I’ll be your mirror.

Identity reflections on the two sides of a computer screen.

Giulia Ranzini
MCM Institute
Universität St Gallen
What happens on the Internet...
*Given* is everything explicitely (and strategically) communicated.

*Given Off* is everything else.
Two.

Mind over matter.
Owning an Internet profile means formalizing a promise with an imaginary public: we guarantee in fact that a future, possible face-to-face interaction will take place with a person who is not substantially different from the one represented within such profile.

Ellison, 2011.
One. Reduced clues.

Two. Asynchronicity.

Three. Shared contextual expectations.
Three.

Attached to a digital body.
Avatar

av·a·tar

1. the incarnation of a Hindu deity (as Vishnu)
2. a : an incarnation in human form
   b : an *embodiment* (as of a concept or philosophy) often in a person
3. a variant phase or version of a continuing basic entity
4. an electronic image that represents and is manipulated by a computer user (as in a computer game)
Attachment defines the emotional link connecting gamer and avatar, capable of replacing the body boundaries within online interaction.

Through this connection, players maintain an experience of the body and identify with the avatar representing them on the screen.

Because of some sort of attachment, gamers physically experience their presence within the game.
“Gamer identification *sutures* the gamer to the game”

Murphy, 2004
think before you eat.
"Let’s say there is a 14-year-old girl who think[s] she might be a lesbian, she doesn’t have to tell anyone. She can just go find support sites, [LGBT] sites, and nobody has to know. And I think that’s really good because it’s really hard, especially for young kids. They don’t know who to talk to or they don’t want to be judged. So they can do that in a very anonymous way that is productive for them.”

"I decided to do it [come out online] cause I felt like it would be easier for me to come out to all of my friends just putting it on there. . . . I felt like I couldn’t see they initial reaction so I wouldn’t know how they initially felt and then they could come to me about it on they own time . . . so it would be a smoother process.”

". . . Towards the beginning when I was kinda like trying to figure everything out, I would just read different articles on like, how does it comes about, or what makes me different from somebody else? What are the different tendencies? What do [people like me] have in common?"
Thank you for your attention.

giulia.ranzini@unisg.ch
@giuliaranzini