Virtual Group Dynamics and Social Networks

a.a. 2016-2017

Dr. Andrea Guazzini
Department of Education and Psychology
and Centre for the Study of Complex Dynamics (CSDC)
University of Florence

Contacts
e-mail: andrea.guazzini@unifi.it - andrea.guazzini@gmail.com
website: http://virthulab.complexworld.net/

Personality, Self and Identity

Personality represents 'those characteristics of the person that account for his consistent pattern of behaviour' (Pervin, 1993). The study of personality has always been an integral part of the study of psychology; however, the study of the psychology of the Internet may be seen as a new addition to a traditional practice.

Net designers have a tendency to view users as a single entity, ignoring personality differences, while psychologists tend to stereotype the Internet as one unit, ignoring its variety and richness (Amichai-Hamburger 2002).

It is interesting to learn how these differences interact with our personality.

Reference: *Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.*

Personality, Self and Identity

Internet psychological context Internet use involves special factors which together create a unique psychological environment for the user. McKenna et al. (2002) suggest four major factors that differentiate between Internet interaction and face-to-face interaction:

1. Greater anonymity;
2. The diminution of the importance of physical appearance;
3. Greater control over the time and pace of interactions;
4. The ease of finding similar others.

It is interesting to learn how these differences interact with our personality.

Reference: *Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.*

Personality, Self and Identity

Need for closure

People who have a high need for closure are motivated to avoid uncertainties. They tend to 'freeze' the epistemic process (Kruglanski and Freund 1983), and to reach conclusions speedily. They tend to get locked into conceptions and ignore contradicting information. People with a low need for closure are predisposed to unfreeze many alternative hypotheses and to test as many implications of their own hypothesis as possible.

- Amichai-Hamburger et al. (2004) found that p*eople with a low need for closure preferred a website with many hyperlinks* over one that was relatively flat: people with a high need for closure preferred the flat website over the one with many hyperlinks.
- *When they were under time pressure the results were reversed*, namely, people with a high need for closure preferred a website with many hyperlinks over one that was relatively flat. People with a low need for closure preferred the flat website over the one with many hyperlinks.

Reference: *Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.*

Personality, Self and Identity

Need for closure

- *Participants with a low need for closure prefer the interactive site.* This provides a perceived legitimacy to pressing repeatedly on different hyperlinks.

- According to Kruglanski and Webster (1996), *people with a high need for closure experience its absence as aversive*. The same may be said to be true for people with a low need for closure. They perceive the necessity of deciding quickly, having no opportunity to receive further information and so running the risk of making mistakes, as aversive.

- When it comes to the social aspect of the Internet, it seems likely that *people with a low need for closure will be willing to explore their identity on the net and are open to finding new relationships there*, while those with a high need for closure will be more inhibited about exploring their identity or starting new Internet relationships.

Reference: *Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.*

Personality, Self and Identity

Need for cognition

People vary in how they treat information. The best-known effort to define and measure this tendency was performed by Cacioppo and Petty (1982), who created the 'Need for Cognition' variable. This refers to an individual's tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive endeavours. It is considered a stable trait that may be influenced by certain situational factors (Cacioppo et al. 1996).

● Those with a l*ow need for cognition do not enjoy cognitive efforts and when dealing with complicated issues* will prefer to rely on the opinion of others, preferably experts, while individuals with a '*high need for cognition' are those who possess a natural motivation to seek knowledge* and so will acquire more information and engage with it (Verplanken et al. 1992).

Reference: Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.

Personality, Self and Identity

Need for cognition

- Amichai-Hamburger found a ***clear difference in the willingness of individuals with a low need for cognition to return to the site in favour of an interactive site*** (a site with many hyperlinks). This preference was not found among individuals with a high need for cognition. It appears that ***the need for cognition determines one's susceptibility to peripheral cues, such as the site's appearance***.

- Das et al. (2003) found that ***people who enjoy cognitively demanding processing tasks are more likely to use the Internet information search tools*** since they enjoy this activity in a similar way.

Reference: *Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.*

Personality, Self and Identity

Locus of Control

People with an external locus of control believe that life events are the result of external factors, like chance or luck. People with an internal locus of control believe in their own ability to control their life events (Rotter 1966, 1982).

