

2 Self

2.1 goals

- ⊙ talk about personality traits
- ⊙ talk about identity

Your online self

SPEAKING

- 1 Look at this profile image used on a social networking site. Discuss these questions.
 - 1 What aspect of his personality do you think he wants to show?
 - 2 Have you ever uploaded an image to represent yourself? What was it for and how did you choose it?
 - 3 Do you have an online page? Do you regularly update it or comment on other people's?
 - 4 Do you think these pages generally portray an accurate impression of people's character?



READING

- 2 Read the article. Does it have similar views to yours?

Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Orkut are now estimated to have more than 700 million users worldwide. As users can create any profile of themselves they choose, you might expect them to portray themselves in the best possible light. When putting up a profile, it would be reasonable for them to present flattering images, choose sophisticated and discerning interests, and carefully express their thoughts so as to appear more intelligent than in real life. But according to recent research, this is not the case. Far from presenting themselves in a flattering way, most users' profiles reflect their true personalities, and reveal both psychological weaknesses and natural physical flaws.

Research was carried out on 250 Facebook users who filled in a personality questionnaire. Results were compared with the same people's Facebook profiles. The survey set out to assess not only the participants' actual personality, but their 'ideal' personality – in other words, what kind of person they would be if they actually possessed all their ideal characteristics. These results were then compared with the participants' Facebook profiles. What emerged was astonishing: far from being idealised versions of themselves, people's online profiles conformed closely to what they were really like. Their profiles accurately reflected how agreeable, extroverted, conscientious, neurotic and sociable they were in real life.

It's not entirely clear why online profiles depict users' personalities so accurately. It could be that users want to portray themselves as they really are, or it could be that people attempt to present an ideal image of themselves but in fact fail to do so. One thing seems clear: social networking sites can in no way be considered a false online world that is idealised and removed from reality; rather, they are simply another way in which people choose to interact with each other.

- 3 **a** Read the article again. Identify the parts which make these points.
 - 1 We are not calculating in the way that we present ourselves to others.
 - 2 We don't attempt to hide our eccentricities or our appearance.
 - 3 Online profiles are not fantasy representations, but match reality.
 - 4 People want to present – or are unable to hide – their true selves.
 - 5 In spite of what many people think, networking sites encourage us to be who we are.**b** Look at the opening paragraph. How does the writer arouse the reader's curiosity about the differing viewpoints?
- 4 **a** Find eight adjectives in the article which refer to different personality traits.
b Cover the article. Can you remember what nouns collocated with these verbs?

create portray put up present choose reflect express reveal

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Presenting a self-image