How is Professionalism maintained in a Digital Society?

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Introduction:
In light of the vast expansion and ongoing reliance on technology as a form of communication and expression in contemporary society (Lupton, 2014), this research considers the implications surveillance brings to the professional in a digital society. It explores how these implications inherently force professionals to adopt self-censorship practices and how this protects their digital footprint (The University of Edinburgh, 2015).

Aim:
To explore the practices newly qualified professionals currently utilise in order to maintain professionalism in a digital society.

Methodology:
· Semi-structured Interviews
· Participant Observation
· Digitally Recorded
· Transcribed by researcher
· Thematically Analysed

Conclusion:
Professionalism is maintained in a digital society by the utilisation of self-censorship practices in the form of impression management (Goffman, 1990). These practices are adopted in order to prevent the professional's integrity, career trajectory and resulting social mobility from being inhibited by potentially continuous surveillance (Bauman and Lyon, 2013) in a capitalist driven society.

Key Literature:
- Goffman E, (1990). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.*
- Lupton D, (2014). *Digital Sociology.*
- The University of Edinburgh, (2015). *Managing your Digital Footprint.*
- Bauman Z and Lyon D, (2013). *Liquid Surveillance: a Conversation.*

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The Never-Ending Cycle:
Social mobility is an ongoing process which is reliant upon professionalism and self-censorship practices in order to be achieved. All three elements within the cycle are dependent upon each other and can result in either an upward/ downward career trajectory subject to what digital practices are utilised by professionals in a digital society.

Social Mobility → Professionalism → Self-Censorship → (cycle)
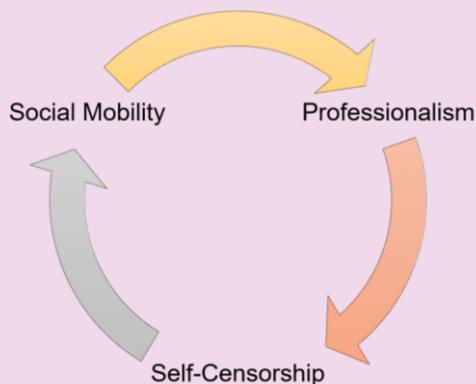
Physical Self Vs Digital Self:

- **Complementary to each other**
- **The Digital Self is always visible**
- **Digital identities can have larger audiences**
- **Anything posted online can be traced**
- **Nothing is really private online**

Acceptable Posts

- Pictures of holidays / with friends
- Opinions on world news and global issues
- Common interests
- Articles
- Events
- Non-offensive memes
- Anything informative or useful to others
- Music videos
- Some life events (e.g. graduation)
- Engagement with interesting activities
- Anything casting character in positive light

Unacceptable Posts

- **Ranting or whinging**
- **Negatively emotionally charged posts**
- **Anything 'personal'**
  e.g. family incidents / relationship breakdowns
- **Images displaying compromised decision making or too expressive**
  e.g. drunk, using drugs and/or semi-clothed
- **Anything 'stupid'**
- **Posts with bad grammar**
- **Cyberbullying**
- **Abusive or offensive language**
- **Sensitive information**
  e.g. addresses / location
- **Confidential information**

Top Ten Tips

1. Utilise robust privacy settings
2. Identify all 'friends' before adding them
3. Never assume you are not being surveyed online
4. If you wouldn't say it in person, do not say it online
5. If a post can be misinterpreted, do not post it
6. Avoid posting controversial opinions unless justified
7. Think about the future implications of all posts
8. Do not post abusive or offensive materials
9. Do not be 'clicker-happy' with likes, shares and posts
10. Do not post images taken in a disorderly state

Identity Formation:
Choose your name, profile picture and privacy settings appropriately.

'I actually don't have my real name on Facebook either, so if you were an employer and you knew my real name then you wouldn't be able to find me'

'I don't use it (Facebook) for legal things, [...] I just use it purely for friends'

(Laura)

'I have only used my first name and split in half so the kids cannot find me'

'Twitter has everything hidden so only people I let follow me can see me'

(Tina)