly agreed that the program improved their confidence in the subject. In addition, students participating in the program have consistently attained significantly higher pass rates and average results for the subject than those who did not attend any mentoring sessions. However, as is inevitably the case with all such forms of learning support intervention, there is and has always been room for further improvements and adaptations to be made.

With this in mind, in 2008 several changes to the program were instituted, including modifications to existing staffing arrangements and alterations to the program's structure and methods of communication. Firstly, due primarily to workload issues and departmental staff changes, a new staff member (assigned the alias Jane for the purposes of this paper) joined the PASS team, taking the total number of staff involved with the program to four, including: the PASS Supervisor; the Unit Coordinator; the Manager of Counselling Services, who was involved in Mentor training; and Jane, who was brought in to assist with training sessions and to facilitate briefing and debriefing sessions with the Student Mentors. Outside of these sessions, Jane also acted as a contact person for any issues the Student Mentors wished to discuss.

Developing a Community of Practice Model

Following Jane's commencement within her new role, she immediately initiated several amendments to the program team's communication methods and processes with the overarching and self-conscious intention of fostering and facilitating the development of a genuine, though informal, Community of Practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991) amongst the combined student and staff team. In Wenger's (2006, n.p.) more recent and explicit definition, communities of practice are defined as comprising "people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour…In a nutshell: communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." Communities of practice may be primarily distinguished from other groups on the basis of three characteristics: an "identity defined by a shared domain of interest"; a participatory sense of community; and "a shared practice" (Wenger, 2006, n.p.).

As indicated in the introduction above, both communities of practice and peer learning share similar conceptions of learning as social, situated, mediated and negotiated through activities and practices (Longfellow et al., 2008). Jane's adoption of an approach intended to facilitate the development of a community of practice amongst the student peer mentoring team therefore appeared a logical and practical combination of these two pedagogical approaches. Importantly, although as "fundamentally self-organizing systems" (Wenger, 1998a, p. 3), the "organic, spontaneous, and informal nature of communities of practice makes them resistant to supervision and interference," it nevertheless remains the case that they can "benefit from cultivation" (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p. 140-143). Proceeding on this basis, Jane instituted several changes to both the location and style of communication between the staff and students involved in the program, in order to recognise and encourage the further development of an already emergent community of practice amongst the group.

Firstly, the venue within which weekly briefing and debriefing sessions were conducted was relocated to bring this into closer proximity with the classrooms used for mentoring sessions, in order to improve accessibility to the support provided as well as to increase the sense of community amongst the Student Mentors themselves. Secondly, Jane began to provide snacks and drinks for Student Mentors at briefing and debriefing sessions to encourage a relaxed and informal atmosphere and facilitate supportive, informative discussions within the group. An immediate increase and improvement in both session attendance and participation by Student Mentors in conversations about mentoring practice was apparent as a result of these changes, indicating a positive shift towards Bickford & Wright's (2006, pp. 4.2-4.3) vision of a learning community. In their conception, such a community exists "only when its members interact in a meaningful way that deepens their understanding of each other and leads to learning…in a community, the learners—including faculty—are enriched by collective meaning-making, mentorship, encouragement, and an understanding of the perspectives and unique qualities of an increasingly diverse membership."

Alongside these changes to staffing arrangements and communication strategies, a new initiative known as the Senior Mentor program was introduced, involving the employment of two students with extensive experience as PASS Mentors for six hours per week throughout the year, both within and outside the university's teaching periods. The purpose of the Senior Mentor role was, and still remains, to assist the PASS Supervisor with the development, implementation and evaluation of PASS and other student peer mentoring programs at VU, through their involvement in such tasks as: the collection and collation of evaluation data; production of unit evaluation reports; provision of student feedback and input; development of Student Mentor preparation and training programs; and external site visits to observe other PASS and non-PASS mentoring programs in action.

Senior Mentors as Wengerian Brokers

As both students and staff of the university, Senior Mentors necessarily operate somewhat anomalously and ambiguously within the liminal institutional "contact zone" (Pratt, 1992) between the traditionally delineated realms of student and staff space and practices. In this sense and in relation to the emergent community of practice amongst the PASS program team encouraged by Jane, Senior Mentors were therefore envisaged as potentially fulfilling the role of what Wenger has termed a 'broker'.