- People with an *internal locus of control expect that their efforts will lead to success and therefore are highly motivated to master their environment* (Phares 1976).
- People with an *external locus of control use the Internet more for inclusion*, as compared with people with an internal locus of control (Flaherty et al. 1998).
- People with a *high internal locus of control use the Internet as a supplement to other activities and in a more goal-directed manner*, for example, as a tool to search for information to complete a task, or to reduce purchase uncertainties, whereas *people with an external locus of control tend to use the Internet more experimentally as a substitute for other activities*, such as spending time with friends.

Reference: Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.

Personality, Self and Identity

Locus of Control

People with an external locus of control believe that life events are the result of external factors, like chance or luck. People with an internal locus of control believe in their own ability to control their life events (Rotter 1966, 1982).

- *They tend to spend greater amounts of time surfing the net* than surfers with an internal locus of control.
- However, *they are less likely to engage in goal-directed behaviours* such as shopping, making purchases and gathering product information (Hoffman et al. 2002).
- It was also found that *people with an internal locus of control felt higher control over the web interaction process and procedures* and had a higher trust in online transaction safety as compared with those with an external locus of control (Sohn and Leckenby 2001).

Reference: Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.

Personality, Self and Identity

Sensation-Seeking and Risk-Taking

These are two highly related personality dimensions. Sensation-seeking focuses on the need for new and varied experiences through uninhibited behaviour: these include dangerous activities, a non-conventional lifestyle and a rejection of monotony (Zuckerman 1971). Risk-taking is a personality dimension; people vary as to the degree to which they are ready to take an action that involves a significant degree of risk (Levenson 1990).

- Alonzo and Aiken (2004) found that *sensation-seeking predicted flaming* (posting hostile and insulting messages) on the net.
- There *was a stronger prediction for males than for females*.
- They suggest that *anonymity on the net encourages people to act without inhibitions and to engage in taking risks in flaming activity for entertainment and to pass the time*.

Reference: Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.

Personality, Self and Identity

Sensation-Seeking and Risk-Taking

Risk-taking is a personality dimension; people vary as to the degree to which they are ready to take an action that involves a significant degree of risk (Levenson 1990).

- It also seems very possible that *people who are high on sensation-seeking and risk-taking will be more open to new experiences on the net*. They will, therefore, be more likely to use the Internet to explore different aspects of their personality.

- Should a net relationship develop, i*t is this type of person who is most likely to take the initiative and suggest a meeting*.

- *People who are low on sensation-seeking and risk-taking will conversely behave more cautiously on the net and will be less open to identity experiments*.

Reference: Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.

Personality, Self and Identity

Extroversion and Neuroticism

Extroversion and neuroticism (as measured by Eysenck's Personality Inventory EPI) The extrovert is outward oriented, whereas the introvert is inward oriented. The neurotic person is an anxious, worried individual who is overly emotional and reacts too strongly to all types of stimuli (Eysenck and Eysenck 1975).

- Hamburger and Ben-Artzi (2000) analysed levels of *extroversion and neuroticism and Internet use* and found that *these showed different patterns for men and women* in their interactions with the Internet services scale.

- *For men, extroversion was positively linked to the use of leisure services and neuroticism was negatively related to information services*, whereas *for women, extroversion was negatively related and neuroticism positively related to the use of social sites*.

Reference: **Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.**

Personality, Self and Identity

Extroversion and Neuroticism

Extroversion and neuroticism

- The latter results are particularly interesting because they confirm earlier studies showing that ***women have higher self-awareness and are more likely to use their social network for support***. The differences found in the extra-neurotic personalities in their Internet behaviour are consistent with those found in the main personality theories Weaver (2001)

- However, Amichai-Hamburger (2005) discusses gender differences and their impact on Internet use and suggests that this ***gender difference will eventually disappear as more people enter the net and the awareness of web services grows***. He suggests that in the future, male and female introverts and neurotics will gradually understand the compensating factor of Internet social services and will start to use them more extensively.

*Reference: **Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.***

Personality, Self and Identity

Extroversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism

Extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism (as measured by Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire Revised-EPQ-R) The EPQ-R questionnaire includes psychoticism, in addition to extroversion and neuroticism. Psychotics show disregard for authority, social norms and rules. They are unlikely to feel sensitivity to the feelings of others (Eysenck et al. 1985).

- Hamburger and Ben-Artzi (2000) were among the first to examine the interaction between personality and Internet use.

