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INTERNET DWELLING, CYBORGS, AND THE MATRIX OF MODERNITY:

AN EMPIRICAL INQUIRY WITH CRITICAL-HERMENEUTIC FEATURES

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Psychology Department

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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October 22, 2004

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Dissertation Title: Internet Dwelling, Cyborgs, and the Matrix of Modernity:
                         An Empirical Inquiry with Critical-Hermeneutic Features

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Abstract

Amidst modernity's expanding electronic social matrix, this cultural-historical inquiry explores the technological construction of human being (e.g., cyborgs) and sociality in the America Online cyberscape. A two-tiered critical-hermeneutic method enables exploration of the broad rationalizing historical narrative and the localized play of virtual discursive practices impacting human meaning construction, selfhood, and social practice. A third and fourth tier of inquiry occasions integration of "psychological" meanings found in research participant experiential descriptions and interviews. This four-tier interplay reveals a bodily ethic enabling participants to modify subjectifying Internet practices toward meaningful social ends. Otherwise, eclipsed interpretive bodily powers contribute to "undecidability" about meaning constructions and identities. Despite multiple identity solicitations, normalization of objectified and schizoid being, and "panoptic" e-surveillance, participants pursued genuine and personally satisfying encounters.

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Naming the "things that are absent" is breaking the spell of the things that are; moreover it is an ingression of a different order of things into the established one – *"le commencement d'un monde."*

Herbert Marcuse
One-Dimensional Man

Introduction:
The Subject and Sociality as Configured by Modernity and the Internet

A few bytes beyond the cusp of the twenty-first century, Western culture increasingly finds itself held within the sway of a cyberspace-human nexus. This entwinement has yet to be articulated in a manner that attends to the relationship between discourses of modernity and first person accounts of experience. The following culturally informed inquiry seeks to accomplish just that – it seeks to address the reciprocal transformations always already occurring when one's being in the world is infused with the possibilities afforded by Internet sociality. In the words of Kenneth Gergen (1991), "As we become increasingly conjoined with our social surroundings, we come to reflect those surroundings" (p.49). The cultural-historical setting for exploring the impact of reliance upon basic forms of Internet sociality appears to be optimal inasmuch as the explosion of the 3D Web revolution heralded by software architects of the 1990s remains largely unrealized (e.g., Kushner, 2004; Hunter & Lastowka, 2003; Ronnblom, 2002).

Catching sight of the recent historical context of lived out transformations informed by Internet use can be, in the words of Michel Foucault (1978), a way of providing a "history of the present" – a way of contributing to a chronicle of subjective transformations which stand as the effects of contemporary historical force-relations. When we are able to gaze back upon the historical shifts that coincide with the mobile productions of power and knowledge, Foucault suggests that "things appear in a very different light" (p.17). Thus the production of subjects and the meanings they live are understood differently in the light of the interplay of force-relations. Similarly, Martin

Heidegger (1962) understands the historical situation Dasein (the human way of being there) finds itself thrown into as participating in Dasein's disclosure. Dasein as **"**futural . . . is in the process of having-been, [and] can by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, takes over its own throwness . . ." (p. 437). Here, Heidegger also recognizes the import of history. In addition, Heidegger understands that an awareness of the future (e.g., one's mortality) can motivate an effort to retrieve the freedom to choose and act through the appropriation of marginalized possibilities associated with one's culturally relevant heritage; a potent prescription for a *cultural therapeutic* which admits the return of "repressed" contexts into human science narratives. It is my presupposition that these "repressed" contexts inform human experiences of self, styles of embodiment, social practices, and beliefs about truth and reality. In any case, we see that both philosophers think about history as bound up with the present. One significant way in which they differ, however, is in the methodological approach each thinker employs in appropriating the past. Whereas Foucault prefers a micro-analytic of discontinuous power relations, Heidegger adopts a macrocosmic analysis of the teleological Enframing of Western culture. Any effort to integrate the interpretive stance of Heidegger's hermeneutic project with Foucault's genealogical project in a practical manner requires some explication.

A review of theoretical support for engaging in a psycho-cultural-historical study informed by a critical-hermeneutics will be articulated in the methodological portion of this research project. At this point, however, I wish to remark that while Foucault and Heidegger are rarely paired methodologically, this qualitative research project will stand as an exploratory heuristic, or rather, a concretization of the fruitful possibilities

associated with the coupling of Foucauldian and Heideggerian praxis. Accordingly, I will outline below a methodological approach to combining broad narratives of history (cf. Heidegger) with Foucault's emphasis on the "history of the present" – or rather, with Foucault's emphasis on efforts to chronicle the competing cultural practices and discourses which vie to inscribe bodies, beliefs, and social practices. In addition, I will incorporate Heidegger's "hermeneutic circle" as a means to expanding research participant lived understandings of their Internet based experience. Thus, I will not focus on obtaining an objective understanding of research participant experience. Instead, I will begin my qualitative inquiry with research participant preunderstandings of their experience as a starting point for resituating and reinterpreting their protocols.

To begin, I will apply Foucauldian and Heideggerian thought by first reading "protocols," or first-person experiential accounts, and interpreting them in a manner which identifies each research participant's lived concatenation of meanings. Second, I will interview each research participant in a manner that will allow their life-situated meanings to be lifted out from average everyday understandings of language and meaning. Lifting out new significations from the language used by research participants will, of course, require an interpretive attentiveness to the plurivocal nature of language – an attentiveness to the way in which connotative, non-literal, imaginative, and life-situated contexts are always already bound up with literal understandings of language. After doing so, I will then "circle" back and integrate the interpretations made in Steps 1 and 2 into a *person-centered narrative* of research participant's lived meanings. The Continental thinker, Calvin Schrag (1989), quotes Heidegger in a manner that lends support to methodological efforts to privilege a place for the perspective of the person or

'subject:' "Philosophy must perhaps start from the 'subject' and return to the 'subject' in its ultimate questions, and yet, it may not pose its questions in a one-sidedly subjectivistic manner" (p. 10). Schrag also quotes the decontructionist, Jacque Derrida: "The subject is absolutely indispensable. I don't destroy the subject; I situate it. That is to say, I believe that a certain level of experience and of philosophical and scientific discourse one cannot get along without the notion of the subject" (p. 129). Said differently, inquiries into meaning are meant to decentralize the authority of the 'subject' in the meaning-making process, not to erase the relevance of the 'subject.' In decentering the 'subject, other contributions to *meaning production* can then be imported from the margins of consideration into the relative center of the interpretive process.

Thus, I will next shift from a methodological emphasis upon the experience of the person or 'subject' to an analysis of technology. Accordingly, in Step 3, I will interpret the parameters associated with each research participant's Internet site of communication in a way that identifies forces motivating particular social practices. Fourth, I will pursue a culturally and historically informed interpretive perspective by reading and interpreting selected texts which elaborate on Western narratives regarding modern technology – Western narratives which provide a background for understanding the experience of the Internet. I will then circle back from Step 4 to Step 3 and integrate the two interpretations into a *technocultural-historical narrative.* Finally, I will fashion a *situated global narrative* of Internet subjectivity and sociality by integrating the person-centered narrative and the technocultural-historical narrative into a unified critical-hermeneutic account. The situated global narrative will therefore stand as an

instantiation of how person-centered and cultural-historical processes contribute to the construction of meaning, experience, and social actions.

In summary, the hermeneutic circle will be the interpretive device occasioning a synthesis of the four steps leading up to the situated global narrative. Step 3 will concretize the critical contribution to the interpretive process insofar as discursive practices converging upon the local sites of Internet communication will be identified. The four major steps comprising this critical-hermeneutic approach are reviewed below:

1) A descriptive-interpretive meaning analysis of each research participant's lived out meanings;

2) An interpretive analysis of interview material from research participants regarding their understanding of life-situated meanings embedded in their respective experiential descriptions. This analysis will also attend to the non-literal meanings and life-situated contexts inextricably linked to language usage.

3) An analysis of the locally situated forces influencing value formations and/or social practices insofar as they are associated with the Internet site of communication identified by each research participant.

4) A thematic analysis of landmark texts that elucidates the cultural-historical backdrop of modern technology and its place in human existence

Partial justification for the achievement of this kind of situated global narrative is founded upon the presupposition that while meaning and experiential phenomenon appear within the holistic backdrop of discourse, meaning and experience cannot be reduced exclusively to discursive production. Thus, my attentiveness to each research

participant's experiential description and interview is intended to reserve a narrative place for the unique, creative, or marginalized meanings lived out by each person. Such moments of creativity might be instantiated as practices linked to motivations unsupported by the web of discourses encircling them.

That said, I as a human science researcher, contend that by taking into account technocultural dreams of the future, a current profile of technoculture, and the historical horizons of technoculture, we can enrich current understanding about the kind of subjects we become amidst the embrace of Internet communication. By way of prologue to articulating this empirical-critical-hermeneutic project, I will first attempt to lay bare some of the contemporary representations already implicated in cyberculture rhetoric.

Literature Review

Images of the Future Handed Down from the Twentieth Century

Sometimes one can draw upon enduring cultural artifacts in order to inspire imaginal understanding of ambiguous experiences. In doing so, Edward Murray (1986) tells us that imagination, or "imaginizing," can become an occasion for human being to light up the scene of life. Said differently, imaginizing invites the horizon or ever-present backdrop of the cultural imagination to reveal itself in a more differentiated manner. For Murray, human beings are "bequeathed" the foundation of culture and tradition - and thereupon the human being often uncritically "builds and functions" throughout everyday existence. In order to articulate the kind of life imagined for us by culture, Murray remarks that "having embodied the culture and traditions of our people, we can imaginatively distance ourselves from such and in due time move toward an authentic owning or even repudiation of the customs, values, or mores" (p. 69). In doing so,

imaginizing speaks in an ornate non-literal tongue by hovering near the site of frozen

dominant discourses.   Dwelling in this way allows for the retrieval of previously eclipsed

ambiguities at the heart of things. In the parlance of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Madison,

1981), these kinds of "creative speech acts" (cf. epideictic) can issue forth new meanings

in the cultural world. New sounds and perspectives are thereby "torn" from language

insofar as the muted "intention to signify" is allowed to struggle to articulate its situated

offering. Bearing witness to the productive human power of imaginizing may then allow

for disenfranchised meanings to come into presence – to emerge more fully into

audibility and visibility. Indeed, this modest research inquiry acknowledges the pictorial

basis of language (viz., Egyptian hieroglyphics, ideograms of 15th century China and 6th

century Mesoamerica). And, as David Abram argues, acknowledgement of image can

become the condition of possibility for revivifying sensual human powers for knowing

the estranged "earthly world around us"(p. 94).

To that end, I will begin by identifying and dialoguing with a few of the

prevailing metaphors Western culture lives by in the next three sections. That is to say, I

will start by invoking a movement toward a more differentiated understanding of digitally

influenced metaphors which infuse average everyday existence.

The Cyborg. In the seminal essay "A Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway

(1991) characterizes this emerging inseparability of human and machine with the

compelling metaphor of the "cyborg." "A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of

machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (p.

149). The potent image of Haraway's cyborg neatly maps onto modernity's burgeoning

proliferation of computer-outfitted persons opting to jack into computer-generated

structures of reality via the Internet. Haraway's feminist treatise, however, muses upon such couplings as transgressive and irreverent: "The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence" (p.151). That is to say that when one is 'cyborged,' preconceptions about what is natural and what is possible are radically called into question. Still quoting Haraway:

> Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect
>
> its father to save it through a restoration of the garden . . . The cyborg would
>
> not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream
>
> of returning to dust . . . The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that
>
> they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism,
>
> not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are exceedingly
>
> unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential.
>
> (p.151)

As Haraway argues above for cyborg uniqueness, resistance, and "pleasure in the confusion of boundaries" (p. 150), we can ask ourselves what it is to be confused in this way; what is it to be simultaneously fused and con-fused?

Fusus, to be fused, means to pour or blend (Misch, 1999). Through the thorough mixing of two disparate substances, merger into something new is made possible. In this way, perhaps the fusion of human being with Internet technology gives rise to the blurring of boundaries – a disavowal of differences in order to enhance compatibility. Con-fusion, standing before or with fusion, may reflect the way in which the undifferentiated state of what is near/far, real/imaginary, public/private, vital/fantastical,

and human/machine is encountered by the cyborg without protest. In this disorienting
realm of previously unthought and unimagined transgressions of traditional thresholds,
there can be a continuum of experiences ranging from pleasurable immersion to
precipitous risk. One's attentiveness to an ongoing explicit dialogue with this unexplored
terrain may help illuminate the "way," that is, the emerging horizon of possibilities. But,
while cyborgs may entertain their fascination with the novelty of unexplored frontiers,
they may do well to remember that attempting to be "exceedingly unfaithful" to origins
still implies the presence of that which is repudiated. New fusions may not fully erase, as
Haraway would have it, the way in which one is bound up with "mud . . . . militarism and
. . . capitalism."

 "2001." In a distinctive contrast to Haraway's celebration of "blasphemy," Joel
Achenbach's (2000) millennial New Year's Eve article in the Washington Post laments
some of the emblematic images found in Stanley Kubrick and Arthur Clarke's film,
"2001: A Space Odyssey."

> The technology in "2001" – like much technology today – is
> dehumanizing. The characters have been sapped of personality. Several
> astronauts are in suspended animation, a state from which they are doomed
> never to awake. Throughout the movie the food dispensed by machines is
> disgusting to contemplate – The Future [*sic*] is intensely unappetizing.
>
> Using a "picture phone," the characters can communicate across
> great distances of space, but it is hollow communication, innately cold,
> burdened with platitudes. We see a man wishing his daughter happy
> birthday, but he tells her he can't be at her party. He has to go to the

Moon. Technology is supposed to ease the pain of separation, but it

also makes it possible. Today we are wired to global-spanning networks.

We can send countless e-mails, work the phone nonstop, even stay in

touch with wireless gadgets – and never pause long enough to have what

amounts to a real conversation.

Are we masters of our technology – or slaves to it? (p. B5)

Achenbach's disenchantment is as much about Kubrick and Clarke's dystopian prophetic

images of homeless, insular, disengagement as with the "wired" state of post-millennial

relationships. Where Achenbach expresses distress over a putative decline in "real"

encounters, the reader is left to infer that by "real" Achenbach equates direct physical

communication with a vital and energized way of being with the other. And yet, a literal

and metaphorical protest pervades Achenbach's characterization of "2001" and its

lukewarm passion for tête à tête, embodied relations. Achenbach seems to sense that

such relations end up pervaded by an implicit understanding that something else trumps

the importance of direct human encounter – the Moon awaits! And yet, what might the

importance of the Moon mean? In this particular instance, it appears that destination

Moon is not inspired by some enchanting quixotic quest; it is not inspired by an epic

(space) odyssey in the spirit of Homer's Odysseus - but rather, the lunar trip fulfills the

requirements of the state. The journey is a work related trip – a functional activity - and a

dispassionate one at that. Kubrick and Clarke seem to have poignantly framed the

emotional/emotionless life of a family by situating its configuration within the context of

work, virtual communication, and separation.

"**<u>The Matrix.</u>**" A third contemporary image rounds out this introduction. In Joel Silver's (1999) cyberfuture production of the sequel bound film, "The Matrix," the audience is brought to the ultra-cool limits of simulation ecstasy. The directors transport the sedentary spectators into the visually and acoustically stunning future world where infants have been permanently and unknowingly wired into computer-generated simulations of Earth by tyrannical Artificial Intelligence machines. A small band of renegade revolutionary hackers are aware of this deception. Collectively, they are able to travel back and forth between the simulated world and the post-apocalyptic earth. They do this with full knowledge that the virtual world is more out*land*ishly real than, for instance, Jean Baudriallard's (1983) "hyperreality." For Baudrillard the "real" has become a hyperreal world where simulations not only constitute "reality," they also lack any intelligible referent to the "desert of the real" – a desert which is exemplified in extreme form by the desolate and despoiled planet Earth of "The Matrix." Thus, in "The Matrix," the price of virtual life is the loss of recognition that simulation (simulacra) are maps of a territory which stylishly and ecstatically entrance the masses such that they fail to see that, "[s]imulation is . . . the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (p. 2).

Throughout "The Matrix," the monotony of the "real" world pales in comparison to virtual "life." The revolutionary hackers' computer generated doppelgangers, divested of their all-to-human physical bodies, perform tantalizing, earth-defying, posthuman martial arts stunts thrilling the moviegoers with special effects which surpass the audiences' theretofore wildest fantasies. Nevertheless, the hackers stand opposed to this mesmerizing illusion, relentlessly attempting to liberate the masses in the name of

restoring the freedom to choose between inhabiting a virtual world or facing the stark

reality of a severely decayed planet. In a telling scene midway through the film one of

the hackers, Cypher, foreshadows awareness of this all-important choice. The Judas-like

Cypher ultimately opts to betray his freedom fighting comrades. During a clandestine

meeting with the Artificial Intelligence constructs at an upscale virtual restaurant, Cypher

eats a sumptuous steak while aptly summarizing his compelling rationale for being

reinserted "into" the Matrix and forgetting his life outside the Matrix: "I know this steak

doesn't really exist. I know that when I put it in my mouth, the Matrix is telling my brain

that it is juicy and delicious. After nine years, you know what I realize? (Cypher gives

an ecstatic sigh while chewing his simulated steak) Ignorance is bliss" (Silver, 1999).

What is at 'stake,' so to speak, for Cypher appears to be a resounding echo of a

lived virtual dilemma: Should one be concerned with the difference between cyber-

dreaming that one is happy and contented over against one's being awake and conscious

of "real" (dis)satisfaction? Moreover, why not plug into virtual happiness if the "real" is

so unappealing? If the "real" is analogous to "electrical signals interpreted by your

brain" (Silver, 1999) and there is no guarantee of existence outside those signals (cf.

solipsism), then what is the danger of living "inside" a computer-generated program?

In some ways, cultural icons like that of "The Matrix," "2001," and the cyborg

amplify a dilemma often evoked by radically new and pervasive technologies - nostalgia

for the "real" over against visionary rhapsodies calling the polis forward into potentially

liberating frontiers. "The Matrix" seems to suggest that a dystopian stance toward the

gigantic pervasiveness of virtual technologies is called for. And while "2001" may

remind us of the potential loss of our humanity, Haraway's cyborg metaphor references a

call to emancipatory transgression and transcendence. For these reasons, this study

grounds an understanding of the effects of Internet life through interpretation of

experiential reports which are understood against the backdrop of cultural, historical, and

'imaginatively' informed perspectives.

The Scope of the Virtual Mis-en-Scène. Twenty-first century human beings

find themselves ensconced in digital technologies that either mediate or replace corporeal

encounters. The proliferation of human interchanges with their mechanized counterparts

include voice mail, pagers, fax machines, wireless Palms, Personal Digital Assistants

(PDAs) with connectivity, Web-ready mobile phones, Internet Instant Messaging, picture

email, streaming video/audio – to name a few (e.g., Marshal, 2002; Captain, 2002;

Rykens, 2002; Rivlin, 2001; Csatari, 2001). Institutionalized trends involving

communication technology and human interaction are also evident. According to Edward

Cornish (1996) the technosocial movement toward "real time" distance learning classes,

virtual corporations that rely on mobile communication technology, online shopping, and

electronic-town meetings are among the many cultural signs that the human technology

interface has become pervasively entwined in human affairs. Manifold versions of

communication technology have become Western civilization's desideratum. From the

viewpoint of cultural commentator, Mark Slouka (1995), humanity has become

"wrapped" in technology. As the North American population converges *en masse* onto

the electronic frontier - framed by the likes of America Online (AOL), The Microsoft

Network (MSN), and Netscape - it may be that the rhythms of nature recede in the face of

the pervasive technological rhythms of "point and click," "send," and "you've got mail."

According to Don Tapscot (1998) in *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net*

Generation, the Internet is providing the occasion for a "communication revolution" through its impact on the plugged-in Net-Generation (N-Gen). The N-Genners comprise 30 percent of the population in the United States; the largest generational cohort to date. This group represents the offspring of the Baby Boomers (29 percent). Hence, they are often referred to as the Baby Boom Echo. Tapscot argues that the N-Genners (5-25 years old), are the first cohort to have grown up with the Net as part of its milieu, or at least with digital technology as a familiar part of their world. Among other considerations, Tapscot claims that Net communication technology dissolves traditional notions of authority. For instance, as Netgen kids outpace adults in their knowledge of the Internet, they have also become more self-reliant and sophisticated in networking through personalized home pages and audio/video broadcasting. "Increasingly, young people are the masters of the interactive environment and their fate in it" (p. 26). In addition, the movement away from the passivity associated with television viewing, to the more interactive quality of the Net has given rise to a generation of youth who are in the words of Sherry Turkle, "empower[ed] . . . to confront, learn, and deal with . . . issues in a constructive way" (p. 126). Patterns of subjectivity and sociality are undergoing metamorphosis in the new millennium.

My interest, therefore, is in forging a culturally situated psychological inquiry into the burgeoning expansion of the Internet, as a communication technology. This research is geared toward filling a relative absence of literature which critically examines experiential reports of subjectivity and sociality as an effect of barely visible discourses of Western culture.

As a way of attending to issues of power and enframing, this literature review is organized around psychological, techno-cultural, continental, and critical thought pertinent to *electronically mediated relations* (EMRs). In order to complement or even offset the current speculative theory and objective research, this inquiry offers a critical-hermeneutic perspective providing experience-near renderings of EMR's as a culturally situated phenomenon. I therefore suggest that research participant experiential descriptions will provide insight into both the lived experience and the referential "matrix" of those engaged in Internet relations.

Before proceeding with a discussion of EMR's, the *where* and *who* of Internet communication must be clarified. Popular culture and technoculture literature refer to the *where* of communication as "cyberspace." Paradoxically, the place of cyberspace is both a somewhere and a nowhere; and though we may associate cyberspace with the computer screen, the sense of Internet spatiality seems to both include and transcend notions of screenal reality.

<u>Cyberspace Explored</u>. The term cyberspace, was first introduced in William Gibson's (1984) cybercult classic, *Neuromancer*. In this seminal cyberpunk vision of the future, Gibson refers to cyberspace as a "consensual hallucination." Gibson's ethereal rendering suggests that human encounter through the Internet rests upon a mutual agreement to 'meet in' an unworldly imaginary domain. Human beings leave Earth and join others in the disincarnate realm of fantasy.

Robert Romanyshyn (1994) further augments the metaphorical understanding of cyberspace by suggesting that the astronaut body readied for departure from Earth has now become the cybernaut launched to the "inner space" sea of digitized images. For

Romanyshyn, both of these metaphorically lived bodies are no longer animated by full

sensual immersion in the world. Each lived-out bodily orientation has been severed from

its earthly context. As such, both bodies are poised to explore realms which transcend

immediate physical surroundings. Romanyshyn laments that the body, decontextualized

from its immediate world, becomes a functional tool, a spectator, which in effect narrows

its sensual hold on the world to visual perception. According to Romanyshyn, the

cultural-historical understanding of the body as an anatomical object signified the

culmination of the dream of technological consciousness "to distance itself from the

world and from the flesh that ties us to the world" (p. 94). By extension, Romanyshyn

observes, that our age is now marked by cyberspace dreams where a new analogue to the

astronaut body has emerged in the guise of the "dream body." The sign of the dream

body represents a dis-integration into a cybernaut that "does not dwell in the things that

surround it . . . the cyberbody *haunts* the things of its virtual world" (p. 95). Furthermore,

it exists with "a mind independent of the biology of bodies" (96). In either case, both of

the metaphorically lived bodies are not "ensouled" for Romanyshyn. Each lived-out

body has, instead, incarnated the (programmed) technological dream or 'soul' of its era

thereby risking the loss of a "sense of home." For Romanyshyn, cyberspace becomes in

effect another occasion for leaving one's senses and inhabiting denatured dream worlds.

A third and perhaps more concrete view characterizes cyberspace as set of images

generated by computer technology, or rather, software generated representations which

substitute for "reality" (Gelerneter, 1991). Here the imaginal aspect is conspicuously

absent and replaced by an emphasis on the materiality of the electronic environment.

Differences aside, Kevin Robins (1995) would likely agree that all three perspectives

implicitly or explicitly support the notion that cyberspace solicits the computer user to turn "a blind eye on the world we live in" (p. 135).

In average everyday EMR practice, the Internet opens onto several interactive domains. Specifically, netizens can be found communing in a variety of configured social spaces. A vast array of topical, interest driven, romantic, or cybersex interactions comprise the burgeoning number of chat rooms available to those interested in text-based modes of relating. Other text-based environments, like MUDs (multi-user domains), invite game playing and linguistic constructions with one or more online persona. Or, one can access a virtual community replete with images of cityscapes and self constructed avatars of oneself and one's electronic interlocutors. In effect, the online user can entertain the belief that he or she has "stepped through" the screen into text-based or visual landscapes where relational narratives are co-designed, abruptly severed, or seemingly precluded by a teeming swirl of disconnected declarative outbursts. Amidst these scenarios, relationships or communities endure or dissolve depending on the nature of commitment enacted by its participants.

In light of the cyberspace discussion hitherto, it appears that cyberspace is a liminal term that simultaneously gestures toward the concrete words and images framed by technological hardware, while also pointing to the imaginal space solicited by the shroud of Internet distance and incorporeality.

Digital Subjectivity. The next question to be addressed involves the *who* of Netspace communication. Many Net enthusiasts and academics have designated this *who* with the name of the ambiguous figure known as "cyborg." The term cyborg was first introduced in 1960 by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline (1960), two researchers

involved in medical investigations for the United States space program. Clynes and Kline proposed to develop a project with the express purpose of integrating humans with machines. Their objective was to optimize the body's capacity to survive in alien environments; in particular, to survive environments associated with space travel. Mechanical enhancements of the flesh were designed to provide automatic or "unconscious regulation of the cyborg's homeostatic functions vis à vis unfavorable deep space conditions. For some cyborg commentators (e.g., Halacy, 1965; Tomas, 1995), the erstwhile human, now partially altered or "enhanced," finds itself freed from factical limitations on its way to becoming a "superman" or "superwoman."

By contrast, Haraway appropriated the cyborg image into her "informatics of domination" and reconfigured its meaning into a metaphor for the feminist subversion of oppressive identity constructions. Haraway envisioned the cyborg as enabling an oppositional form of consciousness at the forefront of movement toward a post-gender world. The cyborg became a figure committed to perversity and the transgression of totalizing political inscriptions of nature (and the female body). For Haraway, then, the sign of the cyborg was to be extended beyond its coding as a solution to the Clynes and Kline body-outer space dilemma. The focus was, instead, to be shifted to seizing oppressive technological tools in order to "interface in nearly infinite, polymorphous ways" (p. 163). Historical constructions of the body could then be overcome by weaving together new social networks which provide possibilities for being freed from dominant discourses. Recrafting identities and bodies becomes an active and productive stance for Haraway. "The cyborg is not subject to Foucault's biopolitics, the cyborg simulates politics, a much more potent field of operations' (p. 163). Whether or not Haraway's

subversive stance is a part of Internet sociality will be called into question by the research protocols employed in this study.

Haraway's perspective is certainly not the only way to understand human-machine fusions. Thus, I will now proceed to elucidate a variety of representative perspectives on embodiment and subjectivity. I hope to broaden or "deepen" the referential context in which the cyborg subject can be located. This contextualization will include discussion of the physiological perspective, technocultural perspective, psychological perspective, Continental perspective, and a critical theory perspective.

The Physiological Perspective

In Fred Evans' (1993) *Psychology and Nihilism*, he sets out upon a genealogical study of the cybernetic organization of the human "mind." In short, Evans argues that cognitive psychology adopts a computer model of mind as the ideal description of mental activity. Evans claims that the cognitive sciences have reduced mental actions to computational processes. Moreover, cognitivism arose from the hegemony of rationality which contributed to spawning the machine model of consciousness – a model that effectively denies or devalues other modalities of human existence. Where Evans locates a field of discourses signifying consciousness as cybernetically organized, I suggest that the medical field has analogously propagated an understanding of the anatomical body as machine-like.

Upon consultation of the classic text of the biological sciences, *Gray's Anatomy* (Williams, Warwick, Dyson, & Bannister, 1989), it becomes evident that the natural science study of the anatomical body centers its attention on both the structural form and the biological processes which comprise the human anatomy. With regard to biological

processes, the reader is instructed that the organic body is fundamentally a cellular organism. The human body begins as a single cell; it matures towards infancy through the multiplication and differentiation of cells; and finally, it approaches mortality not long after cellular duplication comes to a halt. The biological end of cellular division is referred to as the Hayflick Limit (Travis, 1998). When human cells have divided on average, fifty times, the cellular clock comes to a halt. Thus, mortal human destiny is posited as genetically coded – finitude, in the form of the Hayflick Limit, is largely preprogrammed. That is to say, the anatomical biological clock places limits on longevity; and within those Hayflick parameters we can acknowledge our bodily dependence on the external environment for sustaining life long enough to exhaust the limits of our biological clock. The organism's capacity for ongoing interaction with its environment serves not only as an occasion for survival, but also as a significant support for the reproduction and maintenance of structural integrity (e.g., skeletal structure).

In addition, the reader learns that physiology is the wellspring from which the epiphenomenon of consciousness emerges. The nervous system, which is comprised of bioelectrical networks of communication, enables the organism to detect and adaptively respond to fluctuations in internal homeostasis. In scenarios where environmental stimuli affect changes in internal states, behaviors are understood as mere communicative responses designed to alter the organism's response to the stimulus. Consciousness thus becomes a secondary effect of tension states that serve to trigger behaviors aimed at reestablishing optimal bodily equilibrium. This materialist premise conflates bio-mechanical processes with an understanding of "mind" in such a way that the "contents" of mind merely reflect the data of machine-like interactions with the environment.

