

ONE DAY IN ‘CYBERSPACE’.
IDENTITIES, SELVES, PERSONALITY IN THE NAVIGATION BETWEEN
ONLINE-OFFLINE SPACES



30 May 2017
Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science
London School of Economics
Queens House, 3rd floor, 55-56 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, WC2A 3LJ
Room QUE 3.28
10am-5pm
Admission free, lunch and refreshments provided

The extensive penetration of ICTs in people’s everyday lives demands continuous ‘micro-coordinations’ between online and offline spaces. In order to accomplish usual routines and cognitive/interpersonal tasks, such as eating, writing a paper, or talking to a colleague in a meeting, social actors have to develop strategies to coordinate their (usual) offline activities with (new) online activities, such as checking their smartphones to reply to a text message, control emails or notifications, etc. These activities can be either harmonious and feasible or difficult and impractical.

The ways in which ICTs are shaping psychological processes have not been fully understood yet. However, in the last decade, new strands of psychosocial studies have been developed to provide account of the role of digital technologies in social actors’ behaviours. Among these, the impact of ICTs on identity and personality processes has received growing attention.

In this one-day event, the SEBE-Lab will host two seminars that focus on identity and personality processes looking at how activities in cyberspace and the alternation between online-offline activities transform personality and identity processes. These contributions illustrate research studies that have investigated, respectively, online gaming and Internet job search. This event is also the occasion to confront on research carried out by colleagues and PhD students at PBS and other LSE departments.

INTRODUCTION

*Marina Everri, Saadi Lahlou, Maximilian Heitmayer
SEBE-Lab, PBS, LSE*

11-12:00

Virtual selves, real lives: the experiences of self in contemporary society
Simon Evans, SEBE-Lab, PBS, LSE

The emergence of digital technology in contemporary society has given rise to a “virtual self”, facilitated and mediated by technology, with multiple forms of experience and expression. The presentation outlines findings from an investigation of the implications for this “virtual self”, by way of a large-scale research programme, spanning 5 years and following 64 users of the virtual world “Second Life”. Using digital ethnographic and inductive analytic techniques that emphasise the insider perspective of the virtual world user, the research reveals a number of aspects in the experience of self through virtual worlds. In particular, the use of SEBE methods, capturing experience as it happens, indicate how self emerges at the intersection between virtual and physical worlds, as well as through several levels of interaction between the virtual world user, their avatar(s), other users, the virtual world technology, and the physical world environment. The presentation illustrates that the contemporary self is in simultaneous multiple locations, extended and bridged by technological mediation, such that someone who uses virtual worlds becomes a form of cyborg.

Biography

Simon Evans is a graduate of the LSE Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science doctoral programme, and a member of the SEBE-Lab that is based in the department. His research interests focus on the role of virtual environments in the experience and emergence of self, mainly through the lenses of symbolic interaction, activity theory, and digital ethnography. He has written several papers on aspects of his research, and presents at conferences that emphasise human-computer interaction, the internet and cyberspace, and the experience of using virtual environments. Simon’s doctoral research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, and he is a member of the British Psychological Society.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Simon_Evans8

<https://lse.academia.edu/SimonEvans>

<http://personal.lse.ac.uk/evanss/default.htm>

12-14:00

The interplay between online and offline self in cyberspace. From social networks to MMORPGs

Tiziana Mancini, University of Parma, Italy

Do not assume social network user’s profile or/and MMORPG gamer’s avatar reflects his or her offline self. Starting from this premise the seminar aims to examine the ways in which cyberspace users shape or not their virtual profiles to their offline self. Two kinds of virtual environments will be analysed – social networks and MMORPGs – showing that if social network profiles generally reflect user’s actual personality, different avatar customization strategies are used by MMORPG gamers. The strategies range from *idealized* avatars to *utopian* avatars, and only gamers

playing with an idealized avatar take their offline personality as a starting point for the customization of their main avatar. Moreover, they feel strongly identified with it. In virtual environments, people build and manage not only personal identity, but also social identities. They identify with different virtual groups, e.g. in MMORPGs with faction, race or gild. As in real life, the identification with a social group is related to the discrimination against outgroups. Surprisingly, online discrimination is not in any way related to the injury manifested in offline life and can be reduced when different avatars are used to play with MMORPG. Consequences for users' wellbeing will be also analysed, especially in terms of 'addiction'. Results will show that regardless the type of virtual environments, shaping the online profiles/avatars based on offline personality increases social network/game addiction.

Biography

Tiziana Mancini is Associate Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Parma. She is faculty member of the Master in Psychology and of PhD in Psychology program in the same University. Since 2001 she is full member of *Italian Psychological Association* (AIP), and since 2008 full member of *European Association of Experimental and Social Psychology* (EASP). She is consulting referee for national and international journals such as *Psicologia Sociale*, *Giornale Italiano di Psicologia*, *Psicologia clinica e dello Sviluppo*, *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, *International Journal of Psychology*, *International Journal of Intercultural Relation*, *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*. She is editor of *Acta Biomedica for Health professions* and consultant editor for *Psicologia Sociale*.

She has been involved for years in various research projects of local, national and international interest, first of all on issues related with self and identity in the post-modern society. In this area, she conducted research on: construction of identity in adolescence, construction of professional identity, cultural identity changes in migration, facing with identity threats in chronic disease conditions, and, more recently, self and identity in cyberspace. Immigration and cyberspace psycho-social processes are her current themes of research, specifically forced migrant integration processes and at MMORPG effects on wellbeing. She is the author and co-author of numerous papers presented at national and international conferences, and of some monographs and essays. Numerous research and review papers have been published in national and international journals.

<https://scholar.google.it/citations?user=zusRgEIAAAJ&hl=it>
<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authord=23035761800>
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14-15:00

LUNCH - Refreshments will be served

15-17:00

Online Job-searching: the perspectives of applicants
Marco Giovanni Mariani, University of Bologna, Italy

The advances in Internet Technology (IT) have supported the transition from conventional methods of employee recruiting to innovative methods based on electronic recruitment. In the last years, job seekers prefer the Internet to both search and/or apply for jobs, and collect information about companies. In addition, attracting the best candidates is crucial for organizations; therefore, they must attract job seekers through the web. Starting from these premises, the seminar aims to examine

the different aspects that lead applicants to submit their applications to online recruitment sites. Several drivers will be analysed taking into consideration the following aspects: (a) users' trust toward IT systems during online application process, (b) the role of classical aesthetic (i.e. clarity, precision of the site) and aesthetic expression (i.e. originality and creativity of the site) of web-pages, and (c) the role of employer branding. Results concerning recent studies carried out in Italy will be discussed.

Biography

Marco Giovanni Mariani is a researcher in Psychology of Work and Organizations at the University of Bologna. He is faculty member of the International Master of Work, Organizational and Personnel Psychology (WOP-P, Erasmus Mundus) in the same University. Since 2001 she is full member of *Italian Psychological Association* (AIP) and of *European Association of Work Psychology* (EAWOP).

He is consulting referee for national and international journals such as *Economic Psychology*, *Stress and Health*, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *Giornale Italiano di Psicologia*. He is Review Editor for *Frontiers in Psychology (Organizational Psychology)* and consultant editor for *Psicologia Sociale* and for *Risorsa Uomo: rivista di psicologia del lavoro e dell'organizzazione*.

He has been involved in research projects of local, national and international interest, on issues related with psychosocial aspects of IT adoption, personnel evaluation and safety performance. He is the author and co-author of numerous research and review papers published in national and international journals and presented at national and international conferences.

From Scopus: <https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=55014427300>

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