In Wenger's (1998b, p. 109) formulation, "[b]rokers are able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination, and - if they are good brokers - open new possibilities for meaning." The inherently complex role of brokering "involves processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives…[and] requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice, mobilize attention, and address conflicting interests" (Wenger, 1998b, p. 109). While brokers are necessarily

subject to the competing imperatives of becoming "full members" or "being rejected as intruders," "their contributions lie precisely in being neither in nor out"; the role of broker "therefore requires an ability to manage carefully the coexistence of membership and non-membership, yielding enough distance to bring a different perspective, but also enough legitimacy to be listened to" (Wenger, 1998b, p. 110).

Brokering the Community of Practice into the Virtual Realm

Since the program's inception, the Senior Mentors have been regarded as an important element in the combined staff and student team and their ideas and suggestions welcomed by the existing staff involved with the PASS program. Consequently, when the Senior Mentors suggested the introduction of the Social Networking Site (SNS) Facebook as an additional method of communication and potential means of increasing and improving existing interactions between Student Mentors, Senior Mentors and staff, the suggestion was met with enthusiasm by the other team members. In light of Jane's attempts to foster and facilitate an informal community of practice amongst the program team, the extension of informal, social modes of communication between the staff and students involved in the program into the online realm appeared a natural and potentially useful progression.

While Jane and the PASS Supervisor, the two staff members directly involved with the introduction of Facebook into the PASS program, were themselves what Prensky (2001) has termed "digital immigrants", defined somewhat problematically in opposition to an artificially homogenised generation of "digital natives" (Selwyn, 2009b), the Senior Mentors were enthusiastic about the prospect of introducing Facebook to the staff members as well as to the program more generally. Similarly, the two staff members welcomed the Senior Mentors' suggestion warmly, anticipating that Facebook would become a relatively straightforward online extension of the already emergent community of practice self-consciously established and encouraged amongst the program team. Furthermore, it was expected that the adoption of Facebook as an additional method of communication would provide an additional space for Student Mentors to share session ideas and resources and to engage with the program outside other scheduled session times, thereby increasing their social integration and engagement (Tinto, 1994).

While Selwyn (2009b) has recently cautioned against the artificial homogenisation of the so-called "net generation" as "digital natives" and the resultant dichotomisation between this generation and the "'often Web-illiterate' adults in their lives" (Keen, cited in Selwyn, 2009b, p. 369), this remains an accurate characterisation in this instance at least. As relative novices with digital technologies in general and with Facebook in particular, both Jane and the PASS Supervisor perhaps naively assumed that the introduction of Facebook into the program would proceed unproblematically as an extension of existing modes of communication into the online realm. On the basis of multiple research findings indicating that Facebook functions for most students primarily as an online extension of existing social networks rather than an imperative towards their expansion (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Lampe et al., 2006; Selwyn, 2009a), this appears to have been a relatively reasonable expectation at that time.

However, as the following discussion will attempt to illustrate, despite the brokering role adopted by the Senior Mentors in attempting to bridge the divide not only between students and staff but also correspondingly between digital natives and digital immigrants, boundaries that had previously remained either non-existent or at least imperceptible within existing face-to-face interactions were soon rendered visible and therefore unavoidable. While Facebook has been welcomed by many educators on the grounds that "it allows us to go where they [students] already are; it is an environment that students are already comfortable with" (Mack et al., 2007, n.p.), the unwitting incursion by staff into an online forum which from its very inception was student-owned

and predominantly, though now decreasingly, student-populated (Karl & Peluchette, 2011; Roblyer et al., 2010) functioned to expose boundaries that in the shared physical space of the university may have been allowed to remain invisible.

Social Networking Sites and the Read/Write Web

Tim Berners-Lee (cited in Arenas, 2008, p. 54), the original inventor of the World Wide Web, initially conceptualised "The Web" more as "a social creation than a technical one. I designed it for a social effect—to help people work together—and not as a technical toy. The ultimate goal of the Web is to support and improve our web-like existence in the world." In this sense, the emergence of what have been termed Web 2.0 technologies or, perhaps more accurately, the read/write web - in which "the users interact as part of a social network…[and] where a very complex knowledge network is possible as originally articulated in Wenger's communities of practice" (Arenas, 2008, p. 54), may be best conceptualised less as a radical reinvention of the Web itself, as the term Web 2.0 seems to suggest, but rather as the technological fulfilment of its creator's original, socially-oriented intentions.

