

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF “SELF”: HOW OUR NEW SOCIOTECHNICAL ENVIRONMENT IS CHANGING THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of technology within the past 20 years has brought about a fundamental change in the way society communicates, operates and relates to itself. As the line between humans and technology is becoming increasingly blurred, technology, through its features and connective capabilities, is expanding individual's conception and construction of 'self'.

The paper takes a qualitative approach to the current research and theoretical foundations of identity construction to distinguish the vital components of empirical identity creation that are necessary for the development of the 'self'. This framework is then used to examine the relationship between the 'self' and technology in order to determine how our new sociotechnical environment is impacting the traditional process of identity construction.

As a result of the analysis, this paper identifies two main aspects of identity creation that are impacted through our relationship with technology; the storing of memory and the process of self-reflection. Born out of new norm, are structures of interaction, communication and thinking patterns which are intrinsically changing the way we shape our sense of 'self'. Ultimately, it is found that our online environments are facilitating the enhancement of our narcissistic qualities and the cultivation of a 'self' that is intrinsically dictated by external 'others', where the traditionally internal influences on the 'self' are becoming externalized and our sense of agency is considered 'illusory'. It is theorized that through the implementation of self-reflective practices in our online environments, individuals may reclaim not only a better sense of their identity but also reclaim their agency within these new online environments.