The naturalist view of the factical human body outlined thus far suggests that physiological discourse posits human behavior, communication, and consciousness as linked to the experience of bodily disequilibrium. This mechanistic view constructs human embodiment as dependent upon environmental resources in such a way that adaptive responses are merely a montage of wide ranging "instinctual" coping styles.

In a positive sense, the medical discourse implicitly acknowledges a fundamental relationship between mind/body and person/world. There is a profile of experiential truth here. To be sure, as human beings we do sometimes explicitly acknowledge our organismic susceptibility and vulnerability to environmental fluctuations (e.g., blight, extreme temperature change). As such, we are reminded that the project of survival compellingly solicits our attentiveness to basic biological processes (e.g., eating, sleeping, hygiene). However, the "survival instinct" will inevitably be thwarted and we will eventually encounter our finitude – if not through the contingency of existence or disease, then through exhausting our predetermined cellular Hayflick Limit. This implies that the mind presides over a factically flawed body and that human embodiment is lived as a vulnerable body in relation to its world. Do such dualistic assumptions about mind/body and nonunitary assumptions about person/world relatedness inform the contours of human existence? We will eventually examine how these beliefs may be implicated in one's participation in EMRs. Furthermore, we will ask whether the notions of dualism and person/world separateness can be supplemented or even modified by a human anthropology of lived experience. But first, we will continue to pursue the implications of mapping the human body through the codings derived from machine metaphors.

Among the consequences of objectifying the human body as an organic machine includes the temptation to view inorganic machines as virtually compatible counterparts of human physiology. Following from this discourse, the cyborg can be understood as the seamless marriage of two functionally equivalent forms of matter. Indeed, Shankar Vedantam (2001) reported on groundbreaking research out of the Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry (MPIB) in Germany where multiple brain cells from snails have been successfully meshed with silicon chips thereby forming a "part-mechanical, part-living electronic circuit." The preeminent goal of researching this interface between biology and technology is to develop prosthetics which function as a *more responsive* extension of the human nervous system (e.g., artificial retinas) than the limited computational functionality of silicon chips. Given the MPIB objective of overcoming mechanical circuit insufficiency, it is interesting to note that the assumption of body-machine equivalence is *not* a founding principle of the MPIB project. Quite the contrary, organic embodiment is seen as much more versatile:

> Nerve cells in the brain find each other, strengthen connections and
>
> build patterns through complex chemical signaling that is driven in
>
> part by the environment . . .
>
> Silicon chips, on the other hand, can perform specific functions
>
> with great reliability and speed, but have limited responsiveness to the
>
> environment and almost no ability to alter themselves according to need.
>
> (p. A3)

A compelling phenomenological explanation of bodily complexity can be found in Merleau-Ponty's (1942) work, *The Structure of Behavior*. Therein, Merleau-Ponty

provides a rigorous demonstration that the physical order (e.g., ions, chemicals) and the

vital order (e.g., tissue, organs) of human existence are not intelligible without due

consideration given to the human order. It is the human order, *in situ*, where experiences

of context bound meaning subsume and organize biological functions. Hence, a molar

analysis of embodiment in its relation to environment can shed light upon the failure of

silicon chips, in and of themselves, to achieve the same adaptability and versatility of a

human nerve cell. The silicon chip requires an interface with the context infused vital

and human order. "The idea is to combine the mechanical abilities of electronic circuits

with the extraordinary complexity and intelligence of the human brain" (Vedantam, 2001,

p. A3).

In either case, the existential truth of the biological and the phenomenological

perspectives is that human embodiment is mortal. Naturalist researcher's may, however,

be in pursuit of research designed to enhance the human body in a way that surpasses its

taken for granted organic limitations. Preoccupations with human exemptions to bodily

finiteness have brought medical researchers to the threshold of "posthuman" possibilities

promising to overcome bodily frailties. Borrowing from *Immortality*, Ben Bova's (1998)

upbeat and credulously optimistic overview of biomedical research, one encounters a

fantastical vision:

> As the American immunoligist William R. Clark put it, "Death is
>
> not inextricably intertwined with the definition of life." Just because
>
> human beings have always died does not mean they always will die.
>
> [D]eath from old age, death as the inescapable end of life, will
>
> become a thing of the past, a dark memory of primitive days.

You might be one of the immortals (p. 3).

Throughout his book, Bova goes on to recount life-extension research breakthroughs associated with gene therapy, embryonic stem cell research, fetal tissue transplants, telomeric regeneration, and nanotechnology. For Bova, each of these research domains holds out the promise that immortality "is within sight" if conservative institutions such as law and religion give up the need to maintain the status quo. From my perspective, it follows that where humans are understood to be like machines, or at least as structured like machines, we may well find that the fantasies of transcending finite existence continue to abound – whether that be in the form of overcoming everyday limitations, or in the form of entertaining beliefs that one can shed the mortal coil. The notion that malfunctioning organic or mechanical body parts (e.g., pacemakers, mechanical hearts, computer chips that restore vision), can be repaired, replaced, or upgraded ad infinitum may sustain efforts to promote human-machine fusions. Do such aspirations partially inform the current migration onto the electronic frontier?

To be sure, when human being joins with technology, one's powers can be extended, but to what degree and toward what meaning? Dreams of immortality notwithstanding, what else might we consider about the possibilities afforded by human-technology fusions? Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) cogently underscores a lived perspective on the relations between humans and technology in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. "Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument, and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world" (p. 146). If this is the case, to what sociocultural end might humanity poise itself when imagining "bodily synthesis" with machines and, moreover, when

uncritically donning the "bodily auxiliary" of Internet garb? Sigmund Freud (1961)

discussed the implications of human-machine fusions in *Civilization and its Discontents*.

At the time of its publication, Freud was commenting upon the significance of the

technology of the 1930s. Advanced instruments like the Internet did not exist. Thus, it

might be said that Freud's words were remarkably prophetic:

> Long ago he [*sic*] formed an ideal conception of omnipotence and
>
> omniscience which he embodies in his gods. To these gods, he attributed
>
> everything that seemed unattainable to his wishes or that was forbidden
>
> to him. One may say, therefore, that these gods were cultural ideals.
>
> To-day he has come very close to the attainment of his ideal . . .
>
> Man [*sic*] has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic god. (pp. 42-43)

In light of Freud's far-reaching notion of the "prosthetic god," is it not fair to ask

if Western culture has been seduced into striving for a supracultural ideal which extols a

new mode of being aimed at surpassing bodily finitude (e.g., overcoming space-time

barriers)? By extension, are Internet users implicitly or explicitly gratified by the

experience of making interpersonal connections with others beyond the reach of the

"body's natural means?" And if so, following Merleau-Ponty, then what cultural world is

projected around humanity? Specifically, as the North Americas becomes E-mericanized

through embracing the transborder (space-time defying) technology of the Internet, is

Western culture in the process of producing a human abode where mediated relationality

is meant to serve as a satisfying substitute for shared bodily presence? In order to address

such a question in this study, it was methodologically productive to expand upon

Merleau-Ponty and Freud by reading research participant protocols and wondering about

the ways in which EMRs participate in organizing human relatedness to one's embodied

self and that of embodied others. Where the Internet allows human beings to overcome

the strictures of geography and time, an experientially informed inquiry into the kind of

psychological, social, and cultural world provides grounding for abstract theoretical

speculations about the electronic world projected around humanity. Embarking upon this

kind of inquiry may allow for eclipsed aspects of human existence to be illuminated in a

manner which might more effectively situate naturalist discourse on physiology.

Technocultural Veiw

Just as the cyborg neologism may locate part of its lineage within physiological

discourse, the cultural past of the Internet shares part of its ancestry with the military

industrial complex; specifically with that of the Department of Defense. The

technoculture observer, Mark Dery (1996), recounts how a grant awarded to the

University of California, Los Angeles, led to the spawning of a military communication

network known as ARPANet (a.k.a. the Internet) in 1969. During and after 1983 the

Internet was subdivided into military, civilian, and National Science Foundation

networks. It was not until the 1990s that commercial services like America Online and

Compuserve came into prominence.

> Mind-bogglingly, the Internet is itself a part of a still larger complex of
>
> interconnected networks commonly called the Matrix, which also includes
>
> UseNet (a buzzing hive of discussion groups called "newsgroup"), FidoNet
>
> (a constellation of over twenty thousand BBSs scattered over six continents),
>
> and BITNET (Because its Time Network, an academic network) among
>
> others. (pp. 5-6)

With the then influential magazines like *WIRED* and *Mondo 2000*, the anarchic cyberspace culture found a partial outlet for the recording, recoding, and dissemination of its birthing process. For instance, with the civilian portion of the Internet free to develop without direct military purview, the early 1990s became a time when the emerging commercial space of the Internet was largely unregulated. According to Douglas Rushkoff in *Cyberia: Life in the Trenches of Cyberspace* (1994), the new frontier of cyberspace in the early 1990s attracted virtual reality entrepreneurs, psychedelic experimenters, underground computer hackers, neo pagans, and other pioneers. The fringe quality of the first-stage social demographic comprising cyberspace formed a backcloth for unusual ideas about consciousness and embodiment. The question concerning transcendence, as a form of E-volution, was pervasive.

Robert Romanyshyn (1989) provided a sober historical account of the relationship between transcendence, embodiment, and technology in *Technology as Symptom and Dream*. Romanyshyn spoke of the body as a social construction. He described the dream of technology as one which prepared the body to abandon nature, hence, to abandon earth. Romanyshyn demonstrated how estrangement from the fundamental ground of nature was perpetuated to such an extent that the human capacity for seeing in a richly meaningful was eclipsed. For example, the origin of the linear perspective in the art of fifteenth-century Italy became an occasion for human beings to experience the spectacle of the world at a distance. Through this detachment the spectator became a passive participant. The imaginal eye withered while at the same time the world died in the wake of its newly signified irrelevance. In turn, the body became a "corpse" as its sensuous attachment to the world was no longer held to be pertinent, and as the anatomical gaze

took precedence in defining the body. Ironically, the view of the body as corpse – along with related Cartesian implications - has become hyperbolized in some of the current mythopoetic rhapsodizing of cyberculture.

In a manner analogous to Romanyshyn's thought, Dery documented the liberal contemporary speculation encouraging Net dwellers to embrace the dream of "escape velocity" – the speed required by one body (e.g., space craft) to overcome the gravitational pull of a larger body (e.g., planet) and break free from the larger body's gravitational pull. This belief has been translated into a project of technological transcendence where cyberia (an interesting acoustic neighbor to Siberia) is endowed with the potential to open a space for "mind" to jettison the body and immerse itself into the global network of cyberspace. Pure Cartesian mind leaves the body and merges with machine. As a result, the illusion of overcoming corporeal finitude is symbolically achieved. Immortality is thought to be attained. This subculture folklore, which denigrates bodily existence, stands in antipodal contrast to Irwin Straus' (1952) phenomenological understanding that the "human physique reveals nature" through the upright posture and its corollary coordination of motility, gesture, and lived body sensorium. By contrast, the cyberian view of the body is one in which the body is somehow an impediment to the realization of one's full potential to transcend finitude.

Simon Perry (1994), professor of Art and Robotics at Carnegie Mellon University, has addressed the relationship of the embodied computer user's relation to sophisticated virtual environments. As software programming increasingly mimics and "organic" feel and "greater mimesis" in graphic representations, the computer user may be more inclined to view his or her body as a "meat body." This meat body operates in

the limited service of pressing keys in order for action to occur within these compelling computer generated landscapes. The "mind" wanders across the seductive images of cyberspace while the body is left to perform mundane keyboard tasks. Here, Perry seems to echo Romanyshyn and Dery's sentiment that the computer user's body reveals itself as an impediment to full imaginal immersion in cyberrealities. If this is typically the case, the overcoming of finitude indeed becomes a lived awareness of the body as a nuisance; as an obstacle to transcendence. Perry may have failed to recognize that the wandering "mind" in cyberspace implicates the use of vision to perceive images and text; and this necessity for seeing suggests the profound impossibility of entirely jettisoning embodiment in cyberspace.

Moreover, it has been suggested that as cyberdenizens become accustomed to watching worlds through electronic windows, the value of the natural environment has also been demoted in status (Slouka, 1995). As if prefiguring the dramatic tension between the real and the virtual in "The Matrix," Slouka suggests that the first hand experience of the embodied world pales in comparison to contemporary electronic simulations of encounter. According to Slouka, an ontological inversion has occurred where inside has become outside and absence has become presence. It may be no small coincidence that the denigration of direct encounter on the Internet is analogous to the military industrial complex privileging of technological advancement over the preservation of nature. To be sure, a critical-hermeneutic inquiry can be an effective vehicle for illuminating dualistic inscriptions contributing to the be-coming of the cyborg figure.

Psychological Perspective

In Kenneth Gergen's (1991) *The Saturated Self*, he announces that, "A new culture is in the making" based on a competition for relational time (p. 3). According to Gergen, the proliferation of communication technologies (e.g., electronic communication technologies) "make it possible to sustain relationships – either directly or indirectly – with an ever expanding range of other persons. In many respects we are reaching what may be viewed as a state of social saturation" (p. 3). In light of this social saturation, the challenges afforded by competition for relational time can initially leave one "numb" and overcome by "unfulfilled obligations" according to Gergen. In the long run, however, Gergen suggests that the invitation to immerse oneself in opportunities for global social connection can give rise to significant psychological and social transformations.

Gergen claims that mild forms of social saturation began in the low-tech nineteenth century with its reliance on the railroad, the telegraph, and the public postal service. In the twentieth century, America was introduced to the telephone, the automobile, the airplane, radio broadcasting, television, and motion pictures. For Gergen these technological innovations increased the number and broadened the range of relational others available to the individual. As the self was increasingly populated by "an infusion of possible identities," dilemmas of identity followed (p. 6). Romanticist and modernist notions of the self, as respectively "deep" or "rational," were called into question as technologically informed social arrangements highlighted a plurality of voices and selves clamoring for recognition and legitimacy. This plurality of selves and differing perspectives subverted notions of certainty and thereby inaugurated a postmodern awareness that assumptions regarding bounded identity were unfounded.

Gergen goes on to outline the features of a communal landscape where increasing involvement in electronically mediated interactions have saturated everyday sociality to such an extent that a broadened "range of fractional relationships further dissipates family functions" (p. 180).

In summary, Gergen argues that relational time in the postmodern world is frequently embedded in technological forms of relating. This accelerating trend is resulting in increased numbers of fragmented incorporeal relations which are gradually replacing face-to-face involvement in "deep" connections. Furthermore, exposure to the burgeoning multiplicity of postmodern perspectives, hitherto unavailable in the pre-Internet era, has made possible the erosion of the essentialist experience of a core or "true" self. Instead, people become "fractal selves" who engage in fractal relationships thereby setting the stage for a diminution of committed relationships and "authentic" encounters. The need for self-coherence finds itself impeded by technology's exposure of the individual to an increased range of perspectives that transcend viewpoints held by one' local community. The individual becomes multivoiced on a surface level leading to a "multiphrenia." By multiphrenia, Gergen means an expansive "acquisition of multiple and disparate potentials for being" which has arisen, in apart, from the individual's engagement with technologies of relationship (p. 69). Thus, the co-constructive process gives rise to an individual who is "populated" by many voices and who in turn exploits technology for its potential to provide increased numbers of relationships. A multiplication of fractal selves are thereby engaging in fractal relationships which set the stage for a diminution of committed relationships and "authentic" encounters. For example, the monogamous lover might become an individual with a number of "friendly

lovers." The individual engaged in depthful local community connections could become the globally linked cyborg networked in "social saturation."

In contrast to Gergen, Mark Poster (1995) claims that the dream world of cyberspace can evoke a "narcissistic stupor." Poster employs Wim Winder's film, "Until the End of the World," where the characters become mesmerized by a technological device allowing them to view their dreams. Their absorption is so compelling that they live in utter disregard for the lives of others in the world. As Romanyshyn (1988) cautions in an earlier work, this loss of corporeal communion can lead to depression; but not depression qua medical illness. Depression for Romanyshyn signifies a path to be trodden. It "is a matter of going home . . . it is not an illness to be cured" (p. 227). Here again, the implication by both Romanyshyn and Poster is that excessive engagement in virtual spaces may result in a depletion of involvement in one's shared corporeal world. Hence, immersion in these simulated representations, may lead to a path-ological condition which can be overlooked with regard to its potent meaning. Following from Heidegger (1962), the ensuing depression might be understood as an uncanny mood of dis-ease signifying that one's neglected relational possibilities have been passed over in favor of immersion in a tranquilizing form of alienation from one's genuine possibilities.

If there are dystopian aspects of cyberspace with the potential to evoke alienation from one's own being, it would seem that the task of an Internet culture psychology would be to demystify the romanticization of the Internet as a tool for transcendence, self realization, and genuine forms of relating. An understanding of the unsalutary potentials concealed by overly optimistic marketing and misinformation can serve the psychology field and Net dwellers in both proactive and reactive ways. Cyborg responses to the

economic and philosophical discourse on the nature of the self may concretely illuminate the lived significance of these trends.

Kevin Robins (1995) is a critic of the utopian flights of fancy heralding the cybertechnology revolution as a domain for glimpsing "heaven" and reviving conviviality amidst a world gone wrong. Within this context, Robins views cyberspace as an imaginary realm where cyborgs are invited to dwell in communally constructed fictions. He argues, however, that the fantasies of cyberspace promote infantile omnipotent strivings associated with the domination of nature. These fantasies can be particularly compelling in a world where individuals may feel dis-empowered and perhaps politically insignificant. The virtual sense of omnipotence solicited by cyberspace engagement becomes a condition for the possibility of acting upon potentially volatile delusions about possessing supreme magical powers. When these fantasies are conflated with the crisis of identity invoked by the ontological reframing of the self as multiple, fluid, and alterable, identity confusion may set in. Understanding oneself as an unbounded cyberspace body may engender experiences of fragmentation. As a result, cyberworld relationships may evidence a deterioration of normative ethics and confusion around social meaning. It is within this kind of social terrain that Robins envisions regressions to narcissistic forms of relating as commonplace. Pushed to an extreme, the privileging of impulsive gratification of wishes and desires may for some evoke overwhelming anxiety in the face of a postmodern dissolution of identity resulting in a retreat to the hallucinated omnipotence of childhood.

If and how often some of these cyber scenarios are enacted was a question in this study. In the foregoing work Robins offers what seems to be a plausible conjecture

grounded in mainstream psychological theory. This critical-hermeneutic inquiry shifts the focus away from a theoretical inquiry to an experience-near illumination of the various subject-world dialogues extant in cyberspace.

Having demythologized the utopian potentials of cyberspace, Robins goes on to consider generative transformative possibilities. Robins acknowledges Donald Winnicott's understanding of imagination as a "potential space" which gives rise to creative capacities and to creative infantile illusions which work in the service of "maturation." For instance, incremental maternal failures to gratify the omnipotent desires of a child become the occasion for that child to encounter limitations in a minimally traumatizing manner. The deflation of illusory omnipotence eventually opens the child to forming interdependent relations with others. Here then, Robins is acknowledging that the Internet can present itself as an opening onto a Winnicottian "transitional space" which enhances possibilities for egalitarian relations insofar as the disincarnate feel of cyberspace does not supplant the understanding that an embodied other is always implicated in EMRs.

Unlike Robins theoretical approach to understanding virtuality, Sherry Turkle (1995) provided an interview based cyberculture analysis in her landmark work, *Life on the Screen*. Turkle utilized observation, participation, and interview methods in her investigation into modern day cyborgs. She put together a cultural profile informed by self-reports of lived out experience. Turkle found that the Internet has become the theater for individual and collective communication and enactment of fantasy (e.g., intellectual, romantic, erotic). The cyborg can explore a variety of social possibilities as either a spectator or participant. Participation in these disembodied social scenes (e.g., WELLs,

MUDs, MUSEs) affords the netdweller an opportunity to reconstruct a dizzying number of alternate self (mis)representations. One simply has to create and "project" these representations onto the "other side" of the screen. The postmodern decentered self is afforded the opportunity to experiment with previously unexpressed identities (e.g., gender swapping). For some of Turkle's interviewees, the opportunity to "morph" allowed one to step into and perhaps gain insight into another worldview. As one female interviewee described it, morphing on the Internet becomes a form of "simulation as consciousness raising." Re-representation of oneself holds out transformative possibilities. Disembodied states expand one's range of relational possibilities and calls forth theretofore unlived modes of living one's identity.

Turkle found that the establishment of relationships in various cyber communities did not necessarily guarantee happy self-transformations. In the case of Stuart, he enjoyed a rich fantasy life in one of the interactive MUDs. His involvement in the MUD eventually led to a "cyberspace marriage." Even in the face of establishing a "marital" connection, Stuart felt that despite his lengthy and deep involvement in the MUD he experienced no alteration of his identity, nor did his relational way of being with embodied others change. Stuart described his experience as an "addictive waste of time."

Another interviewee, Robert, described a more fulfilling experience. He found that involvement in cyberspace relationships shielded him from addictive behaviors in his everyday life. Moreover, by escaping to a virtual community, Robert found that the relational opportunities for creative play on the MUD became an important milestone in his personal development. Robert was subsequently able to develop new ways to appreciate troublesome aspects of his life.

Turkle interpreted the divergent experiences of Stuart and Robert through identification of the different projects each brought to their respective MUD communities. For instance, Stuart's preexisting sense of self was "withdrawn, unappealing, and flawed." Given Stuart's tenuous sense of self, Turkle understood his immersion in MUD relations to be motivated by the attainment of reassuring constancy and reliability provided by its members. The dependability of the community stood as a marked contrast to the unpredictable nature of relationships available to Stuart with embodied others. Thus Stuart was using the MUD to "act out" rather than "work through" the insecurities and ambiguities pervading his corporal relations. Robert's project, however, differed from Stuart's insofar as Robert's intention was to apply what he learned from his EMRs to his life outside the MUD. Turkle thereby concluded that cyberspace communities could contribute to personal development if one brought the motivation and capacity to move beyond habitual ways of being.

Turkle's viewpoint on Robert and Stuart preserves the phenomenological understanding that there is a co-constitutive process always already operating in person-(cyber)world dialectics. Constrictions in living are not merely a product of deterministic discourses embedded within Internet social spaces. Instead, transformational outcomes are informed by the ways in which the individual takes up a free relationship to what is encountered. The world of the Internet can be an occasion for alienation or renewal and reintegration.

Continental Philosophy Perspective

One way to appropriate a fuller meaning of EMRs is to take a look at the broader significance of contemporary technology. Heidegger (1977) does this in his essay, "The

Question Concerning Technology." Heidegger questions technology in order to understand its relation to the disclosure of the truth of being. Manifestly, Heidegger is interested in the "essence" of technology – the way in which things "come to presence" in an enduring way. Upon reading Heidegger's text, one begins to understand that Heidegger is not so much concerned with the hardware of technology, as much as he is interested in the way disclosure occurs amidst technology.

For Heidegger, the meaning of technology etymologically links back to the early Greek term, technē. Technē referred not only to the skill of the craftsperson, it also referenced an aesthetic sensibility. The craftsperson task was to set free, or allow something to arise "from out of itself" (*physis*). The efforts of the artisan were understood as a kind of "bringing-forth" (*poiēsis*) which allows "the growing things of nature as well as whatever is completed through the crafts and the arts to come at any given time to their appearance" (p. 11). This coming forth is released or set free in revealing (*alētheia*) truth – not as a correct judgment, but as a revealing of the being of a thing. Upon fuller inquiry then, Heidegger understands the meaning of technology as a way of revealing the ongoing happening of alētheia.

By contrast, the way of revealing that holds sway in modern technology does not bring forth in a way that allows poiēsis or the revealing of alētheia to blossom. "The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausfordern*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such" (p. 14). There exists a "setting-upon" nature in order to expedite the challenging forth of its energy. "Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium, for example; uranium is set upon to yield atomic energy, which can be

released either for destruction or for peaceful use" (p.15). Modern technology gathers humankind together in an orderly mode of revealing nature as "standing-reserve." This orderly gathering at the heart of modern technology is, for Heidegger, an Enframing (*Ge-stell*). By Enframing (*Ge-stell*), Heidegger means that humankind is set upon to reveal nature as standing-reserve (*Bestand*). Thus, the essence of modern technology sends humankind into a way of revealing "the real" as standing-reserve.

In *On the Internet*, Hubert Dreyfus (2000) claims that the Internet carries forward the essence of technology. Despite the unpredictable nature of future Internet uses, Dreyfus suggests that the essence of the Internet "is to make everything easily accessible and optimizable" (p. 2). Dreyfus then goes on to consider what might happen if the Internet became central to everyday living. What would become of human being if a large part of one's existence took place in Netspace? I might rephrase the question by asking, what happens to human being if it participates in an enframing that orders it to make its relationships "easily accessible and optimizable?" Moreover, how is the revealing or bringing-forth of the other changed through reliance on EMRs?

When humankind is sent on this way of revealing, Dreyfus notes that the body is left behind in a manner that disavows its perceptual hold on the world. Dreyfus takes a cue from Friedrich Nietzsche's privileging of bodily instincts and passions. From there, Dreyfus draws upon Merleua-Ponty's understanding that the body's "maximum grip" on the world allows for indeterminacy and ambiguity to become more determinable. In order to crystallize differentiated perception from out of ambiguous experience, the appropriation of maximum grip involves a tacking back and forth between specific details and the broader context. Unfortunately, when one is engaged in Internet exchanges,

much of the perceptually rich background is lost to the conversational partners.   As a result, the ongoing task of interpreting meaning is significantly hampered. Dreyfus claims that reliance on email or the telepresence of others contributes to a declining attentiveness to a fundamental aspect of maximum grip. One's bodily hold on context and the immediacy of shared mood is significantly foreclosed from engagement. Thus, the silent background of one's ongoing perceptual movement is partially put out of play in cyberspace relations. This loss might then lead to a diminishing sense of the "reality of people and things" perhaps leading to a diminution of trust. And with long-term reliance on EMRs, Eva-Maria Simms (2001) might agree that our situated bodily powers for disclosure may begin to atrophy after prolonged engagement with the stylized social order of the Internet. Particularly if one acknowledges the point that the "medium is the message" – that the Internet's extension of our senses occasions a numbing of our human capacities as technology takes over bodily functions in order to increase power and speed (McLuhan, 1964; Levinson, 1999). Moreover, the experience of poiēsis, or "wild thinking," may suffer a loss in power and relevance as its disclosure suffers from a lack of connection to the full context from which it might arise. The technological Enframing (*Ge-stell*) of the imaginal and of meaning may lapse into distortion and frequent misinterpretation. Said differently, the limited understanding of others as standing-reserve may not be the only consequence of the Internet's essence.

Critical Theory Perspective

In the next section, a rare example of Internet research based upon the critical thought of Foucault will be reviewed. In order to situate this example of Foucauldian

research, we will first begin with an extended discussion of Foucault's perspective on power and the production of subjectivity.

According to Paul Rabinow (1984) Foucault has positioned himself "close to, but apart from" thinkers like Heidegger who have addressed the "rationalization and technological development of the world" (p.13). Foucault's effort was not to indict reason per se, but rather to understand its historical effects, limitations, dangers, and its relation to power. "The relationship between rationalization and the excesses of political power is evident. And we should not need to wait for bureaucracy and concentration camps to recognize the existence of such relations" (Foucault, 1983, p. 210). Thus, for Foucault reason was not to be studied as a grand totalizing force which worked its way through history with a singular continuous telos. Foucault was sensitized to more specific considerations:

[I] would suggest another way of investigating the links between

rationalization and power.

It may be wise not to take as a whole the rationalization of society

or culture, but to analyze such a process in several fields, each with

reference to a fundamental experience: madness, illness, death, crime,

sexuality, and so forth. (p. 210)

Rationality was to be studied in relation to various modalities of power which operated discontinuously within different localized domains (e.g., mental illness, cyberspace). Foucault thereby sought to develop a revisionist history which recuperated oppressed knowledges typically barred from admission into discourse by traditional universalizing historical accounts.

Taking a cue from Foucault, I go on to "analyze" the evermore "fundamental experience" of EMR social spaces in order to understand the culturally configured contours of subjectivity and sociality presently emerging under the moniker of the cyborg. Further impetus for this research inquiry was gained by noting that although Foucault was clearly engaged in exploring the horizon of power relations, Foucault explicitly stated that the keynote of his work was otherwise:

[T]he goal of my work during the past twenty years . . . has not been to analyze the phenomena of power . . . .

My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects . . .

Thus, it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research. (pp. 208-209)

In articulating a revisionist history of the modes by which subjects have been created, Foucault shifted from the traditional understanding of subjectivity as situated in relation to production toward locating the subject within a framework of mobile and complex power relations. Moreover, Foucault's aim was to formulate a way of developing a concrete understanding of power relations:

. . . a way which is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point . . . [and] using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations . . . (pp. 210-211)

Here, Foucault gestures toward the assertion that resistance can illuminate that which is resisted. More to the point, resistance references that which attempts to produce subjects or docile bodies. Thus, under certain conditions of inquiry, the disjunctions which are brought about by noncompliant practices can make visible discourses which are intertwined with disciplinary power (1978, 1979). Whereas Heidegger demonstrated how the referential context of one's project becomes transparent when taken-for-granted goal oriented activities become unready-to-hand, or breakdown, Foucault specified how noncompliant social activities vivify the power relations at play within the local referential matrix. I would supplement Foucault's claim that power relations come to light through instantiations of resistance by adding that compliant social practices or beliefs, as well as breakdowns in carrying out the injunctions of dominant discourses may reveal background social structures. For example, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault studies the mobilization of power when sex is "put into discourse:"

> . . . how [discourse] penetrates and controls everyday pleasure –
>
> all this entailing effects that may be those of refusal, blockage, and
>
> invalidation, but also incitement and intensification. (p. 11)

Foucault seeks to specify how the "will to power" negates or supports "the truth" about sex. Rather than supporting a universalist notion of truth, Foucault explicates the historically contingent quality of truth as an effect of power. In short, power creates value; and in the case of *The History of Sexuality*, power works to assign the meaning and significance of various sexual practices. Under such conditions, subjects become agents that carry out valued practices in bodies which have been shaped and marked by power.

It can then be argued, from the perspective of Hans Kögler (1996), that a reconstruction of individual behaviors and beliefs can "refer back to what directs and orders praxis" (p. 31).

How does the power knowledge nexus produce truth? For Foucault, "regulatory" or "normalizing" judgments are engaged when sex is introduced into discourse. The domains of medicine, psychiatry, religion, jurisprudence, and so forth, constellate around a "bio-power" which centers on life by "inciting" disparate sexualities. Power/knowledge wishes to hear sex being spoken about. In this way, normalizing judgment can then signify what is deviant or perverse. "Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence" (p. 60).

Insofar as regulatory discourse about the body is effectively "internalized," the subject becomes an efficient site of self-policing. In addition, where the family exists as an extension of various modes of control by "proliferating, annexing, creating, and penetrating . . . bodies in increasingly detailed ways" (p. 107), the "deployment of sexuality" becomes more comprehensively installed in daily life by normalizing discourse. Under these conditions, power does not attempt to enslave bodies, but rather, power encourages the affirmation of a certain kind of self. Power acts in a productive manner. Finally, where bodies are further situated amidst ongoing surveillance beyond the family (e.g., institutions, administrative machinery), "sexuality [becomes] a set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations . . . Eventually the entire social body [is] provided with a 'sexual body'" (p. 127).

In short, Foucault has provided us with a "history of bodies" as they are invested, produced, and subjected. Can practices of resistance or freedom occur where bodies are

so thoroughly permeated by nonsubjective intentionalities? Foucault inclines: "The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasure" (p. 157). For Foucault, it is the creative enactment of new bodies and pleasures which enables the subject to surpass its subjection. Where this was the case in this study, the ways in which the creative power of the imaginary came to pass in the language of research protocols about EMRs was noted. And in a (cyber)world where the privative mode of imagination – fantasy – was sometimes solicited, it was also noted just what it was that came to signify resistance over against compliance. That said, what follows in this next section is an example of critical research on the Internet which in part attempts to interpret social practices in a manner that discloses precognitive background assumptions and the cultural-historical social structures linked to those assumptions.

Critical Internet Research. In a rare example of Internet research grounded in Foucault's work, Alan Aycok (1995), engaged in a Foucauldian based study of the Internet as a "technology of the self." In this case, Aycock viewed the Internet as an instrument for occasioning the social production of identity. Aycock performed a qualitative content analysis of "several weeks of postings" from the Internet newsgroup rec.games.chess (rgc) where participants discussed issues pertinent to advancement in their mastery of the game of chess. "For most of those who post to rgc, the goal of personal transformation is the formal mastery of chess" (p. 6).

Interpretations of rgc postings were based on Aycock's Foucauldian inspired "model of the online fashioning of identity." Aycock appropriated Foucault's notion of "self fashioning" for his interpretive foundation by emphasizing the following: (1) the

identification of the substance developed by the individual (a deep inner self – indicated by discussion of skill and strength); (2) the mode of individual subjection to a disciplinary rule (commitment to particular activities – indicated by knowledge of techniques, ownership of chess products, etc.); (3) the ethical labor transforming the substance (discipline or routine employed to transform self – indicated by intensity of personal chess routines); and, the outcome of self care (the goal of personal transformation – indicated by mastery of chess). Aycock's Foucauldian view of Internet discourse allowed Aycock to locate newsgroup speech acts and social practices as situated within the disciplinary technologies linked to romanticism and modernism. Whether an experience of shared freedom prevailed at the rgc. Web site was for Aycock not just a function of rgc norms embedded in online participant speech acts. Rather, Aycock indirectly suggested that the framework of Internet surveillance/panopticism (e.g., mainframe caveats advising authorized users that their activities may be monitored) was designed to normalize Web site activity by serving as a background form of discipline.

A corollary to Aycock's conclusions about the fashioning of a deep inner self can be found in *Discipline and Punish*. In this historical account, docile bodies are reproduced by centering the attention of a new form of power, disciplinary power, on something other than social practices.

As the prison system evolved over time, the tactics of normalization shifted from torture, to punishment, and then to discipline. For Foucault, disciplinary practices attempt to create docile bodies through the imposition of social controls. This historical form of discipline took as its "object" the representation of the "soul." The soul was to

be infused with a set of right beliefs and emotions. In this way, modern forms of power designated what counted as normal and abnormal. "[M]echanisms of power . . . are disposed around the abnormal individual, to brand him [*sic*] and to alter him" (p, 199). Prisons attempted to requalify inmates as normal members of society by investing them with beliefs which were consonant with the agendas of power. The techniques of such discipline included observation, surveillance, examination, normalizing judgment, and panopticism. Foucault described Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as an architectural manifestation of an efficient form of disciplinary power. The Panopticon stood in a prison as a centralized observation tower with a full view of all the inmates who were housed in isolation from each other. The prisoners were fully visible to the guards. The guards however, were hidden behind smoked windows. Hence, the prisoners were unable to discern whether or not they were being surveilled. Foucault explains:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it,
>
> assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play
>
> spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in
>
> which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his
>
> own subjection. (pp. 202-203)

The unremitting gaze of an invisible power heightens the self-conscious process by which the surveilled monitors his or her conduct. Here, Foucault strengthens his case for a nonessentialist view of subjectivity. In this particular instance, bodies are being subjected through a disciplinary attentiveness to the inner substance of the "soul." Without the inmate's proper attention to modification of the self, mechanisms of examination, training, and/or further exclusion might be invoked. Rather than severely

punish the inmate, instead, a sophisticated and detailed examination of the "soul" by power is employed as a means to rehabilitate and reinsert the prisoner into the larger social order. Thus, Foucault demonstrates how malleable subjectivity can be when the body is saturated by the techniques of power.

In this way, Aycock's study of the rgc Internet newsgroup postings served as an impetus to read research protocols from a perspective which sustained an interpretive attentiveness to the workings of power upon deep selves and social practices. Accordingly, the research method employed in this study, following from Foucault, maintained openness to the possibility of locating analogous panoptic structures during EMRs. Consequently, it was interpretively valuable to make note of the moments where seemingly docile bodies experience the contours of Internet interactivity as problematic. The kind of clearing for sociality carved out by power was more readily articulated when subjects thematized relational or experiential discord. The relevance of thematized disjunctions within an EMR clearing was not to be the only means of disclosing the EMR horizon. The experiences of fluid, harmonious, or even pleasing EMR interactivity sometimes reflected a docility which lent itself to the disclosure of the "internalized" effects of power.

In the article, "Being and Power," Dreyfus (n.d.b) described Foucauldian power as a social clearing or positive field of action which produces a reality that informs the beliefs and actions of social agents. Comparing Heidegger's thought to Foucault, Dreyfus remarks, "A culture's understanding of being allows people and things to show up as something . . . Thus the understanding of being creates what Heidegger calls a clearing (*Lichtung*) . . . [T]he clearing both limits and opens up what can show up and

what is done" (p. 1). In either case, culturally and historically informed everyday activities (e.g., Internet praxis) both produce and limit what can be revealed to and about culturally positioned subjects. Thus, in effect, the social clearing facilitates and constrains practices of freedom and efforts to expand understanding of everyday experience. Consequently, Dreyfus wants to underscore that social agents can benefit from a reflective engagement with their situated experiences. Quoting Dreyfus (n.d.a) from "Heidegger and Foucault on the Subject, Agency, and Practices," Dreyfus states, "[I]t will turn out for both thinkers that each person can modify his or her cultural practices by openness to embeddedness in them" (p. 1).

How was Dreyfus' latter claim concretely addressed in this research inquiry into EMRs? First, the graphic interface design were interpreted in the section concerning "local site" issues. It was decided that this feature participated in comprising the clearing – or rather, Internet *window* - which opened onto possibilities for e-text writing and other forms of social exchange to occur and have meaning (cf. Johnson 1997; Aarseth, 1997). Second, it turned out that the "code," or programmed architecture of the differently constituted cyber-spaces, was pertinent to the amounts of perceived freedom associated with Internet practices (Lessig, 1999).

Lawrence Lessig objects to first-generation Internet user thoughts that, "Cyberspace . . . cannot be regulated." Instead, Lessig states, "If there is any place that is constructed, cyberspace is it" (p. 24). Lessig argues that cyberspace codes instantiate values which are the outcome of diverse concerns found among social norms (e.g., stigmas a community embraces), the law (e.g., through legalized punishments), and the marketplace (e.g., through price structures). As a result, some cyber-spaces are open and

nonproprietary (no identification needed for access), and others are closed and proprietary (access is granted with tight control). Behavior becomes more or less "regulable" insofar as technologies of identity (e.g., cookies, passwords) eliminate opportunities for user anonymity. Thus in proprietary cyber-spaces, for instance, monitoring entities are thereby empowered to identify if a violation has occurred and who engaged in the violation. In a Foucauldian sense, cyberspace users in proprietary cyber-spaces become visible whereas the normalizing gaze of power is veiled, even if it is still acknowledged as a background presence (cf. Panopticon). Even in nonproprietary spaces a host of constructive forces exist including the social norms imposed by community sanctions and government attempts to limit computer user privacy by requiring authors of encryption code to "build into their code a back door through which the government could gain access" (p. 49) thereby nullifying aspects of privacy associated with encryption.

Philosophical Grounding of the Method

In early phenomenological psychology research, the research participant protocols were interpreted in a manner which assumed that human beings constructed meaning unidirectionally, and that researchers could bracket their assumptions in order to access the essential structure of each participant's lived-experience (Giorgi, 1975, Wertz, 1983). The maintenance of researcher "fidelity" to experiential phenomena, as lived through by research participants, served as a guiding tenet. The emphasis upon phenomenological faithfulness to lived experience was, still, however, beholden to assumptions pertaining to the subject's centrality in constructing lived meanings. In contrast, this study jettisons any assumption which equates the event of signification as residing exclusively within

the constructive power of a meaning-giving subject. By challenging the notion of human exclusivity in constructing meaning I am not, instead, adopting a structuralist stance which eviscerates humanity of its signifying powers and thereby grants priority to rule governed systems as the producers of meaning and social action. Instead, it is the fundamental dialogue between person and world which I maintain as the primary unit of meaning creation. Even more to the point, I seek to combine aspects of hermeneutic and critical inquiry in a manner which intelligibly preserves the understanding of meaning production as occasioned by the ongoing reciprocity inhering in the person-world unity. Before advancing further, however, I will address some meta-methodological concerns with respect to the compatibility of Heidegger and Foucault.

Methodological Differences?: Heidegger and Foucault on 'Depth"

Hans Kögler (1996) discusses the value of bringing Foucault's critical thought and Heidegger's hermeneutic thought (later developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer) together methodologically in *The Power of Dialogue*. Therein Kögler argues for the hermeneutic claim that presuppositions held by interpreters are mediated by culture and history. As such, Kögler claims that these culturally and historically mediated presuppositions both produce and constrain the interpreter's "consciousness." In my research on EMRs, the role of the interpreter includes both myself as a researcher who "analyzes" data and the research participants who implicitly disclose their presuppositions about lived experience in protocols and in interviews with me. Kögler wants to argue that one's "consciousness" can be expanded if one's presuppositions (e.g., researcher and research participant presuppositions) are linked to both the broad cultural-historical framework of one's heritage and to the localized cultural-historical perspectives that contribute to one's

presuppositions. Specifically, Kögler suggests that a fuller understanding of the experiential dimension is gained through an acknowledgement of the power relations always already at work in one's immediate community. Thus, hermeneutics is made more complete when the context of macrocosmic historical narratives are linked to community level power relations.

Power, for Foucault is not to be understood as "hidden" from view. Instead, power is profoundly visible in the form of social practices. In order to demonstrate the compatibility of Heidegger and Foucault on this point, I will discuss, in the next section, how Heidegger's emphasis on "deep" truths is typically misunderstood as a reference to knowledge "hidden" beneath appearances. In the subsequent section, I will examine how ambiguities in Foucault's understanding of history as discontinuous may belie a common ground Foucault shares with Heidegger on broad narratives of history.

Influenced by Nietzsche, Foucault was not in search of "deep" meaning, nor did Foucault believe that there was any intrinsic "deep" meaning to be sought. For Foucault, "deep" meaning came to signify just another social construction propagated by power. Heidegger, on the other hand, purportedly exposed a history of Western metaphysics which covered over the "deep" meaning of being. Does this impasse between these two thinkers necessarily preclude any productive synthesis between critical thought and hermeneutics? I will examine Heidegger's hermeneutically informed approach to disclosing meaning as a way to clarify how Heidegger employs the term "deep." This approach, I believe, facilitated a practical resolution to the perceived division between Heidegger and Foucault on the issue of "depth." It also paved the way for justifying my approach to studying the observable cultural-historical contexts of EMR experiences by

utilizing scholarly works with a technocultural-historical perspective. To begin, I will review Foucault's criticism of hermeneutics.

Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) discuss two types of hermeneutic practices which have been challenged by Foucault – *commentary hermeneutics* and the *hermeneutics of suspicion*. For Foucault, commentary hermeneutics limits itself by simply thematizing each actor's perspective on the intersubjective meanings embedded in his or her encounter. In doing so, according to Foucault, commentary hermeneutics reproduces or uncritically expands upon each actor's limited understanding of shared meaning. Consequently, practitioners of commentary hermeneutics fail to notice the broader contexts which produce the meanings and truths lived through by the actors. In addition, this privileging of the actors' production of meaning restricts the hermeneutic scope of analysis from examining the actors' social practices and their subsequent effects. Commentary hermeneutics thereby suffers from a kind of interpretive myopia. In order for me, as researcher, to avoid reproducing an overly narrow EMR analysis, the data I use will include the perspectives of research participants as well as my interpretation of discourses operating in each research participant's Internet community.

With regard to a hermeneutics of suspicion, Dreyfus and Rabinow state that such suspicion assumes that actors engage in distorting "hidden" truths. Consequently, these distortions render the actors unable to access concealed truths without the aid of an "authority" (e.g., the psychoanalyst role in uncovering repressions). Since, however, the actors' view of surface meanings is a falsification, a hermeneutics of suspicion presumes that an "authority" will enable the actors to unmask the deep meaning hidden behind surface understanding. The interpretive capacity of the "authority" leaps ahead of the

actors' possibilities in a way that facilitates the disclosure of the actors' concealed

meanings.

In this case, Foucault objects to a hermeneutics of suspicion insofar as it seeks

"deep" meanings behind distorted surface understanding. Quoting Dreyfus and Rabinow:

Foucault's basic objection to the hermeneutics of suspicion is

that these secrets which the actors can be forced to face must not be

understood as the true and deepest motivation of his [*sic*] surface

behavior. (p.124)

Here, Foucault would maintain that it is problematic to retain the presupposition that

"true" meaning is hidden from view beneath psychological awareness or behind

appearances. Instead, Foucault argues that surface appearances, such as speech acts and

historical practices, are audible and visible sites of meaning production. That is of

course, notwithstanding a person's effort to withhold or ignore certain significations.

Even if such a person were motivated not to reveal meanings to others, it would still be

the case that meanings are produced and sought out in and through observable

phenomena, not by searching out deep truths. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault wants

it to be understood that the notion of "deep" truth is a construction of cultural-historical

processes linked to power:

[It is through the organization of power] that we became

dedicated to the endless task of exacting the truest of confessions

from a shadow.

The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our

"liberation" is in the balance. (p. 159)

By extension, Foucault subjects the hermeneutics of suspicion to the same critique he applies to commentary hermeneutics. Both forms of hermeneutics fail to acknowledge the relevance of symbolic frameworks in the interpretive process. Moreover, these background frameworks are not concealed, but rather, are present on the surface. For Foucault there are only surfaces in the realm of meaning constitution. The belief in hidden depths is a conceptual error. As a result, my research into EMRs will avoid the interpretive act of constructing meanings which are not well grounded in the observable data used in this study.

Given Foucault's claim that the production of meaning is a visible phenomenon, the question arises: Is it possible to overcome Foucault's objection to Heidegger's emphasis upon "deep" meaning? In order to respond, I will begin by examining Heidegger's discussion of meaning as a way to demonstrate that Heidegger and Foucault both attend methodologically to the observable matrix of meaning production.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes the meaning of meaning as "*the 'upon which' of a projection in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something; it gets its structure from a fore-having, a fore-sight, and a fore-conception*" (p. 193). In speaking about fore-structures, Heidegger suggests that one's initial understanding of what is encountered is informed by one's presuppositions. By speaking about meaning as the "upon which," Heidegger is also suggesting that what one encounters in everyday dealings derives its intelligibility from the way in which what is encountered is embedded in a "totality of involvements." In my research on EMRs, I will attend to the totality of involvements by examining scholarly texts about technocultural-history and by exploring

discourses (e.g., through graphic user interfaces and Internet documents) associated with the Internet sites used by research participants.

At this point, it is important to note that both the totality of involvements and fore-structures are public and accessible ways to understand meaning. For example, Heidegger discusses how a hammer is not initially understood as a decontextualized object. The meaning of a hammer is informed by cultural-historical presuppositions about such objects, as well as by an understanding of the work produced by employing the hammer. And this work, for Heidegger, "bears with it the referential totality within which the [hammer] is encountered" (p. 99). To be sure, the usability of the hammer can be understood more fluidly when one considers that the context of a hammer's meaning for a carpenter is far different than the context of a hammer's meaning for someone who is being attacked. For the carpenter the hammer is a building tool, for the potential victim of assault it is a tool for protection, a weapon. In both instances, the meaning of the hammer is assigned by the entities which are "discovered in using it." It is one's openness to the changeability of referential totalities which allows presuppositions about the hammer to be modified in a manner which acknowledges the impermanence of meaning. Thus Heidegger, not unlike Foucault, attends to the indivisibility of meaning from the world or social clearing of background significations. Meaning is not, as it were, to be found behind the phenomena of the world. Meaning is understood through an awareness of the worldly weave of references. Hence, for Heidegger, meaning is not "deep" in the ordinary sense of the word. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger remarks:

> [I]f we are inquiring about the meaning of Being, our investigation
>
> does not become a "deep" one [tiefsinnig], nor does it puzzle out

> what stands behind Being. It asks about Being insofar as it enters
>
> into the intelligibility of Dasein. (p. 193)

Here, depth pertains to the intelligibility of what is encountered. Dasein understands what is encountered through its holistic awareness of the entwinement of being and world. In understanding depth beyond conventional understandings of spatiality, we can then see that breadth might be a more apt term. Depth qua breadth is a profoundly visible contextual phenomenon for Heidegger. Albert Hofstadter remarks in his translation of Heidegger's (1982) *The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* :

> We must not think of being, Sein, as a being, ein Seiendes - as, for
>
> example, some deep principle behind all other beings, serving as their
>
> source, their ground, their creator. This confusion started with the
>
> beginning of philosophy in the West with Thales . . . and has continued
>
> down to the present . . . The necessary implication is that being cannot
>
> be understood in the same way as beings. I can understand the hammer
>
> by understanding functionality, but functionality is not another being, on
>
> a higher plane than the hammer, which then has still another mode of
>
> being on a higher plane of being as its being, by which it is to be
>
> understood. (pp. xxiii-xxiv)

If the being of a phenomenon is not to be understood as "deep," nor is it to be retrieved as "higher" for Hofstadter. Again, the meaning of the hammer (its functionality) is found in and through the weave of references it gathers. This is a non-essentialist view of meaning which does not take recourse to "higher" Platonic ideals or to "deep" and original truths linked with a metaphysics of presence.

Given Hofstadter's additional remarks upon the meaning of depth, how then does one make further sense of Heidegger's elucidation of depth? Robert Romanyshyn (1983) offers us, perhaps, another profile of insight illustrated by the notion of depth as "lateral depth." Turning to Merleau-Ponty as a source of clarification, Romanyshyn remarks:

> [C]onsider the phenomenon of depth. It is not the visible, and yet as invisible it has no other way of appearing except as *of* the visible. The painter, for example, who paints depth must paint things, and it is between and among things that depth appears. The depth of a thing is not that which is inside it but that which the thing is in and through its existence among other things . . . (p. 234)

Romanyshyn points to a quality of depth as residing in the "between." Thus, the meaning of depth arises from one's submission to the dialogic movement always ready to happen between things and situated 'subjects.' The depth of meaning remains invisible only insofar as there is a failure to deliver oneself over to the understanding that one is thrown into a world already populated by a system of references which awaits meaning-ful engagement. Moreover, this web of references is conditioned by the histories, cultures, discourses, and power relations which inform the plentitude of meanings awaiting thematic articulation by situated agents. It is the situated agent who possesses the human power to creatively appropriate such "repressed" or "oppressed" significations and frameworks. Recuperation of the power to imagine novel meanings makes possible practices of freedom consonant with the therapeutics of culture informing my research into EMRs. For example, my imaginal interpretation of the EMR protocols, followed by

an interview with each research participant, stood as a provisional effort at

collaboratively re-appropriating depth/breadth dimensions. Once the collaborative re-

appropriation of depth/breadth dimensions were thematically rendered, such research data

in effect cleared a space for netdwellers in general to more readily identify, reinterpret,

and modify background orders subtending their virtual and everyday existence.

Methodological Differences?: Heidegger and Foucault on Historical Continuity and Discontinuity

As I mentioned in the Introduction, Foucault and Heidegger appear to have

adopted divergent positions with regard to narrating history. Where Heidegger locates a

rationalizing telos occurring at a macrocosmic level of history, Foucault argues for the

existence of historical discontinuities and ruptures best observed at the local level of

historical events. In this section, I ask if the historical perspectives of Heidegger and

Foucault are as divergent as they appear. And, if they are not - if their perspectives

instead turn out to be interrelated, my interpretation of EMR experiences can

accommodate discoveries suggesting that power relations may sometimes reproduce the

dynamics associated with broad cultural-historical narratives. That is to say, the fluidity

of power relations at various Internet locations may not always signify a rupture from the

dominant cultural-historical themes.

To begin, I suggest that there exists an ambiguity embedded within Foucault's

sustained emphasis upon privileging local versions of history. Specifically, Foucault

claims that the process of subject formation is consistently informed by something akin to

"regulation" and "normalization." In other words, Foucault contends that amidst the

discontinuous unfolding of power relations throughout history, normalizing forces are

always already at work. According to Dreyfus and Rabinow:

> In *Discipline and Punish* and in the part of *The History of Sexuality*
> devoted to bio-power, Foucault begins his diagnosis by pointing to the
> peculiar way modern norms work, which he calls normalization.
> Among all the rich assortment of techniques, practices, knowledges,
> and discourses Foucault has discussed, normalization is at the core.
> (p. 258)

Moreover, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault declares that when legal power commingles with the human sciences, a "legal-scientifico complex" (cf. bio-power), or a formidable union of discourses arise which combine to develop normalizing practices and docile bodies. In the face of the legal-scientifico complex, Foucault suggests that the subject is vulnerable to subjection by micropractices of domination. Although an opposing argument might aver that these regulatory norms change over time, according to Dreyfus and Rabinow, it remains the case that the subjection of bodies to regulation is an enduring background presence for Foucault.

> Our norms are always on the move as if their goal was to bring every
> aspect of our practices together into a coherent whole. To this end
> various experiences are identified and annexed as appropriate
> domains for theoretical study and intervention. (p. 258)

It is this continuous progression of normativity which I believe links Foucault to Heidegger. I argue that although Heidegger was blind to the play of power relations due, in part, to his emphasis upon examining the implications of Western metaphysics, Foucault's emphasis upon a plurality of discontinuous power relations fails to integrate the existence of historical continuities embedded in Foucault's own historical accounts.

Specifically, Foucault may have not fully understood the significance of his claim that

regulatory practices are continuously co-present with power relations across the way

stations of history. Such a foreclosure may have prevented Foucault from articulating a

commonality he shared with Heidegger. For instance, in Dreyfus essay, "Heidegger and

Foucault on the Subject, Agency and Practices," he points out that Foucault's historical

narratives may contain an emphasis on continuity:

> In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault tells a rather unNietzschean
>
> continuous story of how the gradual development of confessional
>
> practices in the West produced a very stable, unified subject . . . .
>
> [T]hese confessional practices linked up with totalizing
>
> scientific practices in the early seventeenth century . . . and finally two
>
> centuries later, a science of sexuality that was supposed to hold the
>
> clue to human agency. (p. 9)

Thus, mapping Foucault's discussion of the historical continuity of normalization

processes onto Heidegger's understanding of Enframing (*Ge-stell*) as a continual

"ordering" of practices has merit, though it is not without its challenges. Certainly

Foucault is clear that this process of regulation is a non-subjective intentionality, or

rather, occurs as if there were a "strategy without a strategist." However, it remains

possible that social clearings may instantiate hierarchies of power relations which may

become frozen for indefinite amounts of time. When imbalances in power are

concentrated in this manner, persons or things may indeed come to presence in enduring

ways for extended periods of time – particularly when the limited cultural-historical

consciousness of a people contributes to a marginalized awareness of sites for enacting

resistance. As such, it rested upon Foucault's shoulders to explain how the normalizing

telos of rational discourse has achieved a relatively dominant status in Western culture.

Insofar as there are situations where Enframing (*Ge-stell*) has not achieved a grand scale

ordering of the social clearing, I would agree with Foucault that the fluidity of power

relations gives rise to social clearings in flux. At the same time, it is also possible that the

broader mode of revealing referenced by Heidegger's notion of Enframing (*Ge-stell*) can

promote a world ordering or backdrop which sets the parameters within which power

relations are at play. In either case, the interpretation of the data in this research study

illuminated some of the ways in which broadly concentrated discourses of power

produce, constrain, or coexist with a plurality of power relations. Moreover, the data

suggested some of the ways in which persons come to presence in an enduring way,

while also recognizing that the coming to presence of 'subjectivity' can also be a fluid

phenomenon.

Summary of Research Purpose and Guiding Presuppositions

<u>Purpose</u>

The purpose of this study, by way of review, rests upon an inquiry into EMRs and

the kinds of 'subjects' potentially co-constituted through immersion in Internet

communication. Thus, my core question pursues an inquiry into the kinds of

transformations undergone in the experience of self, other, and sociality during Internet

communication. In this way, I contribute to a reexamination of utopian and dystopian

claims regarding the impact of the Internet. Four kinds of qualitative data are

incorporated into this inquiry regarding subjectivity and sociality. The data include

experiential descriptions, interviews with research participants, cultural-historical

accounts about the significance of technology, and an analysis of discourses constellated around sites for EMR communication. An integrated interpretation of these qualitative data rests upon my preconceptions regarding the structure of meaning.

From a hermeneutic point of view, the act of naming presuppositions allows the researcher to overcome the belief that bias-free perspectives are attainable – "In every case . . . interpretation is grounded in *something we have in advance*" (Heidegger, 1962, p.191). Restated in critical terms, it is understood that the researcher is an agent inevitably situated within a particular power/knowledge system invested with value – "We are inescapably and fundamentally bound up with power saturated preunderstanding. We can't escape it, we draw on it in order to understand" (Kögler, 1996, pp.105-106). Thus, when the "taken for granted" assumptions at the heart of preconceptual understanding are acknowledged, the act of interpreting meaning can be understood as a situated outcome of the dialogue between culturally and historically embedded researchers and research participants.

Methodological Presuppositions

In asking about how human beings currently live the metaphor of cyborg subjectivity as a fusion of human and machine, I adopt Heidegger's (1962) notion of "being-in-the-world" and Merleau-Ponty's (1961, 1968) understanding of the "subject-object dialogue" and "flesh" as renderings of the interdependent and indivisible nature of person and world. Thus any traditional notion of the human 'subject' is recovered as distinguishable but not divisible from its lived horizons. I therefore contend that the meaning of the being of cyborg 'subjectivity' will arise through attention to the broad referential unity gathered by human-machine fusions, as well as, by the ongoing play of

significations always already waiting to emerge when solicited by phenomenal perspectives. Consequently, I have introduced the guiding presupposition that a contextualization of empirical 'subjective' data (viz., protocols) should incorporate broad historical narratives, local force dynamics, and the acknowledgement of imaginizing as fundamental constituents of the interpretative process. Otherwise, uncritical adherence to the constricted disclosures encouraged by rational discourse and the assumption of a subject-object split would sever what exists as a fundamental unity. It is an organic and holistic mode of understanding human existence that can occasion a richer thematic articulation of lived meanings and culturally inscribed bodies and practices.