Berners-Lee's original vision of "a system in which sharing what you knew or thought should be as easy as learning what someone else knew" (cited in Arenas, 2008, p. 54) has indeed come closer to reality with the advent of the read/write web, an evolution more of a social than a technological nature (Wesch, 2009). This transformation of the read-only web as "a very large multimedia content repository" into the read/write web as "a truly interactive environment" (Arenas, 2008, p. 55) has been precipitated to a significant extent by the emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as MySpace and Facebook define SNSs as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). boyd and Ellison (2007, n.p.).

In addition to the affinities between the read/write web and communities of practice on the basis of their similarly social, informal and participatory natures (Arenas, 2008), the fundamentally social character of SNSs in general, combined with Facebook's creation both by and for students (Roblyer et al., 2010), have led some commentators to herald Facebook as mirroring "much of what we know to be good models of learning, in that they are collaborative and encourage active participatory role [sic] for users" (Maloney, cited in Selwyn, 2009a, p. 158).

Furthermore, Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011, p. 19) have drawn a direct connection between social networking's support of "social interaction between individuals" and its potential to promote the "active learning, social learning, and student knowledge construction within a student-centered, constructivist environment" advocated by Vygotskian-derived socio-constructivist pedagogical approaches. In relation to student peer mentoring, the social affordances of SNSs such as Facebook for connecting students with Vygotsky's "more knowledgeable others within students' zones of proximal development" (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011, pp. 19-20) would appear to render Facebook the perfect vehicle for transferring and extending existing communities of practice centred around peer learning into the virtual realm. However, as the burgeoning body of literature concerned with addressing the issues surrounding the introduction of Facebook into educational settings makes clear, this process is far from straightforward.

Facebook as *the* Social Networking Site

Facebook was first created in 2004 by then 23-year-old Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg (Roblyer et al., 2010, p. 135) as a means of digitising the "legendary (Harvard) freshman-year 'facebook,'" allowing "students not only to gawk at one another's photos but also to flirt, network [and] interact" (Hirschorn, cited in Roblyer et al., 2010, p. 135). Despite a

recent challenge from Google+ which, interestingly, attempted to reinstate boundaries into the social networking system through its 'circles' concept, Facebook remains by far the world's most popular SNS (Dougherty, 2011). In fact, having doubled in membership from 400 million active users in April 2010 (Karl & Peluchette, 2011) to 800 million active users as of October 2011, Facebook is "now as big as the entire Internet was in 2004," when Facebook was first created (Pingdom, 2011, n.p.).

Importantly, while throughout the period from 2004 to 2005 Facebook was progressively opened up firstly to students of other colleges and subsequently to high schools across America (Roblyer et al., 2010), users were still required to sign up using an educational email address ending with .edu until 2006 (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). As a consequence, for much of its existence Facebook has been primarily populated by students, with surveys conducted in 2006 and 2008 respectively finding that 90% and 84% of undergraduate students were members (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011, p. 20). However, since Facebook first began to open itself up to those outside the university network from 2005 onwards, the undergraduate student demographic of 18-24-year-olds now comprises less than half of all Facebook users, while the fastest growing demographics are those aged 30 years and over (Karl & Peluchette, 2011).

Today's students are therefore increasingly likely to receive "friend requests from sources that are outside their regular network of friends including parents, professors, and, in some cases, employers" (Karl & Peluchette, 2011, p. 214). This situation raises serious and complex issues concerning privacy and professionalism on the part of university staff, the management of staff and student identities, the maintenance or transversal of boundaries between staff and students and the power relations inherent within these relationships. As Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011, p. 20) note in relation to student-staff interactions on Facebook, "the student response…is not always positive; the literature provides a mix of positive and negative reports involving student responses to their teachers joining Facebook."

For example, Hewitt and Forte (2006) reported that one third of the students they surveyed "did not believe that faculty should be present on the Facebook [sic] at all," with some respondents raising "concerns about identity management and privacy issues." Similarly, Karl and Peluchette (2011, p. 220) found that "a considerable number of students agreed they would feel nervous, worried, suspicious, and concerned if they received a friend request from a professor." Somewhat more equivocally, Mazer et al. (2007, p. 10) reported that 33% of students regarded faculty use of Facebook as "somewhat inappropriate," while 35% found it "somewhat appropriate." However, their study also concluded that "high teacher self-disclosure…may lead students to higher levels of anticipated motivation and affective learning and lend to a more comfortable classroom climate" (p. 12). In a more positive finding, Roblyer et al. (2010, p. 138) report - on the basis of a self-confessedly small-scale survey - that "students seem much more open to the idea of using Facebook instructionally than do faculty," while Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011, p. 27) conclude that students found "passive behaviors more appropriate than active behaviors" on the part of faculty staff.

