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words

Social avatar

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The first avatars (used to represent the self on computers) used basic animation. However, online social arenas are sophisticated. By selectively posting written/visual material, individuals can self-manage image, effectively creating a social avatar. While there is growing awareness of the need to distinguish between 'private' and 'public' aspects of posted material, the psychological effects of social avatars are unrecognised. The selective creation and maintenance of a social avatar is most likely to affect individuals who already struggle to integrate aspects of their personality, behaviour and psyche. This opportunity for further compartmentalisation therefore reinforces divisions in the self, with unhelpful consequences.

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