Camelia GRADINARU*
"Al.I. Cuza" University of Iaşi (Romania)

From Multitude to Convergence:
Contemporary Trends in the Study of Online Identity

Abstract: This paper focuses on the concept of online identity and tries to highlight some relevant trends in its interpretation from the beginning of the Internet until today. The early research focused on the multitude of possibilities brought by the new technologies, the great freedom of anonymity, the endless ability of playing with numerous aspects of the digital self etc. Today, the dominant discourse about identity is changed and one major component of the online identity – the online self-presentation – was chosen to illustrate this change. The contemporary forms of computer-mediated communication brought, beside the positive things, some difficulties and some constraints of the identitary construction. The diminution of the use of anonymity, the large number of sources through we can verify the identitary information, the importance of other-provided information are some cues of this change. Also, the "context collapse" and the challenges addressed by the online archive delineate other difficulties. Consequently, the dichotomy online – offline was nuanced and an identitary convergence seems to be the premise of the contemporary approaches that also integrate the Internet into a functional component of everyday life.

Keywords: online identity, self-presentation, archive, impression management, context collapse, other-provided information

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* Interdisciplinary Research Department – Social and Human Sciences