



PSIWORLD 2014

## Weblogging: A Technological Framework Mediated by the Self

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### Abstract

This article examines the way in which self-consciousness and audience each concur to self-exposure in individuals who use weblogs. Through separately controlling some of the means that probably influence individuals interaction by computer-mediated communication, this article explores the measure to which several variables contribute to self-exposure put up in virtual/online contexts. Therefore, the study tackles these variables allowing a more comprehensive understanding of the simultaneous role each variable plays in psychological outcomes such as the self-exposure of individuals using new technologies. We also sought to show the psychological meanings of online self-expression.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Scientific Committee of PSIWORLD 2014.

*Keywords:* weblogs; self-exposure; cognitive sciences; consciousness; cyberspace

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### 1. Introduction

The fast occurrence of internet-based personal weblogs (“blogs”) throws back particular technological innovations and new online practices with large relationship to the self. Weblogs emerge on personal websites and are typically and regularly improved by their author. Blog posts include a wide range of topics from personal to more non-private ones such as star stories, political views, news, and other information. According to Barrett, weblog is “a small web site, usually maintained by one person that is updated on a regular basis and has a high concentration of repeat visitors” (Barrett, 2002, p. 89). Literally, the weblog means to “log information found on the Web.”

At its simplest, a weblog is an online page containing a collection of links and associated textual commentaries or annotations, where the “posts” step out in reverse chronological order such that the most recent post appears at the top page of the blog to which new entries (links & text) are added on a frequent basis.

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In the past few years, however, there's been a decline in popularity among the people using blogging for online self-expression, while new self-exposure social networking such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr or Twitter are constantly growing. A detailed analysis of this decline shows that while the use of blog by young adults is fast declining its use among older ones (over 30 years) is rising. This fact is due to the broadening tool-sets of more recent trends in online self-exposure on social networking sites such as Facebook. Nowadays, for example, Facebook enables individuals more freedom to express themselves online without text limitations using the "notes" tool.

As Petru Iluț suggests in his book *Sinele și cunoașterea lui*, the most important consequences of these changes are the multiple and contextual emphasis on identity, self detaching from the rigid social structures and statuses and the nurturing of the intimate and internal features. On one hand, this kind of private self-consciousness leads to attending one's own thoughts and feelings (e.g., the hidden nature of the self, or 'the secret self'/ the 'undisclosed self') that are often made transparent on weblogs. On the other hand, the public self-consciousness is the tendency to reach the self as others view it (e.g., the genuine feature of the self).

In weblogging the contexts and social groups mix online. Any message can be seen by anyone. When we communicate, we usually have in mind a particular audience to which the message is for. Therefore, a message intended for a kind of audience can be seen and interpreted differently, or negatively by another type of audience. When communicating online, we must make an extra effort to think to other unintended audiences, and how the message might look in their eyes. Online communication requires a higher level of effort and self-confidence than offline communication. Unfortunately, the online culture is a culture of speed, and it takes more effort to resist pressure to press the Send / Post before we having thought for a second.

The online environment provides an opportunity to build the self strategically. We have much more control over the way we present ourselves, than in offline communication. We can make careful selections and we can build a positive and complex identity. A negative aspect is that we have no control over the online information about us. Information can be survive long after we (think) we destroyed it, or, better said "Google never forgets."

Today, there is an obvious mix between everything that is material and virtual, a so curdled mixture that we can hardly distinguish between these two concepts, real and virtual. Although, in fact, they are totally opposed, the margin between real and virtual is becoming increasingly thin. Nicholas Negroponte asserts in his work *Being Digital*: "We live in a world that tends to become digital" (Negroponte, 1996, p.163). We live in a world where almost everything can be experienced through a simulated version of virtual reality: we shop online, pay our bills online, work online, communicate online, travel on-line etc. In these circumstances, we can talk about a booming culture of virtual reality.

If we accept the idea that post-postmodern self assumes a multiple/multimodal identity, then we can assert that identity today is a free choice, a dramatic representation of the self, in which each is able to self-expose in a variety of roles, images and activities. In other words, identity is an extension of free choice and of a multiple identity that accepts the condition of a fast and intense change of society. In this way, the other becomes a part of the identity and therefore the identity of an individual depends on recognition by the public.

As the title of this article suggests, the technological perfection seduces, says Baudrillard in one of his memorable books, *Seduction*. Based on people's fascination with technology and communicational speed, blogs are an expression of the need to focus on exposing a new hybrid self. The active posting of conflicting or cooperative personal approaches reflects the multiple-voiced features of the self. Thus, blogs become evident examples of Hermans' model of the multi-voiced networked self's dynamic meeting with social and cultural others.

## 2. Hypotheses

Individuals develop new meanings of personal identity through the online character (online disinhibition effect). Further, I will describe weblogs as places where individuals can acquire multiple identities in unprecedented ways and cause changes in the conventional notion of identity. Identities are thus negotiated, reproduced and indexed in a variety of new types of online interactions. The results were that these identities are perceived and described by users as at least as real as those in the offline reality. To make a comparison between the two types of identities (online/offline), so as to say that virtual identity is a natural continuation of nowadays identity (understood in the terms in which we defined it at the beginning of the paper) we should note if this identity is indeed real. To be real it

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