Since this research project is meant to be rigorously qualitative in nature, I also presume that some meanings, typically marginalized by more traditional research inquires, can be foregrounded through a researcher's recovery of the "meaning-bestowing" structure of interpretation and perception. When the narrow perceptual openness of the ahistorical and decontextualized clearing of rational thinking is brought into dialogue with the ground of imaginative thinking - which is free to grasp synthetic interrelations - I presuppose that the reinstatement of imaginative thinking allows for a richly integrated articulation of lifeworld considerations. Moreover, integration of such latent lifeworld considerations and meanings into cyberspace theory makes possible a cultural therapeutic. This therapeutic of culture may then pave the way for identifying circumscribed and prescribed regulatory practices in a manner which allows one to freely retrieve and act upon productive and constraining forces. In this way, any prereflective enactments of "normalizing" or "disciplinary" strategies (e.g., Nietzsche's life denying nihilistic repetition) might be overcome.

Literature Review-Based Presuppositions and Research Questions

The research and theoretical literature reviewed in the Literature Review provide a backdrop for the research questions. The presuppositions subtending my research questions revolve around utopian and dystopian views of technology, the value of "real" experience over against simulated experience, the social and psychological impact of increasing engagement with EMRs, the loss of connection to one's bodily and earthly context, the project to overcome one's finitude, the expanded opportunity to explore different identities, the expanded opportunity to explore different others, and the importance of attunement to aesthetic experiences amidst modern technology's Enframing (*Ge-stell*). It is in and through mindfulness to these presuppositions that a research clearing is established where I can interrogate the research data about the construction of 'subjectivity' and sociality undergone during EMRs. By also attending to research participant meanings and symbolic orders, I am able to await the revelatory unfolding about cyborg existence. As such, I will now go on to outline the overall design of this research project – a methodological design which will bring my presuppositions into dialogue with the empirical data I obtain.

Research Design

The phenomenon at hand called me to lay out a form of inquiry into its conditional nature, into its situated being. As such, I was invited to faithfully and rigorously construct a way in which the phenomenon can show itself. Consequently, I developed an empirically grounded critical-hermeneutic approach to the study of EMRs. I did this, in part, because it appeared that in order to render "unconscious" aspects of EMR experience more visible, such a project necessitated an acknowledgment of how

lived meanings and social practices are infused with the impress of locally and historically co-present discourses.

Phenomenon to be Studied

This research project interrogated the historical and modern technocultural backdrops linked to the Internet's emergence into the public domain during the early 1990s. This research project also explored human participation in the social possibilities afforded by the Internet in order to illuminate the emerging co-constituted transformations of human existence. Donna Haraway's metaphor of the cyborg served as a touchstone for illustrating how the notion of human-machine fusion may participate in gradually refiguring the human world and one's sense of self.

Research Participants and the Protocol Question

Persons who believed that they use the Internet as a way to engage in meaningful connections with others were asked to participate in this research project. I solicited research participant involvement through the distribution of flyers, advertisements, and word of mouth by persons acquainted with this research project. The solicitation was worded in the following manner:

> If you would like to participate in a research study about socializing on
> the Internet, please contact Andrew at the following number (telephone
> number provided). Any and all correspondence will be kept confidential.
> If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to fill out a
> questionnaire that will be mailed to you. You may also be asked to
> participate in a voluntary interview. Additional details can be discussed
> when you contact me at the telephone number listed above.

Research participants were asked to respond to an author-designed survey which

included seven short-answer questions and one protocol question intended to illuminate

EMR experience. The survey questions read as follows:

For research purposes, please respond to the inquiries listed below. In order
to maintain your <u>confidentiality</u>, please do <u>not</u> provide your online screen
name.

1) Female _____ Male _____ Other _____ (check one)

2) Age _____

3) Ethnic background
_____

4) How long have you used the Internet as a way to engage in meaningful
relationships?
_____

_____

5) Windows user _____ Macintosh user _____ (check one)

6) What is your Internet provider name? _____

7) What is the chat room address, Instant Messaging Service, or address
of the site where your encounter took place?
_____

8) Please describe a significant time when you attempted to establish an
intimate connection with another person on the Internet. Include in your
description your experience of attempting to understand the other person
and what you attempted to convey about yourself to that person. Also,
describe what you noticed about using the Internet to make a meaningful
connection with that person. Lastly, please describe how socializing on the
Internet has impacted your personal growth and your off-line relationships
with others.

***Please describe your experience in enough detail so that somebody who has never
had the experience would know what it was like.**

In the protocol question (#8), the research participants were being asked to

describe how their experiences of self, other, and the process of socializing on the

Internet were experienced. In effect, they were being asked how their Internet

experiences mattered to them.

Research Components

As I mentioned in the above section, some of the research materials included

research study advertisements, an author-designed survey, and the provision of an

Informed Consent form to research participants. I also used a second set of materials.

Specifically, I selected scholarly works (supra) addressing pre-Socratic, Socratic, and

fifteenth to twentieth century cultural-historical perspectives on the human engagement

with technology. Each of these works was consistent with my methodological

presupposition that human beings exist in a co-creative relationship with technology.

Each of these works also recognized the way in which the cultural-historical world

participates in constructing human experience. The perspectives offered in each text

were, however, as different as they were similar. The differing cultural-historical vantage

points taken up in each text allowed me to more fully assess the participation of the

Western world in producing human experience.

All of the scholarly texts I employed have been reviewed in the Literature

Review. Martin Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology" opened up

"thinking" about a broad historical narrative regarding modern technology - enframing.

Here, Heidegger meditated upon the way in which the modern technological mode of

revealing clears a space for a narrow understanding of things as "standing reserve." In

Technology as Symptom and Dream, Robert Romanyshyn examined the vision of modern

technology and its relationship to historical events from the fifteenth century up to the

twentieth century. In doing so, Romanyshyn worked out how the historically informed

dream of technology contributed to a particular psychological way of relating to one's body and to one's earthly abode. In *The Saturated Self*, Kenneth Gergen examined human being's expanding engagement with communication technologies. Gergen described how increased EMRs with people have inaugurated a shift away from the deep self of romanticism and the rational self of modernism toward the plurality of postmodern selves and the concomitant impact on social relationships. Finally, in *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace*, Lawrence Lessig challenged the notion that cyberspace is a space of freedom and, instead demonstrated how cyberspace has no nature. Lessig argued that cyberspace is, more or less, a regulable space subject to the immediate local impact of software code, laws, norms, and markets. Moreover, the degree of cyberspace regulation is contingent upon the degree to which people attempt to influence the values shaping the architecture of the Internet.

<u>Procedure</u>

Research participants will be asked to respond to a protocol question intended to illuminate EMR experience. Informed by the work of Giorgi (1975) and Wertz (1983), I will conduct an interpretive thematic rendering of the experiences described by each participant. In order to do so, I will adopt the stance of psychological reflection. I will then engage in multiple readings of each protocol in order to gradually articulate the psychological themes which reflect the relationship between the research participant and her experience of EMRs. This attitude of psychological reflection will first require me to get a sense of the meaningful whole of each protocol as a starting point. From there, I will be able to identify the smaller units of meaning comprising the whole protocol. After identifying these smaller units of meaning, I will then organize them into a

narrative that reflects the meaningful whole of each protocol. Throughout the process of psychological reflection I will incorporate Murray's (1986) "imaginizing" by attending to the cultural-historical imagination (or discourses) structuring the meanings lived through by each participant. I will also attend to ambiguities in each description as well as to the potential surplus of meaning embedded in the language of the protocol. The incorporation of imaginizing will allow me to retrieve marginalized meanings, consonant with research participant descriptions, and place them into the narrative. In Step 2, I will contact each participant (e.g., face-to-face, telephone) for an interview. Where meanings of their respective protocols are vague or portions of the protocol seem to suggest "breakdowns" in communication related to compliance with or resistance to Internet practices or discourses, I will read those parts of the protocol to the respective participant and ask for clarification. I will then "circle" back and integrate the research participants' clarifications into the meaning units pertaining to their protocols.

It is noteworthy that my reading of successive protocols led to the discovery of themes I had not previously identified. In such cases, I re-read the other protocols with the intent to locate the newer themes. Where appropriate I added these new themes to the respective protocol narratives. After completing a full analysis of all the protocols, I organized the themes pertaining to each of the protocols into a general *person-centered narrative*.

In Steps 3 and 4, I shifted my thematic analysis to the analysis of technology. In Step 3, I conducted an interpretive analysis of the texts and "window" (e.g., graphic user interface) associated with the site of Internet communication. The purpose here was to identify themes, practices, and discourses typifying the local site of communication. In

Step 4, I conducted an interpretive analysis of the broad narratives of history at work in the scholarly texts I discussed in the "materials" section. The thematic analyses were conducted in a manner similar to the approach adopted in Step 1. Thus, in Steps 3 and 4, I familiarized myself with entire site of Internet communication and the scholarly texts. I then noted the cultural-historical themes potentially linked to Internet sociality. I then "circled" back and integrated Step 4 and step 3 into a *technocultural-historical narrative*. Finally, I fashioned a *situated global narrative* with regard to Internet subjectivity and sociality by integrating the person-centered narrative and the technocultural-historical narrative into a unified critical-hermeneutic account. The situated global narrative therefore stood as an instantiation of how person-centered and cultural-historical processes contribute to the construction of 'subjectivity,' meaning, experience, and social actions.

Results

The Results section contains the critical-hermeneutic analysis of data pertaining to the construction of subjectivity and relatedness in cyberspace. Data Section I consists of a Person-Centered Narrative re-presenting the integrated interpretations of each research participant's protocol and telephone interview. The unabridged protocols and the transcripts of the telephone interviews can be found in Appendixes D-K. Section II culminates in a narrative regarding Local and Cultural-Historical Data. Whereas Section I instantiated an analysis of the "subject" pole of lived experience and social praxis, Section II re-presented interpretations of the "worldly" contribution to experience. The AOL local site common to the research participants' online social interactions was analyzed along with scholarly texts addressing the cultural-historical backdrop of

Western technology. The AOL local site data can be found in Appendixes L-O. Finally, Section III concludes with a Situated Global Narrative which stands as an integrated description of how cyberspace subjectivity and sociality are bound up with broad and local trends in technocultural history.

The benefit of partitioning the Results section in the three-part form described above allowed the process of "subject" formation and social practice enactment to be considered in a richly differentiated manner. The dynamic interplay of multiple processes always already making contributions to the construction of meaning, subjectivity, and virtual social practices were thereby illuminated. For example, interpretations of the Person-Centered Data allowed the life-situated meanings of each research participant to be disclosed from their own lived "psychological" perspectives. The incorporation of research participant interview perspectives into my interpretations allowed research participant voices to occupy a valued place in the construction of meaning units. Furthermore, combining my interpretation of the written experiential descriptions with input from research participant interviews allowed me to revise the presuppositions guiding my interpretations vis á vis the hermeneutic circle.

Section II allowed for the consideration of local and broad cultural-historical forces contributing to the meanings, virtual social practices, and experiences of "self" undergone by the research participants. In effect, the production of discourse-laden social practices in cyberspace were illuminated in this section. Moreover, a hermeneutic circle was built into the form of Section II as well. The inclusion of the local Internet site analysis allowed the presuppositions at work in the grand narratives about technological culture and history to be reworked by circling back and forth between discourse laden

practices at the local level and those articulated at the macro level of analysis. The end result was the *technocultural-historical narrative.* At the same time, this two-tiered cultural-historical analysis also paved the way for Section III's decentralization of the person-centered process of meaning construction and culture/history making. Thus, it was in the *situated global narrative* that the holistic backdrop of discourse and the situated influence of the "subject" were brought back into a dialogic unity.

By way of review then, the three data sections are organized in the following manner:

1) **Section 1** contains an integrated interpretation of Person-Centered Data (viz., protocols and interviews) culminating in a *person-centered narrative*.

2) **Section II** contains an analysis of AOL Local Data and Technocultural-Historical Data culminating in a *technocultural-historical narrative.*

3) **Section III** integrates the person-world data of Sections I and II into a *situated global narrative*.

Section I: Person-Centered Data

Here, in Section I, I interpret the protocols written by Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn re-presenting their lived attempts to form meaningful relations in the world of cyberspace. In effect, their stories provided insight into the process of being swept up into the excitement and promise generated by AOL's dream to sell and normalize virtual interactivity. Examination of the meaning units flowing from Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn's protocols revealed that they do indeed give themselves over to the space of AIM social practices with hopes that virtuality will provide a fertile landscape for intimate relationships to thrive. In a sense, each of the research participants literally and

figuratively bought into the expansive virtual social practices. Moreover, each of the research participant's discovered that virtuality allowed them to overcome the finiteness of bodily facticity and access people who would be otherwise unavailable through reliance upon bodily powers alone. However, further thematic examination of Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn's protocols led to the disclosure that they did not continue to passively act as docile subject's willy-nilly delivered over to social practices prescribed by AIM. Instead, their initial acceptance of AIM eventually led to breakdowns in communication, resistance to certain virtual practices (e.g., multiple identity expansion) and modification of AIM practices by importing other communicative practices (e.g., telephone, offline meetings) as a way to offset the loss of carnality in cyberspace. The three research participants' assertion of individual autonomy, therefore, lent support to my methodological presupposition that virtual space was a co-constructed landscape.

The co-constructive process occurring between the research participants' and the cultural-historical world of social practices and discourses have been elaborated, further ahead, in Section III's *situated global narrative*. The *situated global narrative* revealed that the linkage of cultural-historical forces to virtual social practices was not sufficient to guarantee that individuals would submit to such practices. Mere submission to available social practice would have suggested that dominant discourses maintained a unidirectional impact on the kind of "self" research participants become amidst the practice of virtual social intimacy. Thus, the voice of subjectivity served as a counterbalancing force influencing how relatedness would occur in cyberspace and informing what practices and discourses would be enacted or ignored.

That said, further development of the Internet experiences of Rochelle, Bryce, and

Dawn have been developed in the *person-centered narrative* articulated at the end of this

section.

Protocol #1: Internet related themes – Rochelle, 21 y.o., Caucasian, female

1. Offline interpersonal stress, followed by an introduction to Internet social spaces and
practices, occasioned exploration of online social experiences
*In the midst of family upheaval, Rochelle was open to the encouragement that she try out
a new form of social interaction.*

> • "My parents had just moved to Provo, I was living with my aunt . . . who . . . was
> diagnosed with a serious medical condition . . . My best . . . friend had just discovered
> the Internet and she introduced me . . ."

2ahn. The lure of inhabiting taboo or otherwise unavailable social (cyber)spaces can lead
to a transgression of ethical and legal offline norms eschewing identity alteration
*Rochelle was enthralled with the privilege of access to alternative virtual life spaces,
which she attained by assuming a different identity. Rochelle's identity revision was
enabled by the absence of carnality in cyberspace. However, during the interview,
Rochelle stated that once online, she generally preferred to withhold aspects of her
identity rather than completely morph into an altogether different online persona.*

> • "Using my aunt's credit card, I authorized the use pretending to be her."

> • "You could portray yourself any way you want, make a completely different life for
> youself [*sic*]."

3b. Internet fascination turned into a self described "addiction" to the standing reserve of
available (and forbidden) virtual males to socialize with
*The opportunity to access communities of virtual people, considered taboo or
inaccessible offline, became irresistible.*

> • " . . . with in that month and a half was addicted. I would sneak on late at night, and
> talk to a lot of older guys."

> • " I was sneaking online after my parents were asleep and after I got home from
> school when they weren't home yet."

> • " . . . all the guys I talk about were way older than I was at the time . . . I'm not going
> to analyze why that is at this time and point but at the time it made me happy so I just
> went with it."

4c. <u>At the beginner stage of Internet communication, Internet based re-presentations of online others were accepted as accurate portrayals of their offline embodied "selves"</u>
Rochelle did not initially anticipate that virtual others posed with identities untethered to the facticity of their offline identities.

- "I was naïve at the time, so I believed pretty much anything they told me . . ."

5d. <u>At the beginner stage of Internet communication, intense emotions of affection were felt toward the personas of online others encountered during cybertext chat</u>
Rochelle found herself swept up in intense emotions of hope and love after feeling affirmed by the virtual others she encountered.

- "Then there were a couple others, and of course I was in love with all of them."

6g. <u>The world of Internet chat provides one with the power to be immediately transported away from the "reality" of everyday life concerns as well as the stress of virtual world conflicts</u>
Rochelle found that cyberspace provided her with an increased power to control the kinds of social experiences she underwent. Rochelle felt as if she was able to replace the stressful "reality" of her everyday world and "self" with that of the more appealing and absorbing "reality" of virtual intimacy.

- ". . . It's like you are in your own little world, nothing matters except you and the person/persons you are talking to."

- " . . . It's a relief from everyday life, because you can just be your [*sic*], and live in a fantasy world if you wanted to online."

- "Nothing bothers you, if you don't want to talk to person, you can very easily block them from your buddy list or just ban them from talking to you at all . . ."

7e. <u>Cybertext chat can be less stressful if one prefers to be evaluated on the basis of social presence rather than physical presence</u>
Rochelle's fear about being judged primarily in terms of her bodily appearance were allayed during e-text chat.

- "You feel really special inside, like you have nothing to be afraid of because the person you are talking to isn't judging you for looks, just solely on how you interact online."

- " . . . It lets you open up to someone without them staring at you . . . you don't have to worry if you have spinach in your teeth . . ."

8f. Difficulty interpreting online humor and sarcasm can interfere with safely immersing oneself into online chat
Rochelle found that when the virtual other's humor tilted toward sarcasm, it was difficult for her to know if she was still in a secure social space or if she had exposed herself to the possibility of malicious judgment.

   • "It's hard to tell someone's sense of humor online, but usually it goes through. Sarcasm is a big one though. Sometimes you can't really tell whether or not the person is being just mean, or sarcastic."

9i. The remoteness of disembodied sociality clears a social space for virtual others to be more   socially insensitive
After some painful online experiences, Rochelle developed the belief that the physical and social distance, intrinsic to online chat, invited hurtful social behavior from online others.

   • "I guess that's why it is easy to be jerks online, because they aren't face to face with you, so they just do what they want . . . it hurts just the same."

10j. The computer screen, as a symbolic barrier between self and other, may not diminish the emotional injury from being "verbally" aggressed in cyberspace
Rochelle experienced the emotional wounds inflicted by virtual others no less intensely than she would in a face-to-face encounter.

   • "But in reality no matter if you are behind a computer screen or in person, it hurts just the same."

11. The computer screen, as a symbolic barrier between self and other, may not diminish the emotional difficulty of undergoing conflict in cyberspace
Rochelle found arguments with virtually present others no less unpleasant than such conflicts would be face-to-face.

   • "I've had my share of fights online as well, and believe me, they were just as hard as they would have been if the fights were in person."

12k. Transitioning from a virtual relationship to an offline embodied encounter can require deliberation and screening
Rochelle put effort into securing her parent's approval to pursue a date with someone she made an acquaintance with online. Rochelle's parent's insisted on first screening Rochelle's virtual acquaintance.

   • ". . . I finally asked them if I could meet someone in person form online. It took some convincing but they let me as long as they met him first . . ."

13. <u>The first e-enabled offline "date" with a virtual other occasioned more frequent dates of a similar kind with different virtual others</u>
Rochelle increased her efforts to meet virtual others offline after her first e-enabled offline date.

- " . . . that was just an icebreaker. I met guys more often after that."

14lx. <u>Impressions formed about virtual others online turn out to be disappointing re-presentations of what virtual others will be like in the flesh</u>
Rochelle's e-enabled dating disappointments were chalked up to her naiveté and her belief that most males were lacking in character and forthrightness about their intentions despite their benign virtual representations of "self."

- "And the one person that you do find may look good online, but then you get them on the phone and they are completely different, it's a real let down."

- " . . . Out of all the guys I met online, there weren't too many "nice" guys . . . "

- " . . . I didn't really know what I was getting into with those kinds of situations . . . It was kind of an emotional roller coaster for me, but I soon learned that guys are like that."

15m. <u>As a heterosexual female, it can be a relief to encounter a virtual male whose "self" seems to manifest similar qualities</u>
Rochelle was relieved to meet a virtual other who she perceived to be dissimilar to previously encountered virtual males and, at the same time, more similar to her.

- " . . . it was almost as if we knew each other, we had a lot in common and I was jus [*sic*] so glad that he wasn't into the types of things all the others had been."

16n. <u>A decision to correct an online mis-representation about one's offline "self" occurs when the virtual other may be significantly mismatched with one's offline "self"</u>
Rochelle was able to be straightforward about the difference between the age she assigned to her online "self" and her actual offline age. Rochelle was able to do this, in part, because she perceived that the "older" online other might be concerned about the age discrepancy.

- "He was older . . . You had to be 18 in order to place an ad, so I told a white lie, but in my second e-mail to him, I did tell him that I was only 17, and that in two weeks I would be 18."

17o. <u>Where e-text rapport turns into enthusiastic telephone (voice-based) space rapport, a long-term relationship becomes possible</u>
Rochelle engages in a long-term relationship with her e-enabled date. The offline relationship did not ensue until Rochelle felt extremely positive about the "self" of the

virtual other. The sustained sense of rapport both persons established were developed through their extensive virtual interactions across different electronic mediums.

> • "We hit it off, even on the phone. We talked on the phone almost every day, for hours at a time. Finally, we decided to meet . . ."

> • "When you finally get a hold of someone who is stimulating you feel a connection. You think, "Oh wow, we have something in common." And you want to know more and more about this person . . ."

18p. Caution about the character of the "self" of an online other can lead to a sketchy agreement to meet offline
Rochelle's next long-term offline relationship first began online with a feeling of caution and a tepid sense of rapport and interest in the "self" of the virtual other. Moreover Rochelle found herself to be scarcely motivated to meet offline.

> • " . . . For some reason though, I thought he was too "shady" . . . He, at that time, was I guess too boring for me . . . We arranged to meet eachother [*sic*] there, or just in passing, say maybe we'll see eachother [*sic*]there . . ."

19. Misinterpretation of intentions can result in a failure to communicate further
Rochelle feels misunderstood when the virtual other claims that Rochelle intended to avoid further contact with him.

> • "He swears that I blew him off, but if I did, it wasn't intentional . . ."

20q. The level of attraction or interest in the "self" of a virtual other does not necessarily re-present a reliable impression of what the offline experience of the other will be
Rochelle found that impressions of online others do not translate well into experiences of the other offline.

> • " . . . So I guess it goes to show that even if we hit it off online, doesn't mean we will hit it off in person, and vis versa."

21r. The degree of enjoyment experienced during online chat varies depending on the virtual space chosen and the kinds of virtual others chatted with
Rochelle did not find online chat to be a consistently pleasurable experience due to the variety of Internet spaces and virtual others she experienced.

> • " . . . In general when you are talking to people in chat rooms its kind of fun. Depends on the chat room, and what kind of people you actually engage . . ."

22r. In chat rooms, the virtual "self" of others tends to come into presence as puerile forms of chat
Rochelle experienced most chat room social practices as immature.

• "The whole problem I had was just talking to people who were mature . . ."

23su. <u>As a female, the decision to allow virtual males to view photographs depicting her physical appearance can be experienced as risky – particularly if she believes that her body image does not match Western culture ideals</u>
Rochelle sometimes experienced emotional injury when receiving feedback about the posting of her picture online. Rochelle found herself needing to prepare emotionally for anticipated judgments about her posted image

   • " . . . I'm not a Barbie . . . so I rarely gave out my picture and when I did I had to prepare myself mentally."

   • "After a few years of that I got tough, or bitter . . ."

24t. <u>In personal ad sites, it felt less traumatic to share the picture of her embodied female "self" since it was assumed that disapproving others might simply pass over the image without comment</u>
Rochelle felt less attacked by unkind judgments in a personal ad site because she assumed that disapproving others were more likely to pass over her picture without bothering to comment. In this way, Rochelle felt that her feelings were "spared."

   • "When I posted personal ads I did have my picture on there, but that wasn't as bad as the chat rooms . . ."

25v. <u>A female's wish to merely chat online was frustrated by the perceived intention of online males to pursue sexualized objectives</u>
Rochelle eventually decided to resist and reject the sexualized practices of online males.

   • " . . . I'm sure the guys had a different frame of mind, but I wasn't going to play their games anymore."

26y. <u>Though one can adopt multiple identities and indulge in fantasy online, it was learned that "true" intimacy cannot be sustained where such "false" re-presentations of self occur</u>
When the pursuit of love is embarked upon, Rochelle decided that the online other's failure to be what s/he portrays him/her "self" to be online can lead to rather large disappointments.

   • " . . . You can live a fantasy life on the Internet, but if you are really looking for true love, don't falsify anything, it just makes for a big disappointment in the end."

27z. <u>The practice of virtual sociality can dramatically decline when one successfully transitions to establishing a fulfilling offline relationship</u>
Rochelle found that her involvement in a rewarding romantic relationship reduced her Internet use to the function of briefly checking email and playing games. Chat room involvement no longer filled a prior emotional need.

- " . . . I still use to [*sic*] Internet to play games, but I don't go into chat rooms. There is no need to, I have everything I need in a person."

Protocol #2: Internet Related Themes – Bryce, 27 y.o., African-American, male

1a. <u>Enthusiasm and fascination surface during early encounters with modernized electronic communication equipment and practices</u>
Bryce's exploration of and learning about the unprecedented Internet communication practices gave rise to early feelings of exhilaration. It was enjoyable and socially liberating to interact without seeing or being seen or known by anonymous virtual others.

- "It was fun, and exciting, and innovative to me."

2bh. <u>The "self," perceived as socially inadequate and vulnerable, opens up to practicing sociality through a distanced and disembodied modality</u>
With regard to embodied self-image, Bryce experienced his everyday "self" as impaired in the arena of face-to-face encounters with new people. However, with no-body present during Internet chat, Bryce experienced the Internet as offering a safer horizon in that he could practice a less immediate means of interacting with others. Thus, the absence of Bryce's online physical presence, freed Bryce to display an e-text identity able to engage in more expansive social "self" practices.

- "I am a shy person at first . . . . the Internet gave me an outlet. I could say almost anything without feeling odd . . . "

- "I've found that socializing on the internet has impacted my personal growth by giving me more opportunities to meet people that I wouldn't normally talk to, or be able to talk to because, of my shyness."

3c. <u>The "self" feels freer to re-present itself through dialoguing about personally meaningful topics</u>
Bryce felt liberated to practice "self" expression by "chatting" about typically unexpressed matters of personal interest – especially sexual matters.

- "I would talk about sex, politics, and other things that appealed to me."

4d. The Internet is initially viewed as a relatively effortless instrumental means to accessing a desired resource - knowable others

Bryce initially discovered that Internet chat encompassed fewer obstacles to succeeding in his project to meet others seeking social opportunities. Moreover, the knowledge that a large variety of virtual others also sought to meet new people allowed Bryce to initiate interactions with greater ease.

  • "I found that the Internet made it easy for me to become acquainted with someone."

5e. An early sense of comfort and mastery with e-relations breaks down when deception is encountered

When Bryce discovered that the disclosive space of Internet chat allows virtual others to portray a textual presence incommensurate with the facticity of their offline bodily being, Bryce's feeling of betrayal occasioned a return to the offline world and the semblance of visual certitude about identity therein.

  • "My first experience to meet someone new on the Internet was horrible because, the person lied about his age and appearances. When that happened, I immediately stop [*sic*] using the Internet as a way to meet a partner."

6f. Unsuccess making acquaintances in the incarnate offline world prompted the realization that use of the prosthetic-like equipment of the Internet was an indispensable aid in meeting others

Bryce's repeated failure to connect with embodied others, in the anxiety ridden horizon of Bryce's everyday offline world, gave rise to Bryce's realization that he was somehow incomplete or ill equipped to make acquaintances. As a result, Bryce chose to revise his approach to online social practices thereby reducing the risk of being deceived online. This allowed Bryce to shore up his perceived "self" image of inadequacy by donning Internet equipment in order to successfully meet a partner online.

  • "A few months past and I weren't [*sic*] meeting people *on my own* [italics added], so I decided to meet a partner."

7g. Success in transitioning from a virtual relationship to a face-to-face relationship hinged on utilizing Internet communication equipment, frequent daily e-chat, and efforts to know the "self" of the other

Before meeting his future partner in the offline world, Bryce dialogued online with him extensively as a way to fill out the cybertext re-presentations of his potential partner's "self" more fully. Bryce developed a better online sense of the "self" of his future partner by noticing his online social style and emphasis during chat time.

  • ". . . I learned many things about him through the Internet so by the time we met I knew many things about him. That meeting on the Internet involved [*sic*]into a three-year relationship."

8. <u>The Internet aided in expanding awareness of offline social venues for meeting others</u>
The Internet allowed Bryce to increase his awareness of places for socializing in his everyday embodied world.

   • "'The Internet gave me more places such as clubs . . . to meet people."

9i. <u>Embracing Internet equipment and practice allowed "self" confidence and practical know-how about offline relationships to emerge</u>
Bryce was able to successfully integrate practical Internet social skills into the daily social "self" practices of his everyday relational life space. As a result, Bryce felt that his embodied "self" image offline had transformed into a more capable and less vulnerable offline presence.

   • "It has also given me more courage and confidence . . . I now know the types of people that are attracted to me and how to approach them."

Protocol #3: Internet Related Themes – Dawn, 29 y.o., African-American, female

1a. <u>Job responsibilities impose an unwanted geographic separation from an offline significant other. The decision to use the Internet as a means to communicate harbors the potential to ease separation stress due to decreased financial expense</u>
Dawn found herself disappointed about the imposed physical separation from her romantic partner. The combined stress of financial limitations and difficulty synchronizing schedules to talk precluded further use of voice-based long distance telephone service. Dawn thus pragmatically accepted relocation to a text-based Internet space (email) for interpersonal connection.

   • "Well due to job training updates, I had to interact with my significant other using other means of communication . . ."