More anecdotally and on the basis of her personal experiences exploring and reflecting upon the deep "challenges and opportunities" Facebook presents for faculty interactions with students, Schwartz (2010, p. 42) suggests that it might now be appropriately regarded "as part of the larger commons, a space in which we stay connected. Facebook, instant messaging, and the like keep my metaphorical door open. And that increases the potential for real-time, face-to-face conversations that are rich with connection, depth, risk-taking, and growth." However, while she sees potential for student-staff interactions on Facebook to fulfil many of the "five good things" comprising a successful "mentoring episode" according to Fletcher and Ragins' "relational mentoring" model "increased energy

and well-being, potential to take action, increased knowledge of self and others, a boost to self-esteem, and an interest in more connection" (Schwartz, 2010, pp. 41-42). Schwartz simultaneously reiterates a recommendation for the establishment and respect of boundaries to guide such interactions.

Staff Invaders in the Student SNS Realm

The complex, contradictory and equivocal research findings outlined above were most certainly echoed in the experiences of the two staff members directly involved with the introduction of Facebook into the VU PASS program as an additional means of communication amongst the staff and student team. As noted above, both Jane and the PASS Supervisor were at the time relative novices, or digital immigrants, in relation to Facebook and were therefore reliant upon the Senior Mentors to act as brokers and translators in assisting them with setting up and populating their personal Facebook profiles. However, the staff members both enjoyed the experience of being mentored and soon found themselves becoming members of various collectives through Facebook's groups and pages, playing games and connecting with other personal and professional contacts online. They both found their initial introductions into the realm of social networking simultaneously enjoyable and rewarding, with Jane commenting that she felt as though she had "moved into a new era."

At the same time, one of the Senior Mentors volunteered to take responsibility for establishing and administering a 'closed' Facebook group for the PASS program team, as would be subsequently recommended in the *Facebook for Educators* guide (Phillips et al., 2011, p. 11) as "a great way for students to work on collaborative projects with each other" and with faculty, especially since "you don't need to be Facebook friends with someone to interact with them in a group." In order to assist with the transfer of the existing community of practice already emerging amongst the program team into the online realm, the Senior Mentor responsible for the group attended the mentor training session for Semester Two, 2008. During the session, in addition to assisting with other elements of the training, they introduced the program's Facebook group to the Student Mentors, explaining its purpose as an additional space for communication amongst the staff and student team outside scheduled session times. Many of the Student Mentors joined the group immediately during the training session, while the rest of the student team followed shortly afterwards.

The two staff members soon began to post comments and suggestions to the Facebook group, in line with their existing roles within the program; these related primarily to learning strategies, administrative and procedural matters, as well as to any other discussions that were taking place amongst the group at the time. In effect, both the style and content of student-staff interaction and communication within the online arena of the Facebook group appeared - as the staff members had initially hoped and anticipated - to represent nothing more than the natural extension and continuation of their existing face-to-face forms of interaction into a different communicative context. The two staff members' impression that their intentional extension of the already emerging community of practice into the online realm was succeeding was further reinforced by the appearance of multiple 'friend' requests from Student Mentors involved in the program on their personal Facebook profiles. In somewhat unintentional accordance with Teclehaimanot and Hickman's (2011, p. 27) recommendation that faculty adopt a passive approach towards their personal interactions with students on Facebook, Jane and the PASS Supervisor accepted these requests yet reserved their active participation and communication for the program team's Facebook group.

The Students Strike Back

However, after what had appeared - at least from the two staff members' perspectives - to represent a successful month-long experiment in online interaction and communication

amongst the PASS program team utilising the Facebook group, both staff members found that their access to the group had been revoked without warning or notification. Neither staff member had been advised that they were to be removed from the group and both similarly experienced their involuntary and unanticipated expulsion as surprising and somewhat confronting. Following a week of intermittent yet consistently unsuccessful attempts to regain access to the group, the staff members raised the issue with the Senior Mentors and were informed that a decision had been taken that there would be more activity within the group without a continuing staff presence. Both staff members commented on their surprise at having had their access to the group withdrawn without prior consultation, to which the Senior Mentors in turn responded with their own sense of surprise at the staff members' reactions. The Senior Mentors apologised for any offence they had caused, however they did not consider the staff's lack of continuing access to the group to be an issue and had not anticipated the staff's reaction to the move. From this point on, the staff continued to be excluded from the Facebook group and relied upon the Senior Mentors to fulfil the role of informant rather than broker in reporting on the level and success of the Facebook group within the then exclusively student-populated online CoP.

