The influence of internet on recognition of identity

Identity recognition has been a hot topic in recent years. It is a complicated issue that no single definition of the term has been set up in science. The first time " identity of perception" goes to the public as a scientific term is in The Interpretation of Dreams (published in 1900) by a great psychologist, Sigmund Freud. He proposed that dreaming was an unconscious process of information in the day time, which shared the role of controlling individual's mental and psychical activities. Thus he claimed that dreaming maintained the personality's continuity and identity. Identity conception plays an important role in human beings' psyche, he suggested. The society is developing quickly, which makes human beings lost in recognition of identity in social life and also in psycho. Problems of identity are studied for years in different areas, and the conceptions of identity differ. Most of the recent studies are conducted in sociology, which focus on study the social groups, social phenomena and social behavior. Here in this paper, I focus on the individual's behavior, individual's interpretations of the information on the internet, and how the internet influences individuals.

Identity is the state of an individual's consciousness of the relationship with oneself, people around and with the surroundings. It is more about how an individual sees himself, based on the aggregation of his personal characteristics, personal feelings, personal values, personal judgments and his interpretations about the information inwards and outwards. To determine one's identity, we need to " aggregate one's characteristics of personality that are of a biological, psychological, social, and cultural nature."(Vladimir Rimskii, 2)Identity is a stable consciousness that will last for a long time once set up. It enables one to " be oneself in different

situations." (Vladimir Rimskii, 2)However, identity changes with the environment changes. Individuals take in different and changing information for the new situations, and this process of aggregation with information will slightly change the individual's perception on his own identity. So exists the possibility to " coexistence of different identities" (Vladimir Rimskii, 2)at one and the same moment in time. In some cases, this leads to crisis because the adaptation of identity lags behind the changes in reality.

Childhood plays a significant and essential role in forming an individual's identity, which continues until death. Identity forming is about mental development, influenced not only by biological factors, but mainly by social factors. The relations and interactions among children, parents, culture and social life of the community play a very important role in shaping one's identity. As a person enter his adolescence years, identity keeps forming and yet changing, for his high time of mental development and values forming. An adolescent goes through a time of getting rid of the influence of parents and setting up self-values in the changing environment. In many cases, these adolescents have the problems of identity because of their lack of experiences in life. As they grow up, they will begin to shape their own identities as the acceptance of particular roles and the rejection of other roles. This process will slow down as they enter adulthood, and they will have stereotype identities, which are relatively stable. However, the identity crisis among adolescents has been a hot topic recently. The new generation is said to be too cool and willful. They are exposed to a world full of information. They have a lot of chances to get in touch with different people, learn about different thoughts, and know what's happening around the

world. Therefore, their identities are easily influenced and changed. Also, because of the overindulgence of their parents, they young generation lose some chances to think about life and future by themselves. They fail to pay enough attention to the identity forming. Therefore, identity crisis is a very import yet complicated issue. In this paper, I will try to briefly study the internet's influences on youth's identity conception.

Identities in the reality

Many identities are perceived as social roles interacting with other individuals. Human beings live within social groups. They have more than one role when connecting with others. Each role might have its own identity or tend to have slightly different identity. These different identities coexist in one at the same moment of time, thus exists the possibility that a person might not able to show all his personalities and roles in one identification card. The other possibility is that people around cannot clearly know who the person is. The author (Vladimir Rimskii, 3) suggests that collective identities of a social group enable its members to " determine who belongs and who does not." Individuals almost always interact with representatives of particular social groups, which make them constantly adapt or affirm their own identities. According to him, we can know a person by checking the social group he belongs to.