2b. <u>The communicative praxis of email space felt distant and created misunderstanding and confusion</u>
Dawn was disappointed with the exclusive use of email space as a way to maintain a bond with her significant other. Email evoked hollow and confusing feelings of connectedness which evoked Dawn's recollection of the lost sensual human qualities present in other forms of communication. Re-presentations of the virtual other's emotional presence (e.g., emoticons) were inadequate substitutes for the other's bodily presence.

   • ". . . I found the emails to be very cold and impersonal. I would assume one thing and something else was implied . . . verbal communication (i.e. tone and voice inflections) makes words come alive and more meaningful."

3c. <u>The initial appeal of Instant Messaging (AIM) chat space rests on its similarity to the responsiveness of verbal dialogue</u>
By switching to the communication medium of AIM, Dawn hoped to retrieve some of the valued benefit of immediacy (e.g., real-time dialogue) associated with verbal interaction.

  • " . . . Instant messaging was agreed upon . . . to get back some of what verbal communication offered."

4d. <u>AIM practice required a tiresome need to calculatively explain one's concerns</u>
Dawn found that she was eventually discouraged with AIM communication practices as a substitute for the valued benefits of telephone interactions. The ease and spontaneity of verbal speech was replaced by the tedium of cognitively working out the written version of Dawn's utterances in AIM space. Consequently, the sense and feel of one's experience can get lost in he translation from the spoken word to the e-text mode of signification.

  • " . . . IM started to become tedious . . ."

5e. <u>The intention to convey supportive feedback through AIM space can be angrily interpreted by the recipient as harsh, insensitive, and lacking in understanding about the AIM recipient's situation and character</u>
Dawn was shocked by the intensity of her significant other's animosity arising from his (mis)interpretation of her text-based instant message to him. The taken-for-granted context of the dyad's offline repertoire and understanding sometimes failed to inform their virtual interaction. Consequently, ill-attuned assumptions and interpretations about e-text communication ensued.

  • ". . . I Imed him stating 'I am surprised at you'. This statement was interpreted as 'How dare you judge me . . . He questioned our entire relationship over my simple statement."

6f. <u>Conflict resolution becomes possible with the acquisition of an Internet enabled prosthetic memory. Scrolling through earlier exchanges during AIM chat allows the AIM sender to retrieve a forgotten context contributing to the conflict</u>
The technology of AIM archiving allowed Dawn to retrieve her memory of the stress informing her significant other's actions. The AIM practice of scrolling backwards through the "chat" transcript allowed Dawn to respond in a more understanding manner to her significant other's outrage.

  • "But before I Imed [*sic*] him back a response, I scrolled up to view the beginning of the IM where he stated how stressed he was . . ."

7g. <u>The ways in which Internet communication can impede human communication are</u>
<u>manifold</u>
Dawn's experiences with social interaction in cyberspace leads her to conclude that the
horizon of virtual communication is fraught with a considerable amount of difficulty. As a
result, Dawn concluded that ongoing involvement with AIM praxis can lead to a loss of
ease and fluency with face-to-face communication. Moreover, Dawn found that the
opportunity to calibrate one's speech to the nonverbal expressions of the bodily present
other is largely eclipsed during virtual communication.

> • "My example only implied a fraction of how the Internet can handicap social
> interactions with people."

8h. <u>Internet communication practices produce deficient social skills. The listener's</u>
<u>assumptions inform understanding more so than the particularities of the conversational</u>
<u>context</u>
The upshot of virtual communication for Dawn involves a diminution in the art of
listening. In AIM space, people are unwittingly trained in the kind of social skills where
hearing takes place without understanding.

> • " . . . Assuming and hearing has taking social skills be it verbal or written out of the
> art of conversing.   Allowing the world to listen with a deafening ear."

Person-Centered Narrative

To begin*, the anticipation of embarking upon cyberspace social practices are*
experienced as potentially gratifying. For, those seeking to make new acquaintances and
form meaningful social connections, the power to leave behind unsatisfying offline
interpersonal circumstances and crossover into a virtual world is inviting. Cyberspace
sociality is eagerly embraced as an enticing alternative for forming meaningful relations.
With the aid of the Internet window, one is plugged into a vast standing reserve of ever
present virtual others seeking social connection. One becomes hopeful, or even feels
spellbound by the expansion of "self" and social possibilities afforded by access to the
electronic frontier. Where one may have typically experienced uneasiness with the
extended power to access such an enlarged social horizon, instead, one's offline social
anxieties or bodily concerns are significantly diffused in the online world. The embodied
anxieties of social life in the offline world are replaced by the opportunity to enact
previously unlived potentials from behind the seemingly indispensable veneer of a
cyberself persona. With the prosthetic medium of computer enabled e-text re-
presentations standing in for the fleshly body of human existence, one believes that new
possibilities for social being can be lived out. For instance, it is felt that virtuality allows
for a liberating contraction of one's bodily presence. Unwanted aspects of one's
incarnate presence can be excluded from one's online persona. At the same time, it is
also felt that there are new possibilities for practicing "self" expansion. Such
possibilities can include taking up the option to enact alternative identities which
transcend ones factical incarnate existence. In addition, one finds that one can express a
typically inhibited sense of "self" more easily after feeling liberated from presenting or

encountering bodily presence online. Thus doubts constellating around one's embodied self-consciousness are muted. However, when one attempts to shift face-to-face communication practices with a previously known significant other into the realm of cyberspace communication practices – due to unwanted geographic separation – one, instead, desires to reproduce the offline experience of the other during online interaction. Overcoming the loss of the other's embodied presence becomes paramount. Thus, with regard to an established significant other, one's wish for "self" expansion is limited to acquiring the extended power to somehow retain a sensorial basis for intimate connection (e.g., voice inflection) despite geographic and economic obstacles.

*   **After** meeting a newly encountered other online, a naïve sense of exhilaration is experienced. Adopting an alternate identity, maintaining ambiguity about one's factical body, or liberating a previously inhibited way of expressing oneself allows a felt ease to accompany interactions with virtual others. Here, virtual relationships are established with plans made to transition the encounter into the offline world of embodied others. Feelings of hope, or even strong affection, can be felt towards these seemingly ideal virtual others. The virtual other's "self" re-presentation within the cyber-window is uncritically taken up as an honest portrayal of offline identity. The virtual other's self re-presentations are trusted. One experiences a degree of comfort and mastery negotiating the re-presentational signifiers comprising e-relations. However, a breakdown in the smooth unproblematic flow of such re-presentational social practice occurs around the time that crossover from the virtual to the "real" world of sociality occurs. One feels betrayed when the illusion that there is a relative match between the virtual presence of others and their offline factical being is shattered. One may even recoil at the thought of once again advancing further into the erstwhile safety of the virtual horizon. Eventually one begins to be more thorough in efforts to discern the verisimilitude of the virtual other's online persona (e.g., extended virtual interactions). Even so, it is learned that knowing more about virtual other or screening him or her offers no clear-cut indication about offline compatibility or incompatibility. Even poor first impressions online can result in positive offline outcomes. Nevertheless, the sense of betrayal becomes less of a concern if one's desire to co-author a fantasy relationship was paradoxically co-present with the wish to establish an intimate encounter. The counterbalancing opportunity to enter – or even escape – into a creative play space seems to serve as a compensatory gratification. It is the singular wish to form an intimate offline relationship that motivates "self" disclosures congruent with one's offline identity.*

*   Other disruptions are encountered in the attempt to fashion personal online exchanges with new online others. Despite the symbolic and concrete barrier of the Web browser window, online conflicts are still experienced as emotionally difficult. Misunderstood online sarcasm, as well as, verbal aggression are still wounding experiences impeding further communication. The disembodied nature of the encounter does not necessarily insure that one is protected from emotional hurt . The concern becomes that the lack of face-to-face interaction serves as a license for online others to be more insensitive which interferes with safely immersing oneself in online chat. A significant portion of online chat is also experienced as "immature." The experience of being a woman online is fraught with concerns about the painful judgments rendered regarding femininity after visual images are posted online; particularly when the evaluative heterosexual male discourse is founded upon idealized versions of Western*

female body types (e.g., Barbie). In a corresponding manner, the gay male and heterosexual female's ongoing exposure to sexualized online advances is eventually tired of and disliked, or even resisted. Despite the risks for both online, it is remembered that the enjoyment of online chat varies from one space to another and one persona to another.

For those who come to online social practices after already having established offline intimacy, the significant other's bodily absence fails to be palpably fulfilled by electronic presence. The familiar rhythms of full-bodied intercommunication are disrupted by the narrow presence of e-language and the ensuing tedium of increasing one's verbiage as a way to compensate for the missing contexts of bodies in situ. The lack of bodily accompaniments to worded dialogue give rise to incomplete contexts for meaning. Misinterpretations follow, in part, because assumptions lack the gestural information of embodied communication. Sometimes scrolling back through Instant Messaging transcripts- a prosthetic memory of sorts - illuminated the cause of misunderstandings and lead to conflict resolution.

***The outcome** for those seeking intimacy through online social practices is varied. In order to successfully crossover from virtual intimacy to offline intimacy, it is believed that fantasy play and engaging in the play of multiple identities must be suspended in favor of revealing more honest disclosures about oneself. Personal growth is achieved through developing aspects of oneself online (e.g., confidence, social skills, appreciation for accurate self-disclosures) and applying such practices offline. Moreover, the need for virtual sociality seems to dissipate as offline social experiences become more fulfilling. When an intimate relationship precedes the crossover to online communication, there is a loss of immediacy and a loss of the familiar ease with understanding one another. Without the sensible other present, it is felt that e-text language by itself ceases to speak as coherently during intimate exchanges. The loss of the sensual leads to the conclusion that online social practices produce deficient social skills and result in creating people who hear without listening.*

Section II: Local and Cultural-Historical Data

Here, in Section II, I explore and thematize the world horizon of technology and the Internet. The critical moment in this section consisted of combining Foucault's dual emphasis upon local social practice analysis and archival analysis as a way to understand the history of the present. The analysis of local and archival standpoints also provided an informed glimpse into the virtual social clearing belonging to Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn's experiences and interactions.

For the purposes of my research inquiry into virtual subjectivity and sociality, local site analysis was achieved by examining AOL's description of the AOL Instant

Messenger (AIM) window (See Appendix M). The local site analysis was further augmented by conducting a thematic review of Lawrence Lessig's commentary on AOL and AIM itself (See Appendix L). The inclusion of this dual perspective on AIM prepared the way for privileging Foucault's emphasis upon articulating the play of multiple interpretive forces vying to assert reality claims – or, in this case, vying to assert claims about the situated nature of AIM space.

Destabilizing the authority of AOL's singular viewpoint about AIM allowed the "event of (researcher) understanding" about local Internet site dynamics to be freed from presuppositions about achieving logocentric certainty. By, instead, adopting a perspectival view on AIM, the *technocultural-historical narrative* - located at the end of this section - revealed how AOL's efforts to market AIM as safe, private, and relatively unregulated seamlessly passed over AIM's panoptic and normalizing function. For instance, AIM's stress upon insuring privacy for AIM users failed, according to Lessig, to clarify AOL's power to trace AIM user activity. Moreover, it understated the lack of absolute privacy afforded to the users of encryption technology. Such insights clarified some of the "strategies" used by AIM to condition and normalize various discourse-based practices.

In the second part of this section, my textual analysis of scholarly works addressing broad technocultural-historical trends allowed for the instantiation of a hermeneutic circle – or rather, for the instantiation of a method for revising my presuppositions about the local world of AIM and the metanarratives about technocultural history. The works of Martin Heidegger, Robert Romanyshyn, Kenneth Gergen, and Lawrence Lessig each contributed to enlarging my cultural-historical

perspective on technology. In and through contrasting AIM social practices with the macrocosmic perspective on technocultural-historical trends, it then became possible to picture how the experiences described by Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn were also embedded in discourses at work throughout the way stations of history (e.g., modernism, Enframing, romanticism). The *technocultural-historical narrative,* thus, provided a forum for fashioning an integrated narrative about the relationship between local social clearings and cultural-historical trends. It was revealed that as the Internet became an increasingly structured space, the local norms and practices came to reflect, not one discourse, but a variety of practices associated with the legacies of multiple discourses. At core, however, AIM space was limited in advance by the legacy of modernity – a legacy which privileges detached, de-sensualized, and de-contextualized modes of being in the world with others. Nevertheless, within the frame of modernity, possibilities for non-modern discourse were still at work in AIM space (e.g., romanticism, postmodernism). Hence, the *technocultural-historical narrative* became a story about the multiple threads of discourse woven into the Net – threads which were sometimes neatly woven together, and threads sometimes so ill-woven that disentanglement from the Net was necessitated in order to be free from its limitations.

Further ahead, in Section III, I compose the *situated global narrative* by reuniting the interconnected reality of person and world. This was accomplished by reestablishing the dialogic unity between the lived experiences of the research participants and the constitutive forces at work in AIM space and in Western technocultural-history.

Local Internet Site Data #1: AOL Critical Themes from _Code_ (Lawrence Lessig)

1. AIM space solicits the Western "self" to increasingly disassociate from the physical body and practice virtual identity re-presentation in terms of a postmodern multiplicity or modernist/romanticist singularity
By providing an option for online users to adopt multiple screen names, AIM engenders forms of self-practice and self-fashioning potentially untethered to one's offline embodied identity. AIM thereby participates in producing a subject who can enact her sense of fluid postmodern identity or retain a singular modernist/romanticist sense of identity.

• ". . . When you start an AOL account on AOL, you have the right to establish up to five identities . . .
        So in AOL you are given a fantastic power of pseudonymity that the "code writers" of real space simply do not give . . ."

2. AOL maintains its (panoptic) oversight by loosely enforcing practices of normative behavior consonant with a particular cyber-space
AOL positions itself as the institution with the final word on enabling or disabling online social practices in the various AOL communities. At the same time, AOL allow for a diversity of normatively different communities and ways of being to exist within the ambiguous framework of "decency."

• " . . . Within the limits of decency, and so long as you are in the proper place, you can say what you want on AOL."

3. AOL's architecture of sociality and power is asymmetrical. Where AOL owners retain the power to speak to the whole AOL community, each AOL member's access to community platforms for introducing broad based change are substantially restricted
AOL has created a social field that grants AOL members the limited power to influence circumscribed local norms rather than impact the broader regulating authority of AOL owners. Consequently, the "self" in AOL is fashioned to wield limited power to affect structural social changes.

• ". . . There is no space where you could address all members of AOL. There is no town hall or town meeting where people can complain in public and have their complaints heard by others . . . The owners of AOL, however, can speak to all . . . The rest of the members of AOL can speak to crowds only where they notice a crowd. And never a crowd greater than twenty-three."

4. AOL members exist within a virtual field of "traceability," or rather, centralized visibility to AOL's gaze
The online "self" practices virtual forms of existence while submitting to the awareness that various online practices may be under surveillance.

• ". . . AOL can (and no doubt does) trace your activities and collect information about them. What files you download, what areas you frequent, who your "buddies" are – all this is available to AOL . . . "

• ". . . . AOL knows (even if no one else does) just who you are. It knows who you are, it knows where you live in real space . . ."

5. AOL allocates a limited portion of its power to observe other AOL members in the form of "buddy lists"
AOL members are granted limited power to observe other AOL member activities. AOL members may also have some of their online actions observed by selected online members - but only if screen names have been freely disclosed to one another.

• ". . . One wonderful feature of the online space is something called "buddy lists . . ."

Local Internet Site Data #2: AOL Instant Messenger (AIM) Critical Themes

1. AIM advertising produces excitement and immediate access to the technologically enabled power, value, and social practice associated with maintaining a constancy of virtual interconnectivity with others
AIM advertising valorizes a multiplication of virtual social practices consistent with the modernist and Cartesian de-emphasis upon sensual bodily and worldly significance.

• "Connect with your friends and family – anytime, anywhere! AIM® 5.2 for Windows, *Download Now! . . .*"

• ". . . AIM Remote™ [buttons]:
        {I am Online. Send me an IM.}
        {Add me to your Buddy List.}
        {Join my Chat Room.}
        {Send me E-Mail.} . . ."

• ". . . AIM Express Features: AIM Express lets you send instant messages directly form a Web browser, such as Netscape navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, to anyone who has registered for AIM or who uses the America Online service . . .

2. AIM encourages the employment of prepackaged online pictorial re-presentations of one's "self" as a way to communicate what is lost by bodily presence in cyberspace
AIM compensates for what amounts to the modernist and virtual abandonment of the flesh by introducing a catalogue of smiley face symbols and images of cultural celebrities into online social practice. In these ways, the virtual social field is filled with re-presentational traces of embodiment rather than the tone and texture of the sensual flesh and world. The surplus of complexity and dynamism occurring during nonverbal incarnate interchanges exceeds what virtual re-presentations can convey. The "self" in AIM space must, therefore, still submit to the diminution of the sensual when employing virtual social practices.

• ". . . **AIM Expressions™** is the exciting way to personalize your AIM® client and instant messages . . ."

• "**Buddy Icons** . . . Make your IMs display your online personality. Choose a cool Buddy Icon . . . Choose from hundreds of cool Buddy Icons:"

• "**Smiley Dictionary**: Ever wonder what people are saying on AIM? Use the handy Smiley Dictionary to keep up . . ."

3. AIM reproduces the Enframing (*Ge-stell*) of modern technology by promoting an instrumental (means-end), efficient, and expedient relationship to language
AIM encourages language practices based on expedience and convenience rather than upon practices which privilege fulsome modes of revealing.

• ". . . **Acronym Dictionary**: Get your message across quickly and save some keystrokes, too . . . you'll be communicating faster than ever with friends, family, and colleagues."

4. Within AOL's extensive virtual social community exists a centralized list of norms which frame parameters for the production of norms in local cyber spaces
AIM empowers individual online users to enact personal and local norms. By contrast, AOL codifies broadly applicable normative rules and guidelines comprised of suggestions and legal injunctions. Within different virtual spaces, netizens are free to practice a plurality of ethics (postmodern?) within the limits of legal norms (modernist?)

• "Block members who misbehave."

• ". . . Please review our chat rules and guidelines." (See Appendix N for AIM Chat Room Rules and Guidelines)

5. AIM promotes a subset of social practices which are relatively free from the visibility of the virtual field
AIM encryption allows Instant Messaging social practices to instantiate a postmodern space largely free from the encroachment of non-local norms. Encryption technology, free of backdoor decryption options, would go further to insure against interference from large institutionalized systems (e.g., government).

• "**Encrypted IM**: Now you can send and receive encrypted IMs . . ."

6. AOL prompts an incitement to speech in virtual interactive domains
AOL's incitement to interactive online speech results in a social saturation which can contribute to the "self's" exposure to broader ways of being a "self.

• "**AIM Chat Rooms** . . . Hot Chats . . . Hobbies and Interests . . . International . . . Love & Romance . . ."

7. <u>AOL's addition of the AIM-mobile phone interface furthers the production of social practices increasingly disconnected form body and world</u>
AOL creates a wireless architecture promoting easier wireless crossovers from voice-based communication space to virtual communication space. Impediments to the "self's" immersion in virtual sociality are overcome.

• ". . . Sending IMs to mobile phones just got easier. Now you can create nicknames for your Buddies' mobile numbers . . ."

• ". . . Have Instant Messages delivered to your cell phone, when you're away from your PC . . ."

Technocultural-Historical Themes #1: "The Question Concerning Technology" (QCT). Having concluded the critically informed analysis of local AIM social practices, I took up the task of exploring the broad horizon of Western discourses in the technocultural-historical textual analyses below. In the first of four scholarly text analyses, Martin Heidegger's essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," provided the widest or most historically panoramic understanding of modern technology vis á vis the other scholarly texts I examined. Here, Heidegger reached as far back as Socratic Greece to inaugurate "thinking" about how the enframing of modern technology opens up a disclosive space which narrowly reveals things as "standing reserve." By contrast, the technē of the pre-Socratic Greeks brought into freer disclosure that which was prevented from presencing within an instrumental perspective. In corollary fashion, it was later seen that Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn's difficulties with arriving at clarity about the virtual others they encountered were situated within the constricted social practices linked to Enframing (*Ge-stell)*.

Below, Heidegger's cultural-historical understanding of modern technology has been articulated under two broad thematic categories. The two broad thematic categories

to be considered in this section will address forms of being a "self" and forms of relation with the world occasioned by modern technology.

Themes: Forms of being a "self"

A. <u>Modern technology solicits the self to order the world (as standing-reserve) [QCT]</u>
The theory of nature found in the modern physics of the seventeenth century prefigured the essence of modern technology, Enframing. With the rise of machine-power technology in the eighteenth century, Enframing occasioned a clearing where the modern self participated in marshalling the world to come to presence in a narrowly ordered fashion. The modern self's capacity to reveal a richly variegated significance of the world was correspondingly eclipsed.

> • "The essence of technology lies in Enframing. Its holding sway belongs within destining. Since destining at any given time starts man on a way of revealing, man, thus under way, is continually approaching the brink of the possibility of pursuing and pushing forward nothing but what is revealed in ordering, and of deriving all his standards on this basis" (p. 26).

> • "Enframing is the gathering together that belongs to that setting-upon which sets upon man and puts him in position to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve" (p. 24).

> • "Modern technology as an ordering revealing is, then, no merely human doing. Therefore we must take that challenging that sets upon man [*sic*] to order the real as standing-reserve in accordance with the way it shows itself. That challenge gathers man into ordering. This gathering concentrates upon ordering the real as standing-reserve" (p. 19)

> • "Modern physics is the herald of Enframing . . ." (p. 22).

B. <u>The instrumental view of technology gives rise to a self understood as the master of technology (QCT)</u>
The instrumental view of modern technology, as a means to an end, "conditions" the human self to manipulate technology for the ends which modern technology serves. In this way, modern technology and the human activity of the modern self are regulated. As a way to overcome the lack of a free relationship to modern technology, the human self views its self as the master of the technology it has been "ordered" to employ.

> • "Technology is a contrivance, or in Latin, an *instrumentum*" (p. 5).

> • "As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so, rather, exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is he comes to the point where he himself

will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct" (pp. 26-27).

• " . . . modern technology . . . is a means to an end. That is why the instrumental conception of technology conditions every attempt to bring man into the right relation to technology. Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means . . . The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control" (p. 5).

• "So long as we represent technology as an instrument, we remain held fast in the will to master it. We press on past the essence of technology" (p. 32).

C. The essence of technology invites the self to reflect freely in an ongoing mode of revealing (QCT)
The essence of technology was prominent during the era of pre-Socratic Greece as technē. The ancient understanding of technē freed the human self to bring-forth truth, not as a fixed representation, but rather as a free revealing of what presented itself. The human self was attuned to the shared participation of conventional modes of knowing (e.g., objectivity) and aesthetic sensibilities in the process of unconcealment.

• "From the earliest times until Plato the word *technē* is linked with the word *epistēmē*. Both words are names for knowing in the widest sense" (p. 13).

• "Once there was a time when the bringing-forth of the true into the beautiful was called *technē*. And the *poiēsis* of the fine arts was called *technē*.
In Greece, at the outset of the destining of the West, the arts soared to the supreme height of the revealing granted them" (p. 34).

• "Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology . . .
Such a realm is art. But certainly only if reflection on art, for its part, does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth . . ." (p.35).

• "The relationship will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology" (p. 3).

Forms of relation with the world

A. In modern technology the world is understood as a resource to be stockpiled as a standing-reserve (QCT)
Amidst the sway of modern technology, the world is revealed as a potential energy resource to be store housed for future human use. The disclosure of the world is typically confined to its value as a readily available material support for human existence.

• " . . . man in the technological age is, in a particularly striking way, challenged forth into revealing. That revealing concerns nature, above all, as the chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve . . . Modern science's way of representing pursues and entraps nature as a calculable coherence of forces" (p. 21).

• "And yet the revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not unfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of *poiēsis*. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [*Herausforden*], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such" (p. 14).

• "The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up . . ." (p. 16).

• "Everywhere, everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so it may be on call for further ordering" (p. 17).

B. In modern technology the world is understood as having a singular essence (QCT)
From the time of Socrates forward, the essence of the things of the world was thought to have been predetermined and unalterable. Truth-claims, grounded in the assumptions of Western metaphysics, posited a singular essence for the things of the world. In this way, the being of the world was debilitated by human forgetfulness about the dynamic unfolding of the world's significance.

• "Socrates and Plato already think the essence of something as what essences, what comes to presence in the sense of what endures. But they think what endures remains permanently [*das Fortwährende*] (*aei on*)" (p. 30).

• "But it can never in any way be established that enduring is based solely on what Plato thinks as *idea* and Aristotle thinks as *to ti ēn einai* (that which any particular thing has always been), or what metaphysics in its most varied interpretations thinks as *essentia*" (p. 30).

• "It is technology itself that makes the demand on us to think in another way what is usually understood by 'essence'" (p. 30).

C. The essence of technology allows the world to be revealed through a continuous process of "unconcealment" (QCT)
The "danger" of modern technology encompasses the loss of free unconcealment as a human practice. Such a "danger" amounts to losing touch with the essence of technology as a way of revealing the world through continuous cycles of disclosure and concealment. The plentitude of the world's significance can show itself when the "saving

power" to recover open-ended unconcealment is revitalized by the imminent threat of such a loss.

> • "Bringing-forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing [*das Entbergen*]. The Greeks have the word *aletheia* for revealing. The Romans translate this with *veritas*" (pp.11-12).

> • "Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth" (p. 12).

> • "The question concerning technology is the question concerning the constellation in which revealing and concealing, in which the coming to presence of truth, comes to pass" (p. 33).

> • "Thus the challenging Enframing not only conceals a former way of revealing, bring-forth, but it conceals revealing itself and with it That wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, comes to pass" (p. 27).

> • "Thus, where Enframing reigns, there is a *danger* in the highest sense.
>   *But where danger is, grows*
>   *The saving power also"* (p. 28).

Technocultural-Historical Themes #2: *Technology as Symptom and Dream*

TSD. In this, the second scholarly text analysis, Robert Romanyshyn's *Technology as Symptom and Dream* stands as a chronicle of discourses emerging from the world of art, anatomy, and physical science circa the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. Romanyshyn demonstrated how the latter fields of study crystallized practices positing the self as a spectator, the world as a spectacle, and embodiment as a specimen. Technology's corollary dream followed suit by extolling a detachment from both the earthly world and the incarnate self.

After I compared the cultural-historical themes outlined by Romanyshyn with the local site analysis of AIM, it became clear that while the local AIM space similarly privileged practices linked to disembodiment and disconnection from the physical world,

AIM practices also allowed Internet users to engage in practices partially offsetting the loss of bodily presence (e.g., AIM Expressions, emoticons) and worldly context. In this way, AIM's virtual communication practices both reproduced and challenged the modernist assumptions informing the architecture of virtuality

In the themes outlined below, Romanyshyn's cultural-historical understanding of the technological world and its cultural project have been articulated under three broad thematic categories. The three broad thematic categories considered in this section will address living the body, forms of being a "self," and forms of relation with the world.

Themes: Living the body

A. Modernity solicits abandonment of the flesh (TSD)
The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are marked by the rise of knowledges and practices (e.g., Brunelleschi and Alberti's codification of linear perspective vision in painting) which "seeded" the current technological world's estranged way of knowing and inhabiting bodily being. Embodiment was understood as a hindrance, an impediment, and an obstacle to knowing one's world.

• ". . . within the space of linear perspective vision and under the fixed gaze which stares at the horizon, the human body is taken up into the heady eye of mind . . . Our senses will make increasingly less sense of the world as the body matters increasingly less than thought" (p. 48).

• "Indeed the daring Copernicus' imagination, 'which lifted him from the earth and enabled him to look down upon her as though he actually were an inhabitant of the sun,' lies in his willingness to dispense with the body in order to achieve a vision of things no longer misled by appearances" (p. 95).

• "Descartes . . . completed another work, in 1649, entitled *The Passions of the Soul*, in which he continued to elaborate the relations between the conscious person and the estranged body" (p. 141).

• ". . . the telos of technology's dream to refashion the body is toward abandonment   of the body, toward disincarnation" (p. 20).

• ". . . the human body has become something quite unknown to us, unfamiliar, an alien abstraction . . ." (p. 103).

• "In leaving the body behind, the self behind the window can better realize its vision of the world, a vision purified of the flesh, sterilized, if you will, a vision, we might say, without taste" (p. 114).

B. The modern body is experienced as an object (TSD)
In the modern imagination, the individual's body is meant to matter from a detached perspective. The modern discourse understands the human body anatomically, as a sanitized, depersonalized corpse or specimen. At the individual level, one is thereby invited to understand living flesh as an object comprised of mechanical functions. Forgetfulness about the sensual, emotional, and mortal horizons animating the flesh conceals how the body gathers meaning about its vital involvement in the world.

• "In 1543 [Andreas Vesalius] created modern anatomy. Before Vesalius the non-living body was a dead body. After Vesalius, the dead body became a corpse. Corpses are designed to be open for inspection . . ." (p.16).

• "[William] Harvey resurrects the corpse. In 1628 he reanimates it by making the heart into a pump. A crude machine . . ." (pp. 16-17)

• "In offering us an image of life as mechanism, as technical function, the corpse hides death and conceals the living body as an e-motional involvement and relation with the world" (p. 132).

• " . . . the eye as the paramount organ of distance comes to represent humanity which, in increasingly removing itself from the world, becomes less and less touched by it . . we shall say that the body abandoned is free to become the corpse . . ." (p. 44)

• " . . . the corpse hides life as well as death . . ." (p. 127).