At the end of semester, the two Senior Mentors compiled a brief report in which they presented data indicating that, at least from the students' perspective, the Facebook experiment had "been very positive" and had fulfilled the functions of Social Networking Sites envisaged by Joinson (2008, p. 1027) in "providing social and emotional support, information resources and ties to other people." For example, the Senior Mentors reported that the Facebook group's "wall was used mostly for social bonding, but mentoring posts were also high," noting that "as the semester went on, and the mentors formed friendships with each other the number of posts increased. This further emphasises the importance of team building activities in the mentor program to ensure that all mentors feel part of a team." However, the Senior Mentors also reported that "the conversation did not begin to flow naturally until after the teaching staff left the group," a comment which raises significant issues concerning expectations, boundaries and identity management in a shared, collaborative online social space such as Facebook.

There were no expressions of surprise or dissatisfaction on the part of the other Student Mentors following the removal of staff access to the Facebook group. Perhaps even more significantly, at the time of Facebook's initial introduction into the program, the staff had not fully understood or appreciated that their presence within the group would or could impact upon either the nature, style or content of student-student interaction and communication within the online space. In hindsight, however, it is plainly evident that the staff's presence on Facebook meant something vastly different to the Student and Senior Mentors than to the staff members themselves. The two staff members involved, experienced educators with decades of aggregate experience, had inadvertently created a complex and potentially conflictual situation.

Expectations and the Psychological Contract

While expectations in student peer mentoring programs are often reified through position descriptions, role specifications and the establishment of mentoring contracts or agreements, the expectations that remain the most problematic are generally those left unspecified and assumed implicitly. These comprise what Carroll and Gilbert (2006) label the "psychological contract", referring to the tacit and often unarticulated understandings regarding how aims, intentions and activities will be achieved within the mentoring situation, as well as to the ground rules for managing the interpersonal relationships and interactions involved. When the underlying aspects of a psychological contract are explicitly addressed and thereby utilised towards the clarification of expectations on the part of those involved in a given mentoring relationship, a "facilitative environment in which work can be discussed" can be achieved (Carroll & Gilbert, 2006, p. 28). However, in

the absence of such explicit articulation and clarification concerning parties' individual and situational expectations, there arises significant potential for misunderstandings to occur.

In accordance with the recommendations of both Lazovsky and Shimoni (2006) and Carroll and Gilbert (2006), the expression and establishment of an adequately overt and unambiguous psychological contract should be regarded as a dynamic process rather than a static event. Particularly within the contingent context of a student peer mentoring situation, this process should be considered as comprising an iterative cycle of summative evaluation and (re)negotiation, each reassessment taking into consideration the constantly changing experiences and expectations of both the students and staff involved. Clearly, in the situation we have described, each of the parties involved with the introduction of Facebook into the VU PASS program as an additional space for interaction and communication possessed significantly differing expectations concerning the identities, boundaries and relationships involved. In retrospect, it appears self-evident that more open and extensive communication and negotiation between the two staff members and the Senior Mentors regarding their mutual intentions and expectations relating to the introduction of Facebook into the PASS program may have served towards the establishment of a more sufficient psychological contract, thereby avoiding the issues which ended up eventuating.

Boundaries, Brokers and Identity in the Staff-Student Relationship

In addition to the level of misunderstanding arising between the staff members and the Senior Mentors as a result of their mismatched expectations and consequently unarticulated and unfulfilled psychological contract concerning the extension of the existing community of practice into the online realm, the issue of boundary maintenance and transversal was similarly fundamental to the circumstances under discussion. From the staff members' perspective, the community of practice they had been attempting to recognise, encourage and extend through the various changes instituted to the program's structure and methods of communication, while primarily student-focused and student-directed, was nevertheless intended to incorporate them as experienced though relatively peripheral participants and facilitators. However, it appears in retrospect that from the Senior Mentors' perspective the same community of practice was envisaged as existing primarily amongst the Student Mentors themselves, a group with which they evidently identified themselves most strongly.