- Amiel and Sargent (2004) continued this work, branching out into three main areas. They found that gender differences disappeared. When it comes to neuroticism, ***people who scored high on the neuroticism scale reported that they used the net for the feeling of belonging to a group***.

Personality, Self and Identity

Extroversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism

Extroversion, neuroticism and psychoticism

- ● *Extroverts*, on the other hand, 'rejected the social communal aspects of the Internet and were negatively correlated to statements like I use the Internet "because I feel more comfortable talking to people on line".' *They were interested in voicing their opinion, but not in listening to that of others*.

- ● Amiel and Sargent (2004) found that *those scoring high on the neuroticism scale expressed a high interest in alternative news and the need to learn about potential threats. Extroverts rejected the use of the net for information, but surfed for alternative news*.

Personality, Self and Identity

Extroversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism

- Amiel and Sargent (2004) found that ***people scoring high on neuroticism expressed a high motive for the need to acquire information***.

- Amiel and Sargent (2004) found ***no link between extrovert personalities and random surfing or sex website use***. The authors explain these differences by stating that this use is much more in line with psychoticism which Hamburger and Ben-Artzi (2000) did not measure.

- They also found that ***neuroticism demonstrated a need for information and belonging, a preference for alternative news*** (as opposed to mainstream or interactive news) and the need to be informed of possible dangers.

*Reference: **Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.***

Personality, Self and Identity

Extroversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism

- **Neurotics did announce a social communal motive, but practically all were negatively related to some of the social services** as text messaging tools (interpersonal/group communication) or willingness to engage in discussion.

- Amiel and Sargent (2004) found that **people high on psychoticism showed a lack of interest in the social communal aspects of the net.**

- However, **they demonstrated an interest in more sophisticated and deviant aspects of the net.**

- In addition, they showed a **great interest in using file-sharing services** (distribution of pirated materials) **and pornography**.

- **They were interested in learning what could happen to them, but not what could happen to others.**

Personality, Self and Identity

The NEO−PI−R

The NEO-PI-R questionnaire (McCrae and Costa 1997) includes five broad personality domains, also called the Five-Factor Model. In addition to extroversion and neuroticism (previously mentioned), it includes agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience.

- ***Agreeableness** refers to individual differences in cooperation and the ability to build social harmony with others. Agreeable individuals have an optimistic approach to the world. They are friendly, helpful and willing to compromise in favour of others. Disagreeable individuals put their own needs ahead of the need to get along with others. They do not trust others and therefore express more hostility and less cooperativeness than agreeable individuals.*

Reference: Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.

Personality, Self and Identity

The NEO−PI−R

- *Conscientiousness* refers to the way in which we control, regulate and direct our impulses. People with a level of conscientiousness are well organized, governed by their task. In contrast, low conscientious people are impulsive.

- *Openness to experience* describes a dimension of cognitive style that distinguishes imaginative, creative people from down to earth, conventional people. Open people are intellectually curious and appreciative of art. They tend to be more aware of their feelings and to think and act in individualistic and nonconforming ways, as compared to more closed people.

Reference: Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.

Personality, Self and Identity

The NEO–PI–R

- Heinström (2005) examined the link between personality and information-seeking. She found three general patterns for information-seeking:

  - 1. *Fast surfing*: people who skim are disorganized, not task oriented and have a low need for achievement. For these people, the depth and quality of information is a minor consideration, as against the need for speed.

  - 2. *Broad scanning* – people who tend to be flexible in their information-seeking, utilizing a wide range of sources. Their broad scanning searches are developed gradually rather than being planned.

  - 3. *Deep diving* – people who are hard workers, desire quality rather than quantity. They put much effort into information seeking, but do not necessarily search for information in a broad manner.

Reference: *Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.*

Personality, Self and Identity

The NEO–PI–R

- Swickert et al. (2002) used the big five questionnaire and found a **negative relationship between neuroticism and leisure activity**.

She found that

- the **broad scanning style**, which is **typical of the extrovert** personality, **combined with openness to experience and competitiveness, was related to using the net as a tool for information-seeking**.

- Other styles were not found to be related to the use of the Internet for information-seeking.

- But the story is going on ....

*Reference: **Joinson, A. (2007). Oxford handbook of internet psychology. Oxford University Press.***