• " 'With the beginning of anatomy,' van den Berg writes, 'the distinction between life and death becomes obscure' . . . The corpse removes the smell of death, and in this respect the corpse becomes the only thing it can become, neither a living nor a dead body, but a lifeless thing" (p. 127).

• "The body which we have invented to fit the space of the world opened up by the linear perspective vision is a body of technical functioning. It is an anatomical object . . ." (p. 114).

• " . . . to retreat *within* the defined spaces of my anatomical arm, the more *my* arm becomes *an* arm, *like any other arm*" (p. 105).

• " . . . our invention of the anatomical body has helped us forget: *the body is a situation and as such changes*" (pp. 108-110).

Forms of being a "self"

A. <u>The modern self is prone to become a detached spectator (TSD)</u>
The "window" of linear perspective vision in art and the objective stance of the scientist of modernity both participate in producing the detached way in which individuals relate to their world. Modernity solicits a passive relation to one's world. Humanity thereby becomes an observer, a dispassionate spectator of its worldly horizon. Lacking investment in and communion with a world richly animated by meaning and sensuality, humanity reproduces a space of literalized interiority that forgets its productive powers of imagination and reflection. The spectator sees without fully understanding.

> • "The window which Alberti imagined between the viewer and the world has become a style of consciousness marked by our retreat and estrangement from the world" (p. 68).

> • "In the space of linear perspective the viewer is imagined to be looking at the world as if through a window. The window is our habit of mind . . . Behind the window we have become distant and detached, a self separated and isolated from the world, a neutral observer and recorder of the world's events" (p. 67).

> • "The spectator self who trains his or her fixed gaze upon the world also practices a singular vision. It is that single vision of Newton's sleep from which the poet Blake begged deliverance, a literalizing vision which forgets the play of imagination, which was Blake's point." (p. 99)

> • "Behind a window, it is easier to imagine that one is only an on-looker of the world, a detached and non-involved spectator" (p. 67).

> • "Cool, detached, impartial, and objective, the self of distant vision becomes increasingly indifferent to a world it views from afar" (p. 89)

> • " . . . the distance which separates our knowledge of the world from our experience of it has increased" (p. 68).

B. <u>The modern self is prone to take itself up as a "master" of its world and of nature (TSD)</u>
Modernism places emphasis upon the self's detachment from the world. The Western self's experience of distance from the world has given rise to a human self imbued with the belief in its centrality and omnipotence. The ensuing belief in the power to control and recreate nature serves as an attitudinal backcloth influencing the modern self to ignore finitude and its symbiotic relation with the vital landscape of life.

> • " . . . in becoming increasingly detached it becomes increasingly possible to imagine that one is in charge and in control of things. With increasing distance it becomes easier to believe that one is really at the center" (pp. 44-47).

• "Having dominated the earth out of our increasing distance from it, we have come to believe that we are masters, and even creators . . . In this respect, we have lost something of the *religious* sense of human life . . . the sense that we are already bound, and connected to, and limited by something beyond ourselves" (p. 25).

• "[Frankenstein] is *made* by man [*sic*] and is *man*made. As *made* by man the monster is the product of a human vision which would master, tame, and even remake nature" (p. 161).

C. The self of modernity tends to reject its "sensual" capacities (TSD)
Linear perspective vision and scientized/mathematicized ways of understanding nature promote epistemologically based practices which shape the self as a head-centered rational organism. Humankind is thereby sent on a way of knowing which devalues the rich sensory ground supporting the reflections of mind. The human self then finds itself inhabiting abstractions rather than the sensual flesh of its body-world entwinement.

• "There is in this [scientific and mathematicized] attitude a decisive rejection of the sensuous world and its sensible appearances, a turning away from the fleshy world of appearances, and even a distrust of how our bodily sense of the world makes sense of the world, a distrust which is destined to become the methodic doubt of the world which lies at the heart of the modern scientific attitude . . . . *Doubt* occupies in modern thought the same central position which *wonder* in the face of the world occupied in Greek thought" (p. 78).

• "Indeed, to set the earth in motion Copernicus had to forget the sensuous body, a feets for which Galileo gave him much praise. Copernicus had to abandon his body, he had to leave it behind, he had to become, so to speak, the first astronaut" (p. 135).

• ". . . within the space of linear perspective vision and under the fixed gaze which stares at the horizon, the human body is taken up into the heady eye of mind . . . Our senses will make increasingly less sense of the world as the body matters increasingly less than thought" (p. 48).

• "In addition to this separation between perceiver and world, the window initiates an *eclipse of the body.* Looked at from behind a window, the world is primarily something to be seen. Indeed, a window between me and the world tends not only to emphasize the eye as a means of access to the world but also to de-emphasize the other senses . . . [M]y vision of the world from behind the window tends to lose touch with the sounds, tastes, smells, and feel of the world" (p. 42).

• "Our sense will make increasingly less sense of the world as the body matters increasingly less than thought" (p. 48).

• " . . . the body increasingly becomes a matter of the head" (p.48).

D. The self of modernity tends to be "unconscious" of "gestural" meaning and emotional significance (TSD)

Seventeenth century discourse "reanimated" the body of anatomy as a collection of reflexes. Depersonalizing embodiment in this way divorced bodily action from the motivations of the person. The modern self, solicited to forget that a plentitude of meaning infuses its actions, progressively lost sight of the desires, emotions, memories, and feminine possibilities motivating its living connection to the world. In banishing the significance of desire, emotion, memory, and the feminine to the concealing shadows of forgetfulness, these nonobjective experiences survived in the modern self's existence as distressing and ambiguous feelings of anxiety or as disturbing symptoms of disease (e.g., neurosis, hysteria, anorexia).

- " . . . within fifty years of Descartes' speculations about [the reflex] body, the English philosopher John Locke, in 1691, makes desire a matter of interior uneasiness, a restlessness carried inside . . . [A] body whose desires have lost their place in the world casts a shadow. The reflex body forced to bear its burden of desire by itself, apart from the world, becomes the mesmerized and hypnotized body of the eighteenth century" (p. 144).

- " . . . Freud's hysterics, whose neurotic symptoms betray how they suffer from reminiscences, from memories which have no place in the world, make their appearances respectively at the very beginning of the twentieth century and at the end of the nineteenth" (p. 142).

- "At this cultural threshold, then, the pantomimic, gestural body of everyday life, the body which is always more than an objectified technical function, is forgotten and remembered, and as such it is present as a cultural symptom. For just as an individual symptom, like anxiety or depression, both reveals and conceals a conflict of emotions, these shadows of the abandoned body reveal and conceal the animate flesh of daily life, the body of desire, memory, and movement, the individual, personal body of character in relation to the world from which we have all taken flight. As symptoms, then, these figures of the body haunt and shadow our cultural dreams of escape and reincarnation" (p. 148)

- "Our reigning vision of the world as a space where everything, lying on the same plane, is a matter of objective fact has been able to appropriate [lived experience], either by confining it to the world of art, which, it assumed, has little if anything to do with real life, or by indexing to it the adjective 'subjective' . . . But in doing so we miss the all-important truth that these landscapes are the unconscious of our age, symptoms in need of our attention" (p.183).

- "In the *horizon*-tal space of linear perspective vision the idea of progress *and* the reality of the unconscious are born" (p. 44).

• "The madman or madwoman is a body out of control, and the grinning face of the fool is a mockery not only of a life which would deny death but of a kind of reason that would leave the body behind" (p. 152).

• "It should be noted, however, that insofar as the shadows of the abandoned body are predominantly feminine in character, we might venture the notion that the discovery – invention of the abandoned body is, psychologically speaking, a masculine enterprise" (p. 151).

E. <u>The modern self tends to function repetitively and mechanically as if it were a "robot" (TSD)</u>
The scientific discourse of the seventeenth century understood the motion of objects as driven by the laws of "mechanism." This mechanical understanding of motion was employed to explain the behavioral "movements" of human beings as well. Moreover, this dehumanized understanding of human action, reframed mechanized ways of being as a means to transcend nature. Thus the human self eventually found itself anchored in a world that solicited automatic, efficient, and productive behaviors. The modern self was no longer invited to act in accord with its horizon of manifold possibilities.

• "With Kepler in 1609 we discover that the motion of the planets is an ellipse. But what matters to our story is not the exact geometric shape of the motion, but the fact that the motion as geometric prescribes a movement, a circulation regulated by *mechanism*. Earth and body obey a new law of circulation, and each begins to move with a mechanically regulated rhythm" (p. 136).

• " . . . Descartes' vision . . . is made quite explicit in his work *La description du corps humain*, written in 1648 . . . In this work he offers an explicit formulation of the body as machine . . ." (p. 140).

• " . . . the robot as such enters the stage of history in 1928 as a dramatic character in a play by Karl Capek entitled R.U.R., *Rossum's Universal Robots* . . . . What Capek saw . . . was the mechanization and dehumanization of humanity. And what he described in his drama was the robot worker, efficient, free from the distractions of memory and desire, with the body of a man or woman remade and now superior to nature – a body designed to work, a body whose death would simply mean the absence of motion" (p. 146).

• "The industrial worker is an explicit incarnation of the reflex body and the robot is an image of this worker taken to its full degree. The idea of the robot is, of course, older than the industrial age, but the specific sense of the robot in relation to labor, and the word itself, belong to the time frame of this history of the abandoned body" (p. 145).

• "The body reanimated via reflex is a machine, and hence its motion has a mechanical, repetitive character . . . It is a motion which lends itself to being

broken into its parts – a motion, then, which allows or invites fragmentation" (p.144).

• "The automatically functioning body behaves without reference to its situation . . . . A body, moreover, which is insensitive to its situation, is also a body acting repetitively" (p.141).

• "The robot would be a being which would transcend nature. It would rise above the flesh" (p. 147).

• "The eclipse of the *difference* between the heart as a pump and the human heart, between technical functions and human activity is the issue" (p. 18).

Forms of relation with the world

A. Things of the world come to matter as a spectacle of objects (TSD)
The window of linear perspective vision participated in producing a detached, de-animated view of the world. The human gaze thereby came to understand the spectacle of the world as an exhibit comprised of discrete objects. Humankind's culturally acquired style of modern perception took cultural, psychological, symbolic, and imaginal distance from the world of perceptual objects resulting in a de-vivification of matter.

• "What linear perspective vision achieves is a kind of geometrization of the space of the world, and within that space we become observers of the world which has become an object for vision" (p. 33).

• "The gaze of the observer . . . leads to a distancing gaze of scientific observation, and the consequence, in both cases, is that the thing becomes a specimen and a spectacle" (p. 67).

• " . . . the self, as spectator of the world with a body which has become a specimen, already practices that distance which prepares for departure from a world which has become a spectacle" (p. 57).

• "The spectator self who trains his or her fixed gaze upon the world is also practicing a singular vision . . . a literalizing vision which forgets the play of imagination . . ." (p. 99).

• "Insofar as we become accustomed to single vision, to that vision addicted to a fixed perspective or point of view, to a single angle of interpretation . . ." (pp. 99-100).

B. The world becomes place to depart from (TSD)
The intensification of the boundary between human being and world, occasioned by linear perspective vision, contributed to humanities retreat from the world – a departure

wherein humankind emotionally withdrew from a world it was neglecting. In this way, humanity perpetuated a sense of homelessness amidst its earthly landscape.

> • "The condition of the window implies a *boundary* between the perceiver and the perceived . . . a formal *separation* between a subject who sees the world and the world that is seen, and in doing so it sets the stage, as it were, for that retreat or withdrawal of the self from the world which characterizes the modern age" (p. 42).

> • " . . . the telos of technology's dream to refashion the body is toward abandonment of the body, toward disincarnation. The dream is, however, inseparable from the dream of departing earth. Disincarnation is a moment of departure" (p. 20).

> • "Indeed, the fires of nuclear catastrophe are the symptomatic side of the fires of departure. Wedded in this fashion, departure takes on the character of psychological necessity. On an earth wired for destruction, space flight becomes a means of escape" (p. 23).

C. The world becomes a place to explained (TSD)
The linear perspective vision gave rise to modernity's relation to the world as something to be observed, measured, analyzed, and explained. The production of objectively informed perception, as a cultural habit, thus reduced the qualitative thickness and richness of the world to categories suitable for rational, scientific understanding and explanation.

> • " . . . the world on the other side of the window is already set to become a matter of *information*" (p. 42).

> • " . . . a linear perspective vision is one which places everything on the same level and in this respect the imaginal eye of the artist has already prepared the space for the sixteenth-century emergence of the scientific world of *explanations"* (p. 43).

> • "When we adopt a look which scales the world to its quantities, the world is leveled of its qualities. In mapping the world we thereby explain it" (p. 83).

> • "In the space of explanation, we turned our eye toward the future and turned our back on the past. Progress and not history was destined to matter" (p. 180).

D. The world is leveled down to its value as energy resource and commodity (TSD)
Behind the window of linear perspective vision, the displaced world was set to be emptied of its significance and revalued as a matter of consumption and economics. Modernity put the world to use as source of energy to be used as the "light" of the human world. In addition, the extraction of resources from the earth sustained humanity's reliance upon

an economics tied to the system of production and consumption for the sake of acquiring capital.

• "The convergence of economics and science into one vision of reality, the convergence of truth as explanation and worth as price, the convergence of money and things, is perhaps the most obvious way in which we have lost touch with things and things have lost their place" (p.195).

• "Amidst all the events images, inventions, and instruments which belong to our technological world, the one item which is perhaps the most fundamental is the equation $E=mc^2$. Nothing perhaps has had more of an impact on our lives, or indeed on the history of humanity, than this mathematical formula, which has become the symbol of our age . . . this equation is the code by which the energy of the stars is released from the ordinary matter of earth" (p. 186)

• "We are energy producers and consumers, and it is energy and our need for it which most characterize our age" (p. 187).

• "The interest, meaning, and even desire of our relationships with things are broken, and we find ourselves in a landscape of commodities and consumer goods subject to the laws of supply and demand" (p. 196).

Technocultural-Historical Themes #3: *The Saturated Self* (SS).   In this, the

third scholarly text analysis, the aperture of historical analysis is narrowed to the

twentieth century. Herein, I thematize Kenneth Gergen's, *The Saturated Self*, which

stood as an examination of technological developments in media, travel, and

communication as occasions for the advent of postmodernism. Gergen described how the

prior discourses of romanticism and modernism came into question as twentieth century

technologies brought the individual into contact with an increasing array of non-local

worldviews. Said differently, Gergen described how a plurality of previously

marginalized perspectives were paradoxically admitted into consideration by practices of

modernity. The ensuing influx of diverse perspectives allowed postmodern discourse to

gain credibility whereas romantic and modernist discourses descended, more or less, into

dubitation.

With Gergen's cultural-historical analysis in mind, the *technocultural-historical narrative* developed at the end of Section II integrated the critically evaluated local AIM data with Gergen's characterization of romanticism, modernism, and postmodernism. By doing so, it was revealed that Internet practices instantiated practices pertaining to each of the three historical discourses, rather than instantiating one discourse to the exclusion of the other two.

In the themes developed below, Gergen's cultural-historical understanding regarding technology's impact on constructions of the self and sociality have been articulated under two broad thematic categories. The two broad thematic categories considered in this section address forms of being a "self" and forms of relation with the world.

Themes: Forms of being a "self"

A. <u>The self of romanticism and modernity is undergoing dissolution (SS)</u>
As contemporary technologies open the way for broader social involvements – for social saturation – the Western self is allowed to "internalize" and enact a plurality of alternative selves. What once counted as the essential deep self of romanticism and the rational self of modernism is now giving way to ambiguous possibilities for being in the emerging postmodern era.

> • "It is the process of self-population that begins to undermine the commitments to both romanticist and modernist forms of being. It is of pivotal importance in setting the stage for the postmodern turn" (p. 69).

> • " . . . there is little hope that the past can be recovered. Our best option, then, is to play out the positive options of the postmodern erasure of the self" (p. xiii).

> • " . . . the eroding of the identifiable self is both supported by and manifest in a wide range of beliefs and practices" (p .7)

B. <u>The self, linked to communication technologies, becomes multiphrenic as the self is infused with social saturation (SS)</u>
As the self embraces a "symbiotic interdependence" with technologies enabling social saturation, the self becomes immersed in landscapes filled with multiple, disparate, and contradictory voices. On the way to early postmodern self-consciousness, the multiply

populated self can become multiphrenic. In this state, the erstwhile selves of romanticism and modernism might undergo experiences ranging from feeling unstable, unbalanced and cautious to feeling free, expansive, and receptive to otherness.

- "There is a *populating of the self*, reflecting the infusion of partial identities through social saturation. And there is the onset of a *multiphrenic* condition, in which one begins to experience the vertigo of unlimited multiplicity. Both the populating of the self and the multiphrenic condition are significant preludes to postmodern consciousness" (p. 49).

- " . . . there is a cyclical spiraling toward a state of multiphrenia. As one's possibilities are expanded by technologies, so one increasingly employs the technologies for self expression; yet, as the technologies are further utilized, so do they add to the repertoire of potentials. It would be a mistake to view this multiphrenic condition as a form of illness, for it is often suffused with a sense of expansiveness and adventure" (p. 74).

- " A multiphrenic condition emerges in which one swims in ever-shifting, concatenating, and contentious currents . . . The possibility for committed romanticism or strong single-minded modernism recedes, and the way is opened for the postmodern being" (p. 80).

C. Waning commitments to traditional notions of self lead to enactment of the postmodern relational self (SS)
Upon embracing postmodern ways of being, the self is more readily attuned to the fluid, dynamic, and relational qualities of self-realization. Rather than experiencing internal conflicts over identity definition, the traditional notion of the self - as discrete and self-contained - gave way to a lived understanding of the self as continually unfolding through dialogue with various others.

- "As the self as a serious reality is laid to rest and the self is constructed and reconstructed in multiple contexts, one enters finally the stage of the *relational self.* One's sense of individual autonomy gives way to a reality of immersed interdependence, in which it is relationship that constructs the self" (p. 147).

- "As the modernist is drawn into the socially saturated world . . . the concept of the true and independent self – whether constituted by a deep interior or machinelike rationality – loses its descriptive and explanatory import. One is thus prepared to enter a third and final stage, in which self is replaced by the reality of relatedness – or the transformation of "you" and "I" to "us" (p.156).

- "For the postmodern, life is rendered more fully expressive and enriched by suspending the demands for personal coherence, self-recognition, or determinant place, and simply *being* within the ongoing process of relating" (p. 134).

Forms of relation with the world

A. <u>Objective and rational modernist worldviews are still prevalent despite their conflicts with emerging postmodern viewpoints and receding romanticist perspectives (SS)</u>
The current cultural zeitgeist instantiates the shifting dominance of various historical worldviews. Presently the self is conspicuously solicited to relate to the world from the rational-objective standpoint of modernism.

> • "Modernist assumptions of rationality, objectivity, and essentialism have been under attack . . . Yet even without a sustaining rationale, the modernist perspective continues to dominate Western culture" (p. 231).

> • " . . . in the three-way conflict of discourses, each simultaneously compels and repels. Romanticist discourse is inviting in its intimations of profound mysteries of the person, love, commitment, inspiration, and the like. At the same time, modernist discourse engenders a promising sense of security and optimism with its emphasis on the rational, reliable, knowable, and improvable aspects of the person. And the newly emerging postmodern perspective opens the way to a fascinating play of potentials and an increased sense of relational reality" (p. 229).

B. <u>The postmodern views of the world imbue the erstwhile certainty of modernist perspectives with doubt (SS)</u>
The emerging postmodern self doubts the apodictic certainty regarding the identity of persons and things. The postmodern self respects the impermanence and indeterminacy of identity and meaning as a positive quality belonging to a world bound up with inexhaustible profiles of significance.

> • " . . . as the range of our relationships is expanded, the validity of each localized rationality is threatened. What is rational in one relationship is questionable or absurd from the standpoint of another" (p. 78).

> • "In effect, one's self becomes populated with others. The result is a steadily accumulating sense of doubt in the objectivity of any position one holds" (p. 85).

> • "Indeed, with the shift from objects to objectification, from reality to constructions of reality, we cross the threshold into a virtual vertigo of self-reflexive doubt" (p. 134).

> • " . . . as one becomes increasingly aware of multiplicity in perspective, things-in-themselves disappear form view" (p. 112).

> • " . . . social saturation brings with it a general loss in our assumption in true and knowable selves" (p. 16).

• " . . . the very technologies giving rise to the pluralism of postmodernism also serve to undermine the potentials of these resources for solidifying cultural modes of understanding and action" (p. 201).

C. <u>Embracing broader opportunities for relatedness with others alters the forms of social intimacy (SS)</u>
Social involvements with a broader range of people is possible amidst the social saturation enabled by modern communication technologies. Compensatory transformations in social connection include partial intimacy, accelerated pacing of relationships, or sporadic yet intense encounters.

• " . . . social saturation and self-population throw traditions into disarray; committed forms of relationship become antiquated, and a multiplicity of partial relations is favored" (p. 182).

• " . . . a new form of relationship emerges in which family members attempt to compensate for the vast expanses of nonrelatedness with intense expressions of bondedness. As many understand it, quantity is replaced by quality" (p. 66).

• "The occasional meeting is intensified by its shortness" (p. 67).

• "The pace of relationships is hurried, and processes of unfolding that once required months or years may be accomplished in days or weeks" (p.62).

Technocultural-Historical Themes #4: *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace*

(COLC). In the last of the four scholarly texts, Lawrence Lessig's *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace* was selected for its micro historical analysis of the constructed nature of cyberspace. Lessig articulated a short history of cyberspace by demonstrating how the situated nature of cyberspace is conditioned by the interaction of software code, laws, norms, and markets. More to the point, Lessig emphasized that the Internet is best characterized as a mosaic of cyber spaces. Rather than being understood as a single space, Lessig contended that each cyber space is differently normed, in part, because its netizens could play a role in defining the values and the architecture governing these spaces. The inclusion of Lessig's micro historical analysis in the *technocultural-*

historical narrative illuminated the ways in which Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn either

challenged, bypassed, retreated from, and/or submitted to AIM social practices,

In the themes developed below, Lessig's contemporary cultural understanding of

cyberspace and the discourses impacting the software code of Internet spaces have been

articulated under two broad thematic categories. The two broad thematic categories

considered in this section will address forms of being a "self" on the Internet and forms

of relation amidst Internet worlds (spaces).

Themes: Forms of being a "self" on the Internet

A. Anonymity and code allow the self to take on a wider range of multiple identities
(COLC)
*An Internet Provider's (IP) software code allows the self to come into online presence in
potentially multiple and divergent ways. Where code enables one to adopt multiple
screen names, the self is freed to explore an indefinite range of identities not necessarily
expressible offline. Thus, if one maintains relative anonymity about one's offline identity,
the online persona is free to experiment with personifying traits incongruent with one's
offline self.*

> • "As a member of AOL you can be any one of five people . . . When you start an
> account at AOL, you have the right to establish up to five identities, through five
> different "screen names . . . " (p.67).

> • " . . . you are given a fantastic power of pseudonymity that the "code writers" of
> real space simply do not give. You could, of course, try in real space to live the
> same range of multiple lives . . . [b]ut unless you take extraordinary steps to hide
> your identity, in real space you are always tied back to you" (p. 68).

> • "In real space you reveal your sex, your age, how you look, what language you
> speak, whether you can see, whether you can hear, how intelligent you are. In
> cyberspace you reveal only an address, and one that has no necessary relationship
> to anything else about you" (p. 33).

> • "The selections about code are therefore in part a selection about who, what,
> and, most important, what *ways of life* will be enabled and disabled" (p. 66).

B. The self conducts itself with the awareness that its online activities may be monitored
(COLC)
*While relative anonymity can exist between social agents on the Internet, the self is more
or less aware that its activities can be surveilled by the architects of Internet code. In*

this way, the activities of the online self can be potentially codified and regulated by direct or indirect means.

> • "If AOL does not like certain behavior, then in at least some cases it can regulate behavior by changing its architecture. If AOL is trying to control indecent language, it can write routines that monitor language usage; if there is an improper mixing between adults and kids, AOL can track who is talking to whom . . . " (p. 70).

> • "If a common cookie identifies you across a number of sites (because its sites have subscribed to a common tracking system), then, in principle, if you have revealed information about yourself in one of those places, the other places could know it as well" (p. 35).

> • "In the government's most recent proposals, the authors of encryption code would be regulated directly – with a requirement that they build into their code a back door through which the government could gain access" (p. 48).

> • "What exactly should we think about constant electronic monitoring" (p.150)?

> •"The system watches what you do; it fits you into a pattern" (p. 154).

Themes: Forms of relation in different Internet worlds (spaces)

A. The self can simultaneously inhabit more than one discursive world (COLC)
On the Internet, one may inhabit multiple discursive spaces. In so doing, the world of the Internet allows the self to "leave" its immediate normative space and enter an alternate social clearing. Though the self may choose to psychologically escape its offline world, the self is not fully free from its offline world of competing normative forces.

> • "When you 'go' somewhere in real space, you leave; when you 'go' to cyberspace, you don't leave anywhere. You are never *just* in cyberspace; you never just *go* there. You are always both in real space and in cyberspace at the same time" (p. 21).

> • "Cyberspace gave Jake the chance to escape Ann Arbor norms and to live according to norms of another place. It created a *competing authority* for Jake and gave him a chance to select between these competing authorities merely by switching his computer on or off" (p. 21)

> • "Spaces have values. They express these values through the practices or lives that they enable or disable" (p. 64).

B. The Internet world is composed of many constructed worlds (COLC)
The world of the Internet is not ipso facto a space of incontestable freedom; nor is it necessarily a place of fixed essence. The Internet is, instead, an array of differently

normed spaces which have been constructed. Essence does not define the Internet. These spaces can be regulated and governed. Although a normative structure may emerge, actions of resistance can contribute to the co-construction of these spaces if netizens dialogue not only at the level of social interaction, but also at the level of code.

- "There is certainly a way that cyberspace *is*. That much is true. But how cyberspace *is* not how cyberspace has to be. There is no single way hat the Net *has* to be; no single architecture defines the nature of the Net" (p. 25).

- ' . . . "the nature of the Net is set in part by its architectures . . . the possible architectures of cyberspace are many" (p. 30).

- " . . . cyberspace is not *a* place, it is many places' (p.82).

- "The networks differ in the extent to which they make behavior within each network *regulable*. The difference is simply a matter of *code* – a difference in the software" (p. 27).

C. Cyberspaces are influenced by discourses which have impact through and beyond software code (COLC)

Each Internet space is infused with values. These values are multiply conditioned. The discourses converging on the code writer and the discourses embedded within the social spaces of the Internet commingle to influence the forms of relatedness unfolding in a particular Internet space. Forces such as the market, the legal system, the norms operating within a given Internet space, and architectural code may support a given discourse or, instead, re-present competing discursive regimes.

- "'For citizens of cyberspace, . . . code . . . is becoming a crucial focus of political contest. Who shall write that software that increasingly structures our daily lives" (p. 60)?

- "Laws, norms, the market, and architectures interact to build the environments that 'Netizens' know. The code writer, as Ethan Katsh puts it, is the 'architect'" (p. 90).

- "Constraints work together, though they function differently and the effect of each is distinct. Norms constrain through the stigma a community imposes; markets constrain through the price that they exact; architectures constrain through the physical burdens they impose; and law constrains through the punishment it threatens . . . . The same model describes the regulation of behavior in cyberspace" (p. 88).

Technocultural-Historical Narrative

Western Internet technology gathers discourses around Net users and their styles of understanding self and other. The Western self, given over to cyberrelations, is therein

stitched into the fabric of pre-Socratic, Socratic, romanticist, modernist, and postmodern constructions of self and reality. While the cultural-historical backcloth informing the Net user's sense of self is woven into a history of sometimes compatible and sometimes conflicting heritages, the modern self, located at the intersection of these discursive cross currents, may not be fully aware of their impact on identity construction and social practice. Expansion of cultural-historical consciousness can illuminate the interwoven threads producing truth-claims about the very being of the world.

*In the first place, the present day Net user is entwined in a long-standing **ontology** about what the world is and an **epistemology** about how to know the world. Socratic and modern worldviews combined with the Enframing (Ge-stell) of modern technology and the linear perspective vision of fifteenth century art, to solicit detached and objective constructions of reality. Additionally, it came to pass, over two thousand years ago, that the Socratic Greeks fashioned an enduring perspective about the being of entities in the world. The beings of the world were rationally deduced to have ideal identities which were pre-given, fixed, and unchanging. Hence a rational way of knowing the world solicited humankind to inhabit abstractions about the static "reality" of the world. The dynamic significations of the living world were thereby partially eclipsed by the twin towers of rationalist epistemology and essentialist ontology. The romanticist perspective likewise went on to interpret human being as having a core essence tied to nature and bound up with systems of morality and ethics. In turn, modernity incorporated the essentialist view of humanity as rational and further extended a blanket over the holistic ontology of the world by characterizing the beings of the living world as objective in nature. For instance, the grid of linear perspective vision gave rise to a detached vision of "reality" which deanimated the world and re-visioned it as a literal space filled with concrete objects. The Enframing (Ge-stell) of modern technology further limited the presencing of the world as a mere stockpile of resources on call. And, in the modern scientific realm, the "real" world was moreover categorized as a spectacle of material objects with measurable physical attributes. Measurability provided scientific forms of epistemology (e.g., laboratory experimentation) with a seemingly certain empirical foundation of knowledge. However, science was faced with an impoverished world made up of 'dying' objects. It then followed that the physical science of modernity attempted to reanimate brute objects as energetic entities (e.g., Einstein's equation - $E=mc^2$, the literary figure of Dr. Frankenstein) mechanistically set into lawful patterns of motion (e.g., Kepler on planetary motion, Descartes on bodies as a collection of reflexes). Thus, that which produced motion or motivation was accounted for only inasmuch as it was measurable. As a result, a full understanding of the nonobjective qualities of desire, emotion, and spirit also descended into the shadows, though somewhat forestalled by pre-Socratic and romanticist appreciation of the passions. Overall, however, what the world is was primarily known in and through structured and unbiased objective-rational assessments of physical attributes. Things became inert substances and living bodies became anatomical machines with measurable personality characteristics all brought to life under the guise of mechanical principles of action. Human being thereby abandoned the sensuous world and carnal forms of knowing while dreaming about transcending the fleshy experience of existence. It is the recent space of openness to difference in the postmodern era which has legitimated the act of doubting the all-to-certain foundations*

of modernity. This has not occasioned a doubt which leads to endless skepticism, but rather it has instantiated a doubt which places the claims of modernity into the margins while marginalized perspectives are retrieved into the center of human awareness.