It is true that social life and social experiences help a person to achieve a definite identity. In order to achieve a sense of belongingness, self-preservation, recognition, self-realization and other needs, a person will join in some certain social groups by attaining membership.(Vladimir Rimskii, 4)

However, humans have subjective initiatives. One may not want to reveal his complete real information in social life with the purposes such as self-protection. Also, one may fake his information in order to get into a group. People are bound to the conventions of the society. They live in a world full of limitations. They cannot fully express and show their values, judgments, behaviors, and personalities. For example, the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual (GLB) may not want people around them to know their secrets. They may cover up in case other people blame them for acting against the cultural and social traditions. Therefore, one will not present the " true" person of oneself in reality and we cannot know a " true" person by processing the intended presentation of his identity.

In the process of identification, an individual may project his own identity onto someone else. He may borrow someone else's identity, or mix his own identity with the identities of others, so as to create a new him.

Identities on the internet

Today, hundreds of thousands of people have accessed to the internet, and have identities in the virtual world. The number is growing at a very fast speed. Individualism and the freedom of expression may be the first reason that people form a new identity on the internet.(Julie Rak, 7)There is no restrictions of forming an identity on the internet, so a person can register an ideal identity, do whatever and say whatever he wants on the internet. Another reason for people's formation of identity on the internet is that people desire to create ideal identities that cannot be realized in the real world. Individuals can decide their attitudes, perceptions, stereotypes, judgments, opinions, assessments, priorities, tastes, ways of life,

characteristics of activity, etc. Internet makes it possible for individuals to achieve self-realization and to be ideal ones for a while. Quite different from the reality, there is also possibility for a person to use a number of different identities simultaneously without using verifiable information.

People have been arguing about the advantages and disadvantages of internet on identities. The supportive side suggests that we can know a person better through internet because his identities online are mostly the ones that he wishes to be. Those identities reveal the real inside of a person. People will fee safe and comfortable to chat on the internet. They use nicknames with limited information revealed. The information doesn't have to be true, which protects people from being traced. Moreover, the communication is mostly non-face-to-face. Therefore, people may be more willing to share their real feelings and thoughts on the internet than in real world.

However, the opposed side argues that people who get addicted to the internet may lose their identities in the reality and fail to bear his responsibilities. They suggest that people turn to the internet to avoid things in the real world. On the internet, all things, including identity information, thoughts and feelings may be false, which will easily confuse people. The exposure to different kinds of information and identities will not help people clear up their minds. It is more likely to pull people away from the real world along with their responsibilities.

Combination of Identities in the reality and on the internet

Based on the discussions between the supportive and opposed sides, I suggest that the combination of identities in the reality and on the internet may be a useful way to help solve the identity crisis. People base on the reality to face the life, bear the responsibilities and solve problems. Therefore, the identity in the reality should be the basic and should be stable. It defines a person's position in a society. However, it's understandable that people want to keep personal secrets and hide characteristics and feelings. The internet will be a good way for them to relieve the pressure from reality and try to be another part of themselves. Therefore, the combination of the identities in the reality and on the internet may complete a person's identities and is good for human experiences. However, one important premise for this is that the internet should be under more control to provide a safer internet environment.

To fully solve the problem of identity crisis, more in-depth studies of identities on the Internet, and investigation of the positive and negative effects of their influences on individual identity perceptions, should be conducted. We believe that these findings may shed some light on tackling the problem of identity crisis in the near future.

Notes

Rak, Julie. " THE DIGITAL QUEER: WEBLOGS AND INTERNET IDENTITY." Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly 28. 1 (2005): 166-182. Academic Source Complete. EBSCO. Web. 28 Nov. 2010.

Rimskii, Vladimir. " The Influence of the Internet on Active Social Involvement and the Formation and Development of Identities" . Russian Education HYPERLINK " javascript: __doLinkPostBack(",'mdb~~s8h|| jdb~~s8hjnh|| ss~~JN " Russian Education & Society"|| sl~~jh',");"&HYPERLINK " javascript: __doLinkPostBack(",'mdb~~s8h|| jdb~~s8hjnh|| ss~~JN " Russian Education & Society"|| sl~~jh',");" Society; Aug2010, Vol. 52 Issue 8, p11-33, 23p, 2 Charts