Once again, it is possible that this issue could potentially have been addressed and overcome by means of more extensive and explicit communication between the staff members and the Senior Mentors concerning the staff members' underlying intentions in establishing and extending the community of practice framework through the introduction of Facebook into the PASS program. However, it also seems possible that while the Student and Senior Mentors alike were comfortable with the already established identities and boundaries existing within their limited and scheduled face-to-face encounters and interactions with the staff members involved in the mentoring program, the latter's arrival in the social space of Facebook was interpreted as an incursion or transgression by the staff members into the essentially student-owned and -populated space of Facebook. As the literature cited above suggests, there appears to exist a significant level of ambivalence amongst the current undergraduate generation of so-called digital natives concerning the ever-increasing levels of intergenerational digital migration taking place in the contemporary context. If this is indeed the case, then the actions undertaken by the Senior Mentors to protect what they regarded as *their* social networking space seem somewhat more explicable.

Furthermore, if, as Selwyn (2009a, p. 171) suggests, "Facebook has been fast established as a prominent arena where students can become versed in the 'identity politics' (and in

Erving Goffman's term 'facework') of being a student," then the Senior Mentors' confident and uncompromising defence of the "space where the 'role conflict' that students often experience in their relationships with university work, teaching staff, academic conventions and expectations can be worked through" is both understandable and arguably both valid and valuable. To the extent that education - and in particular higher education - involves students exploring, experimenting with and establishing their identities as agentive adults in the world, then Facebook may indeed be appropriately and accurately regarded "as an increasingly important element of students' meaning-making activities, especially where they reconstruct past events and thereby confer meaning onto the overarching university experience" (Selwyn, 2009a, p. 171). In particular, if Selwyn's finding that Facebook provides students with "a space for contesting and resisting the asymmetrical power relationships built into the institutional offline positions of student and university system, therefore affording these students with 'backstage' opportunities to be disruptive, challenging and resistant 'unruly agents'" (p. 171), then it seems logical to conclude that the continuation of the staff members' presence within the PASS program's Facebook group may indeed have negatively impacted upon the Student and Senior Mentors' ability to work through their everyday issues and concerns in a sufficiently 'backstage' social space.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to explore and thereby explicate some of the issues inevitably arising in relation to the introduction or implementation of Facebook and, by extension, other social networking technologies into student peer mentoring programs, by providing an anecdotal and experiential account of one PASS program team's attempt to extend their existing community of practice into the online realm. While Facebook has been warmly welcomed and received with "great enthusiasm" (Selwyn, 2009a, p. 158) by many commentators and practitioners within the educational community, its effects, impacts and implications still remain insufficiently understood. As indicated by the ever-increasing body of literature outlined throughout the course of this paper, there still appears to exist a significant level of ambiguity and ambivalence on the part of today's generation of undergraduate students with regard to the presence of faculty staff members on what must still be regarded as a primarily student-owned and -populated social space.

To conclude where we began, as "educators will be more and more inclined to incorporate Web 2.0 technologies, specifically Facebook…it is important that they understand how to do so effectively and also in a manner appropriate for their students" (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011, p. 26). While the authors' experiences of their own 'Facebook experiment' were both ambiguous and inarguably ambivalent, this paper has been intended to act as an additional anecdotal contribution to the ever-expanding body of literature concerning the implementation of Facebook in educational contexts and to thereby assist in improving educators' requisite understanding of both the positives and pitfalls involved. Within student peer mentoring contexts in particular, the deployment - and, at least in this instance, employment - of students to fulfil the complex and ambiguous role of student *and* staff member in order to encourage and facilitate the student-student interactions comprising peer learning, there remains the risk that the students involved will 'strike back', claiming and asserting one identity over the other. Reflecting retrospectively on the authors' experience of the effects and impacts of this risk's fulfilment, it seems clear that careful consideration as well as explicit and iterative articulation and negotiation surrounding issues of staff and student expectations, boundaries and identity management in an online setting constitute the minimum requirements for the successful implementation of social networking into student peer mentoring programs.

AUTHORS

Gill Best and Dan Tout, School of Language and Learning, Victoria University
Darko Hajzler, Counselling Services, Victoria University
Geri Pancini, Work-based Education Research Centre, Victoria University

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