Inquiry into the Internet site addressed in this study reveals that AIM instantiates some of the broad technological discourses outlined above. AIM concomitantly solicits its netizens to know others primarily through the symbolic mediums of e-text, pictographic variations of the "smiley face," and images of cultural celebrities. Here, static simulations and re-presentations of embodiment replace the presence of the expressive human form. Thus the attempt to know the virtual other is limited to abstractions thereby signifying that the excess of context-bound embodied human being fails to crossover from the everyday world into the virtual world. Hence, ontology of the virtual other is enframed by a way of coming to presence which is similar to objective re-presentations. Specifically, the window of AIM cyberspace de-sensualizes, de-contextualizes, and makes two-dimensional the being of enfleshed humanity.

*The modernist construction of an essentially rational **self** has delivered humankind over to a cascade of related practices. Philosophical Socratic inquiry, the linear perspective vision of art codified in the fifteenth and sixteenth century (e.g., Brunelleschi and Alberti), and the physical science of the seventeenth century (e.g., Galileo) all served to normalize humankind's detached contemplation of its world. Estranged from the shared world of things and people, humankind rooted its identity in the mind's eye – reason. As rational head-centered beings, the self of humankind became a dispassionate spectator of its shared world. Detachment from the world corresponded with disconnection from aspects of being human. The self lived an estrangement from bodily ways of knowing. Emotionality, sensual awareness, and the imaginative capacities of incarnate existence became impediments to knowing. The rational self was prone to believe that it housed undesirable and strange capacities within. Non-rational ways of being fell out of awareness and practice and became more or less "unconscious." Aspects of emotionality became ambiguous and even unwanted. Bodily gestures lost their significance as positively meaningful. Living in a flesh divided meant understanding oneself as mechanical and efficient. Vesalius' development of anatomy in the seventeenth century and Harvey's resurrection of the anatomical body as a machine-like body of technical function contributed to disseminating and privileging machine driven ways of being human. Humankind viewed itself as master of the natural and technological world. No longer living symbiotically with its world, the modern self was constructed to explain, predict, control, and extract what it needed from its world. With the arrival of postmodernism and the self's interdependence upon technologies of social saturation in the twentieth century, commitments to dominant notions of being a self were tested. The postmodern self, located in a liminal space of potential transformation, was allowed to explore its multiplicity. The early experience of the lived postmodern self met with a sense of instability and a disparate sense of dizzying multiphrenia. It was the more experienced postmodern selves, more at ease with difference, that could embrace a freer range of expressiveness, a receptivity to otherness, and a sense of familiarity with a fluid identity in ongoing dialogue with its changing circumstances. Hence, the modernist ideal extolling a detached, rational, and efficiently ordered self housed a body of efficient technological bio-functions that is now given over to a postmodern technical world where*

the self is saturated with a plurality of possibilities for being otherwise. The self of postmodernism is invited to embrace a variety self-expressive possibilities, and either celebrate or struggle with the potential lack of continuity between one enacted possibility and the next.

When the view of virtual "self" construction is narrowed from the broad cultural-historical perspective down to the pervasive AIM space, it becomes apparent that the AIM window allows social practices which create a sense of togetherness and simultaneously limits the sense of togetherness by producing detached "self" practices for knowing others. In other words, the AIM window precludes synesthetic bodily ways of knowing by narrowly accentuating the bodily powers of eye and cognition in AIM space. It also becomes apparent that virtual "self" expression is solicited to utilize multiple screen names and the corollary potential for living out singular or multiple identities. This freedom is set in motion by the virtual ordering of space which necessitates the "self's" detachment from spontaneous full bodied expression followed by reliance upon the calculated use of static pictographic re-presentations to replace dynamic bodily presence. The online "self" becomes a two-dimensional object amidst a spectacle of other two dimensional "self" representations. In addition, the requirement to maintain a continuity between one's offline embodied self and one's virtual identity becomes optional. This freedom is not, however, absolute. AIM space is a surveilled space. The virtual AIM "self" is subject to a high degree of visibility by AOL, and to a lesser degree of voluntary visibility by AIM "buddies" - even encrypted communication carries with it the latent possibility of becoming visible through hacking or legal intervention. Thus, living out an unbounded freedom to practice identity fluidity is potentially monitored; particularly in light of AOL's prescription for conduct in the form of AOL "rules and guidelines." In this way, top-down regulations may gradually discipline "self" regulation in this increasingly structured frontier of cyberspace.

*   **Relatedness**, in the world of modernity, is informed by a distinct cultural habit of interacting. The Enframing (Ge-stell) of modern technology fosters an attitude of consumption wherein people and things are disclosed instrumentally. People and things are revealed as a means to an end. The process of continuous unconcealment is rendered inert by such a singular vision that reduces people and things to commodity – to a suitable resource. Modern relations, idled by this constricted way of seeing and being, overshadow dynamic ways of being with one another and thereby allowing slippage into interactions permeated by distance and estrangement. Humanity finds itself deskilled in the capacity to develop meaningful connections imbued with e-motional resonance. Practical instrumental concerns overshadow enduring passionate concerns. With the advent of postmodernism and Internet technology, one can leave one's immediate world and inhabit one or more social clearings. This simultaneous access to multiple social spaces includes the opportunity to inhabit spaces with very different norms and a diversity of possible others to interact with. This exposure to normatively different on-line spaces or communities opens onto potentially new and unfamiliar relational practices. These alternative relational practices are in turn influenced by the play of multiple forces such as the architecture of a website, the norms of conduct, applicable laws or policies, and market constraints (e.g., the price of access). In either case, the forms of disembodied intimacy with diverse others allows for the expansion of one's*

horizons which may include the experience of newfound freedoms, uncertainties, vulnerabilities, and concerns about safety attendant to online encounters.

  While the AIM medium shuts down sensorial modes of being with others, it opens onto the enhanced power to virtually connect with others beyond the strictures of physical accessibility and beyond the limitations of those with immediate access to computers. AIM incites people to virtual speech through advertising and by linking virtual communication networks to computer users as well as to wireless mobile phone users. Crossing over into virtual connectivity becomes more convenient. The AIM window also invites its users to scan the available resource of topic driven chat rooms. AIM space becomes an instrumental resource for accessing the available reserves of chat-ready virtual others. A multiplicity of spaces is also available with many opportunities to crossover from one normative space to another with a simple click of a mouse. The elaborative and rich use of language is still possible with e-text. However, AIM instructs its users to consult its Acronym Dictionary as a way to convey that the efficient and expedient use of language during an encounter is a preferred social practice. Thus, while the freedom to relate to a seemingly infinite variety of virtual others is technologically enabled, the medium (as the message) suggests that practices of virtual relatedness may weave one into the Net, but not necessarily into the lived fabric of self-other experience.

Introduction to the Situated Global Narrative

  Whereas Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn's lived experiences were unfolded in Section I, Section II contained no comment upon any of the research participants' experiences. In effect, their lived perspectives were "decentered." Instead, it was the practical discursive context of their virtual interactions which comprised Section II. The story about their cyberspace encounters became an articulation of the Internet scenes which both invited and inscribed their actions and experiences. In effect, the cyberspace horizon was acknowledged as an integral ground for their lived experience – as the there (*Da*) of their situated being (*sein*).

  In the *situated global narrative* to follow below, historiographies addressing long-standing Western symbolic orders and AIM social practices were woven together with salient themes form Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn's person-centered descriptions and interview-based elaborations. By methodologically integrating analyses of discourse,

practice, and lived experience, the dialogic unity between the research participants and their cultural-historical worlds was restored. The resulting *situated global narrative* thus stood as psycho-cultural-historical profile of experience. As such, it bore out my research presupposition that subjectivity is situated within discourse rather than exclusively reducible to discourse.

With the Net as a part of the rich cultural-historical mosaic comprising the research participants' lives, Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn found themselves confronting choices about inhabiting two very different life spaces – the earth bound sensual landscape of incarnate beings and the screenal 'cyberscape' of virtual re-presentations. As much as these spaces diverged on the lived dimensions of bodily presence and social praxis, both of the online and offline milieus were bound up with cultural-historical influences. Moreover, Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn exhibited differing degrees of commitment to the culture bound practices of virtual intimacy due to the differences in their social projects. For instance, Rochelle was motivated to fill an emotional void in her life by seeking interaction, approval, and romance. Bryce sought to overcome the constriction of his offline shyness and expand his online and offline relationships. Dawn, separated from her significant other by geography and work schedules, worked to preserve a meaningful connection with her significant other. Attention to the different projects enacted by Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn allowed the latent significations circulating "in" cyberspace to be revealed – particularly where I thematized interpretations pertaining to the threesome's responses to breakdowns and successes with available virtual practices. Consequently, glimpses of research participant subjectivity

and co-construction of meaning were more visible against this backdrop of breakdown/fluency and docility/resistance (modification) regarding online practices.

As way to understand the lifeworld accompanying the research participants' experience, the cultural-historical configuration of the world was taken up as a fluid system of power motivated <u>discourses</u> refined by institutions and carried out as <u>practices</u> performed by <u>bodies</u> caught up in those institutions. From this critical perspective, it became apparent that the Internet apparatus provided multiple spaces for the emergence of modern, postmodern, and – to a lesser degree - romantic discourses vying to invest bodies to enact particular practices. Despite the progressive routinization and normalization of practices in AIM space, opportunities to rework or transgress discursive practices were indeed possible.

Section III: Situated Global Narrative

Life on the Net begins as one gazes through the cyberspace window upon the procession of textual and pictographic re-presentations lighting up the virtual world. To look upon and within the glow of the interface window inaugurates the first moment of crossing over from the physical world into an AIM space promising sociality as its offering. In this space, the embodied other radiates within the weightless luminescence of the cyber window glow as text, emoticon, and reproduced image. Within this portal, multiple discourses become virtual practices, interpersonal graces become serial keystrokes, and physical bodies become light.

The Modernist Horizon. *From the modernist perspective, the cyberspace stories lived out by Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn were intertwined with a number of modernist discursive designs for living. AIM, in turn, provided the space for disseminating practices consonant with the discourses embedded within the research participants' stories.* **Mind-body division, separation from the incarnate other, detachment from the earthly context, detached contemplation, increase in instrumental efficiency, and machinic enhancement of human powers were each provided for by the Internet.** *To be sure, these trends in AIM practices sometimes signified, instantiated, and extended earlier cultural-historical moments associated with modernism.*

In the fifteenth century, Alberti codified Brunelleschi's linear perspective vision thereby placing humankind before a window gazing, from a distance, into a work of art. Humankind was therein solicited to practice seeing the world as a passive and detached spectator peering out upon a deanimated realm. In the moment of adopting Alberti's

vision, humankind was set upon the path to simultaneously abandon its flesh and depart from its world as its eye and mind remained to rove over an estranged spectacle of objects. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, science breathed 'life' into this devitalizing discourse. Vesalius deanimated the human body by advancing an anatomical understanding of the body. Harvey went on to reconceive of the body in mechanistic terms while Descarte later re-animated the body as a reflex driven machine (cf. B. F. Skinner). With the emergence of modern technology, its Enframing (Ge-stell) brought humanity into accord with a narrow disclosure of the world as a standing reserve. The human-technology interface granted humankind with the power to efficiently order the world for the purpose of extracting resources. With technology at its service, humankind takes itself as the master of technology and its world. In doing so, humanity became more machinelike. Hence, the Socratic Greek view of beings as poor reproductions of ideal essences existing outside of space and time was replaced by the modern technological view of human beings as a more perfect posthuman improvement upon nature.

The Internet apparatus paved the way for disseminating practices of relatedness and styles of "consciousness" influenced by modernism. As a result, full-bodied modalities for expression and knowing were de-emphasized during virtual communication. AIM space fostered such practices through an incitement to enact virtual speech. This included dissemination of "free" instant messaging capability, centralized access to chatrooms, options to create buddy lists, and an AIM upgrade to mobile phone interface with AIM. Within this discourse-tinted AIM window, one could realize the promise of accessing a ready reserve of available others. Inasmuch as e-text, emoticons, and pictographic images were relied upon during intimate virtual communication, the worldly and sensual contexts for interpreting and making meaning were eclipsed. Meaningful places for interpreting intimate gestures dissolved. Increasingly, humankind was called forth to relate to abstractions of otherness in AIM space. Eye and mind – the tools of rationalized virtual practice – were well suited to engage such abstractions. The physical body was consequently relegated to carrying out the mechanical know-how to operate Internet technology; a rather limited way for the physical body of the master of modern technology to function. Ironically, the Internet-based actions of the research participants were sometimes frustrated by the absence of embodiment during meaningful communication – a body that was typically downplayed in its significance by modernity.

Poised at the cusp of the twenty-first century Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn sat before the AIM window readied for meaningful encounters within the modernist informed AIM space. Initially, the opportunity to interact with somebody and simultaneously no-body was embraced. The research participants lived out the Cartesian tinged de-privileging of the flesh. They did so either out of the enthusiastic hope of forging new relations with previously unreachable others, or at least with the hope of retaining some of the texture and immediacy of offline encounters with a previously known other. In either instance, the three research participants were motivated to seek out virtual sociality due to a perceived deficit in their life or being (e.g., geographic separation, social awkwardness, emotional emptiness). Conducting relations in the screen mediated space of AIM also provided for an initial sense of safety from the unwanted exposure of their incarnate self to online others. In so doing, the research participants sacrificed

their bodily hold on the earthly context intrinsic to the offline lives of online others. At the same time, Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn acquired an enlarged sense of spatiality allowing them to overcome the brute limitations of measured distance. Some of the obstacles found in the natural world were thereby surpassed. The power to access a vast standing reserve of chat-ready virtual others were a mere point-and-click away. Before the research participants could fully savor the space of virtuality, however, breakdowns in their cyberspace practices occurred. As much as these collapses may have signified breakdowns intrinsic to the discursive practice themselves, these breakdowns also represented breakdowns in the research participants' willing compliance with participation in those practices. Hence, Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn discovered that the body-technology fusion enabled gains in mastery and power in cyberspace while also being knitted to losses in the body-world powers of being with others. For instance, the research participants each took up the prosthetic possibilities of embracing Internet enabled sociality in a way that allowed for expansion beyond their offline bodily limitations. In and through adopting an online identity and virtual modalities of communication, the research participants reproduced the discursive turn away from attention to body and world. Thus the modern techno-self was able to leave behind unwanted facets of identity associated with embodiment (e.g., the seeable body, the sexual body). At the same time, the offline self significantly severed the tie to sensuality and corporeality.

Breakdowns occurred when virtual others were perceived as misusing the AIM forum for disembodied presence by being deceptive about offline identity and/or by being demeaning towards the research participant. In such moments, the full-bodied emotional reactions of the research participants were asserted. Experiences of disappointment and dismay occasioned research participant doubts about their initial investment in AIM chat practices. Counter to modernity's emphasis upon a rational basis for ethics, an embodied emotional ethic asserted itself. For example, each of the research participants engaged in strategies to integrate their bodily concerns and needs into future Internet practices (e.g., meeting offline, viewing or posting online pictures, increased scrutiny of online chat, reflective retreat from online chat). In these ways, modernity's normalization of detached modes of contemplation of experience were jettisoned. Moreover, Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn did not read e-text as passive observers. Instead, they treated AIM space as an interactive space. When breakdowns occurred, they eventually increased their active participation – but only after deciding to reconfigure AIM forms of sociality to suit their respective projects. Thus, modernist detachment was not fully reproduced; it was instead replaced by occasional efforts to recoup the loss of sensual bodily presence.

With regard to the majority of the aforementioned modernist practices, the research participants integrated responses of both reproduction and resistance. Where mind-body dualism required disavowal of embodiment, the research participants utilized virtual communication, but often in order to establish on offline connection. In other cases, the research participants attempted to infuse some kind of gestural signifier (e.g., emoticon, image) into their virtual communication. Embedded within meaningful virtual communication practices was, thus, the motivation to retrieve both embodiment and the world horizon. The return to the body and world as the sensual ground for occasioning meaningful spaces was also fueled by breakdowns in the naïve and passive contemplation

about the virtual other. Confusion and conflict ensued when unexamined attributions about the virtual other were made. As Dawn suggested, "assumptions" about meaning were often made because the body-world contribution to the construction of meaning was absent. Intimate communication required increased effort at establishing understanding when the contexts of body and world were absent. Even then, it could not be taken for granted that existentially congruent appraisals about the other had been constructed.

       None of the above is meant to suggest that the research participants did not benefit from the machinic enhancement of bodily powers. To be sure, the Internet did indeed facilitate the overcoming of offline obstacles to communication. However, conjoining meaningful self-expression with electronically mediated tools was not preferred as a primary means of conducting sociality. Aligning one's "self" and one's relational life more fully with a machine-like mode of existence did not ultimately hold long-term appeal for these research subjects.

       <u>The Romanticist Horizon.</u> *The romanticist perspective brought with it the discursive assumptions that **human being was comprised of a mysterious deep interior essence (e.g., nature's "voice within"). The knowable "self" was viewed as profound rather than rational or machinic. In its profundity, the romanticist self was not knowable through (empirical) observation of surface behaviors and practices. Instead, important aspects of self were to be found beyond what was visible. Nevertheless, the being of the romanticist self consisted of ways of talking which addressed passion, depth, meaningfulness, and personal significance. Values sprang from the deep interior of human being rather than from the derivations of reason.***

       AIM practices were not altogether consonant with romanticist discourse. AIM provided the online user with the opportunity to create anywhere from one to five screen names. However, it was not required that the act of naming should reflect the deep essence of the individual. Still, an online user could autonomously exercise such an option, especially in light of AOL's effort to discourage "impersonation" and attempts to "mislead" others. Although there was no requirement for the visible presence of the online user in AIM space, this de-emphasis did not appear to signify AIM's valuation that a deep interior of the self existed or could in necessarily reveal itself. Nevertheless, emoticons and AIM Expressions disenfranchised the distinctiveness of the embodied other by taking recourse to homogenized or popular culture displays of individuality (e.g., celebrity facial expressions) and the passions. With regard to passionate expression, AIM did not fully repress such practices so much as AIM encouraged the efficient use of language (e.g., Acronym Dictionary). With regard to value systems, AIM did not appear to acknowledged romanticist forms of online value construction. Rather than emphasizing value guidelines congruent with the sensibility bequeathed by a deep human wellspring of ethicality (e.g., goodness emanating from nature's "voice within"), AIM stated that "conduct should be guided by common sense, basic 'netiquette,' and [AIM's] chat guidelines." Moreover, privacy was not guaranteed, though AIM professed that it would not monitor chat rooms and it offered encryption technology to AIM users. AIM encryption contained a decryption key thus allowing for the potential of virtual practice oversight by AOL owners or the U.S. government. In addition, chatroom postings were highly visible endeavors within the AOL community and for those on "buddy lists."

Overall, AIM did not instantiate a set of integrated social practices or values indicative of romanticist discourse. If romanticist discourse issued forth from anywhere, it was Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn who enacted it. With regard to meaningful and genuine virtual encounters, Rochelle and Bryce responded with mixed feelings of frustration and disappointment to mismatches between re-presentations of the virtual other and their factical offline presentations of self. They hoped that the code of conduct was imbued with some semblance of fidelity in relation to others. Moreover, when the sexual motivations of virtual others clouded Rochelle and Bryce's efforts to establish meaningful dialogue, the research participants' felt that a social contract for establishing intimacy had been breeched. If the virtual other was previously known in the offline world – as was the case with Dawn - frustrations occurred when it was believed that the context of the true "self" and its qualities were forgotten or overlooked during online chat. It also became frustrating when the intended meanings were not as easily grasped online as they had been during offline encounters.

In summation, the research participant's brought romanticist assumptions about authenticity, the existence of a true "self," and (possibly) ethics to their meaningful online encounters. When breakdowns occurred, the research participants' became either discouraged, disappointed, avoidant, or at least more effortful in their attempts to be faithful to the latter romanticist assumptions – even if AIM space did not readily enable the practice of such beliefs.

The Postmodern Horizon. *Postmodern discourse provided yet another discursive backdrop to Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn's AIM experience. The Internet has been understood as a "technology of social saturation" with the potential to expose Net users to a plurality of beliefs, perspectives, values, and social practices. As a result, the advent of growth in technology-enabled social connection (e.g., telegraph, radio, telephone, television, Internet) gave rise to a "postmodern consciousness." For example, it was believed that immersion in a pluralistic field occasioned* **doubts about modernism and its beliefs in a bounded identity, in a cohesive essential self, in the existence of objective reality, in the necessity of rational practices, and in the existence of individually authored intentions. A postmodern consciousness was thereby readied to acquire a pastiche personality comprised of multiple non-local identities, values, and practices. Value was placed on embracing a plurality of possibilities without imposing a hierarchical grading of those possibilities.** *Thus the breakdown in the narrow perspectivity belonging to modernism and modern technology (e.g., Enframing) could allow the essence of technology (e.g., presencing) to release the play of signifiers and non-traditional perspectives into the foreground of being.*

Several practices coded within the social architecture of AIM allowed for postmodern discourse to be enacted. The combination of AIM advertising and the AIM interface window excited and incited awareness about a variety of electronic social mediums – email, instant messaging, centralized chatroom access, buddy lists, and mobile telephone access. These alternatives allowed for enumerable opportunities for immersing in postmodern informed encounters with those enacting non-local differences. In some cases, postmodern and modern possibilities were latent within the same AIM convention. For instance, the Cartesian separation of identity and body was occasioned by AIM's provision for "screen names" – names, in effect, signifying dis-incarnate

screen presences. Despite the ensuing instantiation of a mind-body split, screen names still gathered the potential for postmodern practices. For instance, the Net user could assume from one to five screen names which could reflect partial aspects of one's identity, unlived aspects of one's identity, or no connection to one's offline identity. Thus the screen name user could enact identity multiplicity, partiality, authenticity, or performativity of morphed traits. In these ways, the employment of screen name practices could reflect multiple discursive latencies rather than a single discursive practice. How one's practices were structured amidst the presence of multiple discursive latencies was another matter in itself.

This normalization of AIM social practice – through posted "guidelines" - was, however, another area where AIM's regulatory presence was ambiguous enough to enable multi-discourse enactments. Indeed, AOL's presence as a centralized observer of AIM practices was simultaneously enacted and relinquished. Concordantly, practices of freedom and compliance were ambiguously enabled and disabled. In such instances, modernist practices ironically served as a 'swivel' sometimes opening on to postmodern practices, and sometimes signifying modernist practices. A single virtual practice could index more than one cultural-historical discourse. For example, the option to communicate through encryption provided for some freedom from normalizing surveillance. In this way, the lack of Net user visibility to a centralized observer implied that a relatively open clearing for free expression existed. However, the presence of encryption keys allowed for the free space of encrypted communication to potentially 'swivel' over to a space regulated by centralized norms. Moreover, visibility to one's "buddy list" or "traceability" by AIM delimited that freedom from normalizing gazes in other chat spaces. Even though one's immediate buddy group could conceivably remark upon a narrow range of one's AOL activities, the final word on norms belonged to AOL even though AOL did not always exercise its authority. In this way, the power to initiate change was always already asymmetrical and concentrated within the hands of corporate executives. The power to organize social norms, from a lateral rather than a vertical power structure, was overridden by the hierarchy of power pre-programmed into the architecture of AIM communication. And yet, AIM portrayed itself as allowing local virtual environments to construct their distinctive social systems. Instead, it was usually the case that AOL provided regulated virtual spaces containing the co-present possibilities of postmodern freedom and modernist regulation.

The way in which Rochelle, Bryce, and Dawn responded to the postmodern possibilities in AIM space added another dimension to the process of intimate virtual communication. For Rochelle and Bryce, the opportunities for expansion of "self" and social possibilities in cyberspace gave rise to heightened enthusiasm. For both Rochelle and Bryce, shedding the factical body allowed for the postmodern possibility of journeying into a variety of previously unexplored social horizons. While Rochelle sought after dialogue with "older" males for the first time, Bryce was able to access casual and potentially romantic chat with gay males at a time when he felt woefully inadequate to do so in his offline life. Despite early positive reactions, Rochelle and Bryce's exposure to non-local differences later gave rise to mixed reactions. Initial enthusiasm about accessing an expanded social horizon sooner or later gave way to disillusionment. Indeed, Rochelle and Bryce's enthusiasm was eventually clouded by the disruptions they encountered in their emerging connections with virtual others. These

disruptions arose when differing values about how to practice meaningful connections in and through cyberspace clashed. Rochelle and Bryce found that alternative social patterns in AIM space unexpectedly re-gestalted into frustrating encounters where one could feel demeaned, attacked, manipulated, or deceived. Bryce immediately reacted with disdain to the deception he encountered. Rochelle, on the other hand, gradually discovered that her initial desire for approval turned into dissatisfaction with objectifying and immature social practices she encountered. In both instances, Rochelle and Bryce subsequently refashioned AIM practices in order to carve out meaningful encounters consonant with values of honesty and kindness (romanticist?). Therein, Rochelle and Bryce resisted modernist instrumentality. In effect, they resisted means-end forms of sociality. This is not to say that neither Rochelle nor Bryce valued AIM space as a postmodern play space. On the contrary, the exclusion of online bodily presence allowed Rochelle and Bryce to undergo "self" contraction inasmuch as disconcerting aspects of their offline selves were not re-presented online. This exclusion of offline characteristics allowed Rochelle and Bryce to ironically practice a playful and liberating "self" expansion in and through their cyberself personas. Previously unlived potentials for being could thereby be enacted. In contrast, Dawn's experience with a previously known significant other revealed that when obstacles to face-to-face communication involved geography and time schedules rather than body image issues, "calculated" efforts to somehow overcome the absence of the embodied ground of communication were enacted. In this way, it was revealed that the absence of the gestural body was immediately experienced as a significant loss. The contracted quality of AIM space thereby became "tedious" and frustrating rather than meaningful and expansive.

Dawn's frustration highlighted another theme regarding the experience of understanding and meaning in AOL's region of cyberspace. For each of the research participants, re-presentations of "self" and significance in cyberspace became problematic, sooner or later. For Rochelle and Bryce, AIM space re-presentations failed to consistently provide clear-cut indications of offline compatibility or incompatibility with virtual others. The lack of important contexts for understanding the virtual other - both bodily and worldly - sometimes created impediments to grasping meanings. Thus the smooth unproblematic flow of communication sometimes concealed the lived fact that misunderstandings were unknowingly circulating during an intimate online encounter. From Dawn's point of view, AIM space was training the "world to listen with a deafening ear." The outcome for each of the research participants was the wish to return from (post)modern virtual relations to the ground of sensual body-world encounter. In this way, it came to be that an always already existing "discourse" of body-world unity ultimately subverted cultural-historical efforts to normalize (post)modern virtual communication practices.

Discussion

<u>Discussion Outline</u>

Listed among the research presuppositions I bring to this critical-hermeneutic

circle of understanding is my view that the human-cyberspace interface reproduced

culturally and historically informed practices. Here I presuppose that cultural-historical

practices serve as conditions for the possibility of becoming a subject and for the

possibilities of shaping social relations. Specifically, I presume that technocultural-

historical discourses and practices contribute to the formation of a disclosive

(cyber)space – a social clearing or field of power relations – which invest human bodies

with differing prescriptions for being-in-the-world with others. Beginning with these

background cultural-historical considerations, I open the Discussion section with a

Descriptive Summary of the Results. Therein, I articulate a concise reinterpretation of

the research findings. This reinterpretation allows me to fashion the second portion of

the Discussion section – the Results Re-view. In the Results Re-view, I construct a

dialogue between the Descriptive Summary of Results section and the Literature Review

section. The circular dialogue between the two sections allows additional understanding

about the being of cyborg subjectivity and cyborg intimacy to be illuminated.

Throughout the literature re-view, I periodically address implications for future

cyberspace study. Towards the end of the re-view I reflect upon my initial

presuppositions about the critical-hermeneutic aspects of doing qualitative research. I

then conclude the Discussion by addressing the Research Study Limitations and

suggestions for future research modifications.

<u>Descriptive Summary of Results</u>

The techno-social scene of the twenty first century has been cast within electronic

spaces. Within these virtual places human participants metaphorically grappled with the

possibilities of living out virtual cyborg existence. For those electronically wired into the

experience of human-machine hybridity, however, such cyber spaces were not marked by

neutrality and unbounded freedom. In this study, I found that AOL's Instant Messaging world offered up a horizon replete with the cultural-historical discourses and practices related to modernism, postmodernism, and romanticism. In addition, AIM space gathered together the dreams, values, practices, transformations of existence, and shadows associated with the effort to embody such a discourse-infused virtual cyborg 'life.' As such, the cyborg's "psychic" and social 'life' came to reflect the mixing of new possibilities and shadowed possibilities circulating within the technocultural psyche. Through an interrogation of the research participants' experiential descriptions of 'life' in E-merica's AIM frontier, the lived quality of cultural-historical dreams and conflicts came into sharper relief.

It was found that the kind of subject under discursive construction in AIM space was different than the kind of subjectivity emerging when the research participants' engaged in the process of co-constructing identity. At first glance, AIM practices most obviously solicited a Cartesian subject (e.g., mind/body as split, instrumentalist attitude, disengaged observer) at home within a field of virtual re-presentations which allowed for postmodern enactment of alternate identities.   At the level of co-construction, however, subjectivity emerged as a virtual cyborg who was both appreciative and ambivalent about its technologically expanded powers to connect with a standing reserve of chat-ready others. Indeed, this technologically enabled expansion of spatiality was sometimes accompanied by an increased sense of safety and invulnerability. At the same time, the electronic life of a cyborg entailed losses in the bodily power to generate meaningful spaces of interaction. The loss of meaningful spaces gave rise to a cyborg subject with an eye that was sometimes "blind" and sometimes "illiterate." As a result, the research

participants' co-constructed version of being a virtual cyborg subject resuscitated their strong allegiance to the sensual bodily powers of signification – bodily powers which, according to Donna Haraway, should have been repudiated by cyborg subjects. For instance, the research participants did not docilely submit to reproducing themselves as disembodied virtual cyborg subjects. The research participants, instead, played with options to freely *cross back over* into the lived world of embodied others after having initiated *crossover* into the ethereal space provided for by AIM. In effect, these virtual cyborg practices were not beholden to enacting disembodied social practices submissively. The research participants, instead, took up the meaning of a Cartesian discursive practice as if it were a sliding signifier. The research participants did so by periodically re-appropriating Cartesian practices as a vehicle for retrieving practices associated with sensuality or embodiment.

As to the form of electronic relations, the kind of sociality emerging in cyberspace was characterized by a normalization of communication wherein research participants were *remotely present* to the *partial presence* of distant others (e.g., as textual, screen, or telepresence). In these ways, remoteness and partiality of presence contributed to a mode of sociality which could include significant disjunctions between chat partners regarding the meanings circulating during a virtual encounter. The meaning bestowing capacity of signifiers was in "retreat." For example, bids for virtual intimacy encompassed instances of substantial "undecidability" about basic aspects of a virtual other's identity. This kind of privative ambiguity resulted in decreased experiences of "being-with" others in a more existentially congruent manner, and increased experiences with "being-among" others where "[e]veryone is the other and no one is himself [*sic*]" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 165). In

order to retrieve the possibility of meaningful relations, the research participants engaged in a calculated intensification of virtual social practices, or a modification of discursive practices.

Finally, electronic sociality revealed itself as an interactive practice where a profound visibility to peripheral others (e.g., soft surveillance) was unreflectively taken for granted. Despite the potential visibility of an encounter and the modernist framing of postmodern possibilities for sociality, the research participants imported some of their own ethics into the enactment of virtual relations.

Having briefly summarized the research results above, the descriptive summary below stands as an extended elaboration of the experiences lived out by the research participants. Therein I chronicle their efforts to fashion a social existence at the intersection of an AIM clearing infused by a technocultural-historical assembly of discursive practices.

A thematically sketched cyborg story. The research participants arrived at the threshold of cyberspace sociality needful of social connection. Without the temporary prosthetic of the Internet, the offline self was perceived as insufficient to overcome obstacles to establishing or maintaining social encounters. By pre-reflectively becoming a cyborg - by temporarily embracing human-computer hybridity – the research participants were allowed to leave behind the perceived impediments of the flesh and momentarily dream of enhanced powers to connect with distant others. Previously inaccessible, taboo, or feared others were bought within reach. Thus, a postmodern expansion into non-local social spaces coupled with a postmodern expansion of the self's

constricted or unlived possibilities were enabled by this dissolution of ties to embodiment.

The AIM window was initially perceived to be a place from which to launch into AIM enabled social connection. When a research participant's project was to form new relationships, enthusiasm about complying with AIM practices was high. In Bryce's words, "It was fun, and exciting, and innovative to me" (Appendix G). A research participant's separation from the incarnate body, as a way to access the standing reserves of chat-ready others, was not initially thematized as problematic. The modernist flight from body and world coupled with the postmodern liberation from an identity bound to a singular (embodied) identity was pre-thematically experienced as rife with gratifying possibilities. In Rochelle's words, "You feel really special inside, like you have nothing to be afraid of because the person you are talking to isn't judging you for your looks, just solely on how you interact online" (Appendix D). It was easy to be spellbound by the AIM window's power – a power to enable a relatively safe simulated coexistence with previously unavailable simulated others. The modernist sense of fleshly vulnerability was seemingly overcome by integrating a sense of identity with the machinic power to expand social spatiality and be simultaneously shielded from unwanted exposure to others (e.g., disembodied communication, AIM blocking button).

Where a strong offline tie to the virtual other already existed, Dawn experienced a muted hope of recovering a satisfying semblance of offline immediacy while online -
" . . . IM was agreed upon [for] both of us to get back some of what verbal communication offered. IM offered a pseudo-telephone call" (Appendix J). At that point, to be a virtual cyborg and anticipate a valued aspect of offline sociality on the

'other side' of the AIM window was incentive enough to make the attempt. Conflicts linked to the modern, postmodern, and romantic cultural-historical discursive practices were yet to vividly emerge. For Dawn, the modernist departure from the body-world matrix of life was tacitly accepted so long as the promise of establishing a meaningful virtual connection with her significant other seemed viable. Even if no-body was present, the desire for the *logos* of bodily-being-with-others, in some form, did not have to be fully surrendered, or so it seemed. Thus, a bodily-based sensibility was already at work in decisions to engage in AIM sociality.

The AIM window enabled and incited the use of multiple electronic social mediums (e.g., email, pictographic representation, buddy lists, centralized chatroom access, mobile phone access) through upbeat advertising. Therein, the modernist call to seemingly sever the bond with the body and earthly world was embedded within the manifold point-and-click solicitations of the AIM window buttons. These research participants, however, focused primarily upon Instant Messaging, chatroom spaces, email, picture posting, and emoticons during their attempts at establishing meaningful encounters. Concurrently, their preference to cross back over into some form of a more sensorially informed encounter (e.g., telephone contact, face-to-face meeting) stood as a bodily-based practice imported into the AIM clearing. Here, the research participants had not passively and docilely fallen into a slumbering forgetfulness about the bond between intimacy and fleshly encounter. By retaining the option to interlace virtual encounters with sensual-bodily aspects of sociality, the research participants retained the choice to resist the AIM window call to adopt the detached perspective vision of a spectator.

Postmodern and romanticist practices were simultaneously possible within the aforementioned chosen practices. That is to say, various AIM practices were not necessarily beholden to a single discourse such as modernism. An AIM window practice could conceivably slide or 'swivel' in a way that allowed for a prethematic enactment of an alternate cultural-historical practice. For the research participants, the option to shift the referential significance of an AIM space practice was always present, albeit prereflectively. From a research participant's point of view, however, the prereflective choice to shift the index of an AIM practice was "consciously" influenced by feelings such as frustration, emotional hurt, and emotional fulfillment. Again, a sensual-bodily ethic asserted itself. In Rochelle's words, "You can be yourself, or you can be anyone you want to be really. You can live a fantasy life on the Internet, but if you are really looking for true love, don't falsify anything, it just makes for a big disappointment in the end" (Appendix D). The bodily experience of disappointment influenced the ready-to-hand way in which virtual practices were put to use. Specifically, Rochelle's comment highlighted how the postmodern freedom to enact false, fantastical, or latent aspects of a research participant's "self" *might* be solicited by the use of AIM space screen names. Alternatively, a romanticist pursuit of love could lead to a re-appropriation of screen names for the purpose of enacting "true" (e.g., factically congruent) disclosures about a research participant's offline "self." The meaning of a discursive practice was not, therefore, unidirectionally determined. Its significance was, instead, co-constructed. Thus, coming into presence in a genuine manner during meaningful encounters could hold sway for the research participants despite the modern and postmodern Enframing of AIM space practices.

Once immersed in AIM space, the research participants fashioned areas of smooth functioning virtual practices. At other times, they experienced points of social breakdown sometimes followed by acts of renewed compliance or resistance. For instance, the act of living out a cyborg vision sometimes included resistance to a detached (modernist) engagement with the spectacle of virtual others. Adopting cyborg vision could also signify how the virtual self lived through an eye which accustomed itself to the partiality of a virtual other's coming into presence. In part, it felt safer to both be and encounter the partial presence of others as an e-text presence or as a screen reality. According to Rochelle, "Nothing bothers you, if you don't want to talk to a person, you can easily block them . . . If the 'real' world was this easy, it'd be so nice, you would get rid of jerks right off the bat . . ." (Appendix D). While distance and partial presence hampered bids for intimacy, the safe distance of virtuality reduced the sense of prolonged vulnerability. In the blink of a cyborg eye, the intrusive, deceitful, immature, or abusive virtual other (or subject) could be made to vanish.

As a virtual cyborg subject, acquisition of the modernist power to feel relatively invulnerable became an occasion for other social breakdowns. To be invulnerable in cyberspace was to signify that a research participant participated in AIM space as a remote presence. As a remote presence, however, efforts to know the virtual other were palpably frustrated. As Bryce recounted, "My first experience to meet someone new on the Internet was horrible because the person lied about his age and appearances." The research participant assumption that online others enact (romanticist) authenticity as a code of conduct was violated. Consequently, research participant's could be unknowingly deceived about the other's factical offline bodily qualities. Here, the

virtual cyborg eye sometimes became a partially blind eye. The cyborg eye could also become an illiterate eye. As a result, difficulty with forming accurate understanding was sometimes suffered. In Dawns words, "I looked at the computer screen in complete horror. He was lashing out at me. He questioned our entire relationship over my simple statement. All I meant by the statement was how surprised I was . . ." (Appendix J).

Without the signs of bodily sensuality and worldly context, the remote eye of understanding became an eye sometimes lost at sea with linguistic signifiers. Specifically, the invulnerable cyborg could become lost in the remote eye of "mind," – a "mind" unwittingly filled with decontextualized fantasy constructions about text-based meanings. Such an eye lost the possibility of immersing itself within the manifold significations which faithfully sing the body-world unity indicative of a virtual other's identity. In such instances, the research participants were motivated to prevent or overcome the fantasy constructions occasioned by AIM sociality by shedding aspects of their cyborg armor and engaging in efforts to reduce distance from the virtual other. The desire to meet by telephone or in person signified moments of resistance. In other circumstances, the reassertion of effort to intensely scrutinize e-text communication occurred - to the point of "tedium" – thus signifying redoubled effort at compliance with the modern and postmodern calls to continue the practice of virtual existence in AIM space. Whereas Rochelle resisted reliance upon AIM practices to establish intimacy by continuing to insist on face-to-face encounters, Bryce and Dawn engaged more actively in AIM chat. Dawn did so out of an imposed necessity, stating that she had to "calculate how to present information" rather than rely upon spontaneous speech acts.

Just how the "cyborg self" of AIM space was culturally and historically produced involved AIM strategies of normalization and regulation. One aspect of behavioral regulation in AIM space has been addressed through the description of discursive practices described heretofore. Another AIM-based strategy for regulating behavior involved AIM's modernist informed "Rules and Guidelines" posted online by AOL. The "Rules and Guidelines" were modernist inasmuch as they seemed to spring from a "common sense" and legalistic sense of justice rather then, for instance, from a romanticist sense of a deep interiority connected to nature. AIM ethics did, however, provide for the possibility of some postmodern freedom by emphasizing that chatrooms "are NOT monitored." AOL's panoptic surveillance was also limited inasmuch as AIM provided "industry standard" encryption for its users; an encryption, however, wherein AOL and the U.S. government maintain decryption privileges. Moreover, AIM possessed other pre-programmed capacities to trace AOL member activities on the Internet. AIM also provided "buddy lists" which allowed virtual "buddies" to know when another buddy was online and what chatroom that particular "buddy" might be found in. The activities of a virtual cyborg in AIM space were thereby normalized as profoundly visible to AOL and selected members. Therefore, postmodern and romantic ethics could be negotiated in a multitude of AOL spaces, but within the confines of AOL's overarching code and modernist informed "Rules and Guidelines." In this way, a virtual cyborg could potentially become the object of normative discipline. Thus virtual freedom in AIM space could be performed within, of course, a modernist frame.

Results Re-view

Response to the literature on cyborgs and physiology. How have images of the future

handed down to Western civilization from its past influenced the human experience of cyberspace in the early twenty first century? The results of this study amended Donna Haraway's early 1990s understanding of what it means to fashion existence from out of the cyborg image. According to Haraway, the cyborg – a hybrid of human and machine (e.g., Internet) – was an irreverent and transgressive figure born with the capacity to oppose and resist acquiescence to the coding attributed to its origins of "mud and . . . militarism and . . . capitalism . . ."

Initially, the research participants in this study did indeed adopt the prosthetic of computer-enabled Internet access in order to establish intimate connections with others. However, this human-machine fusion was only a temporary and transitional choice. The wish to retain machinic powers, such as an expanded sense of social spatiality, was ultimately relinquished in favor of retrieving some sense of the lost sensual-bodily connection. Rather than embrace a transgressive cyborg existence, even after having experienced the embodied self as inadequate, the research participants maintained an abiding motivation to return to the "mud" and sensuality of their embodied being. Moreover, they preferred to work toward achieving successful unmediated encounters rather than submit to modernist (and militaristic?) solicitations to maintain machinic detachment or to practice postmodern fantasy enactments during virtual encounters. In this study, cyborgs did not ultimately defy their human "origins" so much as much they resisted modern technological discourses associated with their hybridity. A bodily emphasis was re-appropriated as the research participants became distressed about the receding relevance of carnal disclosive powers. Rather than docilely accept such a loss; rather than repress, mourn, or become nostalgic about bodily absence, the research

participants creatively worked to resist prolonged disconnection from some form of sensually informed encounter. Thus, this study revealed that the prethematic flight from embodiment into virtual cyborg subjectivity was enacted ambivalently. Submission to modern technological discourses were at times resisted when the bracketing of bodily participation became problematic.

To be sure, the research participants initially expected the fusion of human-electronic 'life' to enable a safe expansion of power to inhabit non-local spaces. Therein they became cyborg "subjects" outfitted with enhancements over their biological and spatial finitude. As cyborg "subjects," they could also conceal their offline facticity. At the same time, to prethematically become an electronic cyborg meant that research participants sometimes endured strained efforts to retain eclipsed aspects of bodily being and power or withstand their diminution. Here, electronic simulations of presence did not successfully tranquilize anxiety about the loss of sensuality.

Was this sense of sensual-bodily loss and return motivated simply by a wish to return to the familiar ground of human flesh? The physiological understanding of human being found in the perennial standard text, *Gray's Anatomy* (1989), provided an account of the human body as an organic machine. In summary, this traditional physiological discourse produced an objectified understanding of the human body which rendered consciousness as a mere epiphenomenon of internal disequilibrium leading to the formation of "adaptive" maintenance and survival responses. The results of this study supported Merleau-Ponty's thesis that this kind of mechanistic and instinctual understanding of human physiology is insufficient. For Merleau-Ponty, human behavior and purpose cannot be fully explained by simply relying upon stimulus-response

explanations (e.g., behaviorism) and instinctual drive theory. As discussed earlier, Merleau-Ponty described a "human order" of existence that organized biological functions through the interpretation of context bound meanings. In this study, the research participants experienced distress during social breakdowns when meaningful spaces for intimacy dissolved or did not materialize. Thus, a wish for fulfillment unrelated to mere biological maintenance and instinctual gratification prevailed at those times (e.g., resisting sexualized social agendas). The importance of fulfilling meaningful experiences associated with the "human order of existence" took precedence.

Where the loss of meaningful sociality resulted in breakdowns, it became clear what kinds of "subjectivity" the research participants identified with – a meaningful *bodily-being-in-the-world* with others. This loss also clarified how each research participant struggled with bodily absence, as well as how they grappled with the absence of non-virtual contexts which typically enrich the sense-making process. The opportunity to construct meanings by integrating sensorially informed experience of the virtual other the virtual other's worldly life context was unhappily absent for the research participants' during bids for meaningful AIM space encounters. In this way, the images from the movie "2001" served as poignant reminders about the lifeless and devitalized shape meaningful human existence takes when the earthly horizon of existence is replaced by the look and rhythm of technologically saturated 'life.'

Implications for further inquiry into cyborgs and physiology. The finding that virtual cyborg social existence extended spatiality and enhanced the sense of social insulation from physical and emotional risks also pointed to the concomitant loss of integrated sensorial participation during social encounters. In this regard, Marshal

McLuhan's (1964) landmark thesis on media extensions of human capacities suggests a direction for further research motivated by a cultural therapeutic. McLuhan reasoned that as technological mediums extend human capacities and take over those functions, such extensions result in the atrophy or numbing of human abilities (e.g., heaters extend the body's thermostatic function). For example, Dawn stated that Internet as a tool for socializing was "[a]llowing the world to listen with a deafening ear" (Appendix J). In effect, Dawn experienced the Internet as extending and muting the human capacity for listening and whole bodied interpretation during social encounters. Following McLuhan's argument regarding technological extensions of human capacities I, therefore, suggest that research addressing biological systems correlated with the integration of symbolic and emotional experiences, might clarify how prolonged human-electronic interface during virtual social interactions impacts brain-body systems. Jane Healy, a researcher in educational computing, has already initiated reflection and inquiry into the medical and behavioral implications for widespread computer use by children.

In Jane Healy's (1998) work, *Failure to Connect: How Computers Affect Our Children's Minds – for Better and Worse*, Healy expressed concerns that time spent on the computer displaced time available for physical and interpersonal experience. Healy went on to suggest that research on the brain development of children who spend significant amounts of time on the computer might shed light upon such conditions as Attention Deficit Disorder and arrested emotional development. Healy thereby supported research examining the limbic system (emotional functions), the prefrontal cortex (self control, planning), and the neurotransmitter serotonin (related to aggressive moods), all of which she believes are altered by prolonged computer use.

Healy did not however address Internet sociality. With regard to those engaging in prolonged involvement in AIM sociality, I would go on to suggest that the sensually depleted social environment of AIM space may be indicative of a need for biological research into its impact upon tactile readiness for unmediated human contact (cf. Harlow's (1974) monkeys). I would also suggest that biological research also examine the long-term impact of virtual sensual deprivation. It may be that the impact of immersion in virtual sociality may give rise to a dis-integrative effects on human neural networks for synthesizing the complex social-emotional information conveyed during face-to-face human encounters (e.g., synesthesic sense, corporeal schema). Thus the meaning of being a virtual cyborg may indeed involve a biologically entwined "forgetfulness," or selective inattention to the signifying power of human gestures, human emotions, and human desire beyond their adaptive biological functions.

Response to the technocultural literature. This study both modifies and supports perspectives raised in the review of technocultural literature. First, I begin with images and subtexts bound up with the landmark film, "The Matrix" (1999). The theretofore stunning and unparalleled visual effects found in "The Matrix" were undoubtedly seductive in demonstrating the appeal for immersion in simulated existence. Whereas the demolished state of the filmed version of the "real" world pales in comparison to the renovated visuals of the movie version of the Matrix, it can be asked whether or not the disparity between AIM space and the offline world of the research participants varied as vividly. Specifically, and for the purposes of this study, it was found that Baudrillard's contention that simulations lacked the capacity to coherently signify the "real" garnered support from the research participant protocols.

In this study, the notion of the "real" referred to the research participants' concern about the match between their perception of the online and offline identities of virtual others; about the match between their experience of virtual rapport and offline rapport; and about the match between intended meanings and subsequent interpretations of those meanings. For example, Bryce found the discrepancy between the online and offline identity of the other to be a "horrible" experience where deception was involved. Rochelle found the discrepancy between online and offline rapport to be unpredictable and often "a real let down." Dawn, on the other hand, found misinterpretations of meanings to require a "tedious" amount of effort to rectify or avoid. The research participants' reactions suggested that a postmodern virtual world filled with identity experimentation is undesirable when the overarching project to establish meaningful connections with others is already fraught with potential misunderstanding. Their predilection for some kind of modernist certainty about the other's re-presentations or a romantic desire for a level of integrity about their identity was generally preferred during virtual interactions.

The results of this study were in partial accord with the Romanyshyn's musing that the "dream body" of cyberspace serves as a vehicle for the factical body to abandon earth. In similar fashion, this study partially supported Dery's contention that netizens seek to achieve "escape velocity" in order to metaphorically break free of earth's gravitational pull as a way to achieve technological transcendence within the global network of cyberspace.

According to the research participants, the modernist desire to transcend embodiment in order that "mind" could merge with the electronic network of cyberspace

was at best a temporary project. Initially, the research participants did indeed seek to take a more or less enthusiastic flight into the cyberspace realm of sociality.   However, their expectations about the possibilities of life within the electronic frontier were dimmed as breakdowns in virtual interactions emerged. In a variation on the words of Herbert Marcuse (1964), the research participants may have initially experienced a kind of "euphoria in unhappiness;" a kind of fun and relaxation derived from consuming Internet related goods and services. And yet, such consumption led to unhappy realizations about and resistance to an unsatisfying repression of human possibilities. Whereas the economic interests of AOL may have converged with modernity's Cartesian incitement to embrace the "false need" to *crossover* into virtual worlds, it turns out that these research participants sought out AIM as a means to *cross back over* into enacting a discourse of meaningful *bodily-being-in-the-world* with others. In such moments, the research participants enacted a retrieval of the marginalized desire for holistically contextualized sensuality. It is therefore no surprise that the research participants' initial perception that their embodied presence was a nuisance to offline social connection gave way to the alternative realization that virtual re-presentations ("dream bodies") of self and other became a nuisance by inducing confusion during virtual chat.

Ironically, transcendence or excessive immersion into the sociality of the Internet became a potential obstacle to meaningful intimacy for virtual cyborgs. As stated earlier, the virtual cyborg eye becomes an eye often blinded to the presence of others. It also became an illiterate eye during times of confusion about the meaning of decontextualized signifiers in AIM space. Sometimes dim-sighted and lost in the translation of e-relations,

the "mind" of a research participant was occasionally reminded of its incompleteness without the complement of its bodily powers.

Implications for further inquiry into virtual technocultural.   The research participants' descriptions of their respective online behaviors tended to challenge Foucault's (1978) notion that the power of discourses are merely "productive" social practices. Whereas technocultural historiographies can benefit from an examination of how human conduct is "drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, [and] incorporated by multifarious power devices " (1978, p. 48), it can also benefit from an examination of how alternate human experiences and practices may be marginalized or indeed "repressed" after power "measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct" (p. 48). From Heidegger's point of view, it is also important to realize that where one possibility (or mode of conduct) is revealed (or produced), another possibility is necessarily concealed (or marginalized). Even in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault did indeed acknowledge that the "inducement to speak" or to "confess" eventually enabled power to "manage"" and "normalize" practices – " [T]he pleasure discovered fed back to the power that encircled it" (pp. 44-45). Although Foucault objected to the notion that "essential" aspects of human being could be "repressed" and subsequently "liberated," the relevance of a cultural therapeutic would diminish if *all* emotional and bodily indicators of health were trivialized as mere effects of social construction.

In light of Foucault's argument that all truth-claims vary because they are situated within different power/knowledge formations, any consideration of counter claims asserting the existence of universal bodily needs and desires amidst EMRs warrants caution – especially since non-Western religious and ethno-cultural groups may differ.

Thus a more conservative experience-near argument might, instead, suggest that the research participants' "desire" for embodied contact arose from a perceived "lack." And such a lack may not have been due to the absence of mere anatomical bodies. Rather, the experience of desire and lack may have been occasioned by the absence of encounters with *historied bodies*, bodies that signify historically informed meaning and identities through physical and gestural signs. This would of course point to the possibility that human desire and historied bodies may have a contemporary, if not lasting importance for humankind in the West. Thus, historiographies about the burgeoning culture of simulation would do well to maintain narrative openness to the possibility that desire for encounters with embodied others may indeed arise for an indefinite period of time in the West. This would of course invite considerations in the area of "normative" or "ethical" cultural-hermeneutics. Moreover, it would strengthen justification for suggesting modifications to future virtual technologies on the grounds of psychological health and well-being. As the psychoanalytic historian, Daniel Burston (2000) summarized in his scholarly account of R. D. Laing's theories in *The Crucible*:

> [Laing] referred to ontological security as the 'normal' state
>
> of affairs and argued that the ability to identify with one's body, to
>
> sustain good-enough interpersonal relationships . . . and to enjoy some
>
> congruence between one's being-for-oneself and being-for-others
>
> are constitutive of mental health . . . (p. 135)

The failure to identify with "the communal self [as] perforce corporeal" (p. 134), according to Burston, may lead one become enveloped in a phantasy world. And where the experiences described by the research participants in this study can be deemed

relevant, *meaningful bodily being-in-the-world with others* might be counted as a situated

constant in the area ethical critical-hermeneutics.

A useful example of such a project is Robert Kugelmann's (1992) study of the

relationship between the discourse of modernity and the "archaic" body in *Stress: The*

Nature and History of Engineered Grief. From Kugelmann's perspective the "stress"

experienced by the human body signifies an implicit critique of modernity and its

emphasis on progress. Kugelmann argues that modernity's form of progress alienates

humankind from the lived body. Whereas modernity focuses upon reasoned efficiency

and productivity, the lived body asserts its care for societal growth which is in accord

with carnal earth-bound considerations.   Here, Kugelmann's emphasis upon the lived

body as a potential foundation for resisting aspects of modernity's progressive discourse

stands as useful touchstone for research motivated by a cultural therapeutic sensibility.

Following from Kugelmann's work, it would profit the field of psychology to

remember that the "symptoms" linked to enfleshed subjectivity can inaugurate a valuable

breakdown of the symbolic order. One positive outcome of such a breakdown is that it

can restore values associated with flesh and earth into forms of being-in-the-world with

others. For example, Kugelmann argues that the accelerated mechanization of society

places increasing stress upon humankind. Such stress does not always call out to be

mastered (e.g., stress management). Rather stress may signify the bodily recognition of

lost worlds, lost forms of intimate personal relationships, lost opportunities for dwelling,

and lost opportunities for experiencing moments of meaningfully lived time. Kugelmann

goes on to suggest that the creation of "empty time," time freed from the need to be

efficient and productive, may allow for the opportunity to mourn such losses, or to arrive

at choices to resist the burgeoning scarcity of being-in-the-world meaningfully. Quoting

again from Herbert Marcuse (1964):

> "Naming the 'things that are absent,' is breaking the spell of the
>
> things that are; moreover it is an ingression of a different order
>
> of things into the established one – "*le commencement d'un monde*"
>
> (p. 68).

Response to literature on psychological issues. In the Literature Review, I

researched a substantial amount of speculative theory about the impact of human

immersion in cyberspace. Some of the arguments posed by different EMR thinkers

included Gergen's claim that social saturation can occasion multiphrenic experiences,

Poster's argument that narcissistic tendencies are solicited by cyberspace, Romanyshyn's

discussion of cyberspace-induced depression as an invitation to return "home," and

Robin's concern that cyberspace immersion reactivates infantile omnipotent strivings.

Whereas the latter theories argue that immersion in electronic sociality might give

rise to deleterious outcomes, other perspectives allowed for more generative possibilities.

From a positive psychological standpoint, Robins' went on to submit that the Internet

could serve as an imaginal space or a "transitional space" (cf. Donald Winnicott)

allowing for the diminution of omnipotent tendencies. Turkle stressed that the outcome

of cyberspace involvement depended upon one's purpose. For instance, Turkle found

that cyberspace contributed to one's personal growth when the Internet was utilized to

work through areas of desired growth rather than merely "act out" a fantasy existence.

All of the above claims or fore-conceptions about the psychological implications of EMR

immersion contribute to the following discussion.

The findings in this study lent limited support to Gergen's perspective that identity expansion is enabled by electronically enabled social saturation. Gergen argued for a developmental perspective on postmodern identity formation. In this study, the research participants clearly sought out self-expansion as part of their pursuit of meaningful virtual encounters. The kind of expansion they preferred, however, only modestly referenced a wish to alter their respective identities by "internalizing" the differing qualities of virtual others. Instead, the research participants sought to live out genuine unlived possibilities for being in relation with others. These possibilities were previously unlived because the research participants felt inhibited during bodily encounters (e.g., due to judgments about female body-image, shyness). Bodily presence was a discomfiting nuisance.

Whereas the research participants may have experienced an initial desire for exposure to the vast alterity of online others, instead, Rochelle and Bryce eventually experienced discontented moods leading them to enact a (romanticist?) search for a compatible other. In such instances, their postmodern desire to infuse their identity with a dramatic expansion of values and modes of being a "self" was discarded. In Bryce's words, "I now know the types of people who are attracted to me and how to approach them" (Appendix H). Bryce was less interested in fundamentally expanding the types of persons he related to so much as Bryce sought to determine the kinds of people he was compatible with. During Rochelle's teenage years, the excursion into the standing reserve of different others (e.g., older males) was fraught with misunderstandings, misconstrued perceptions about having made successful intimate connections, feeling objectified, feeling judged, feeling attacked, and feeling deceived. In her post teen years,

Rochelle found a romantic partner and subsequently retrenched herself in her embodied

world - " When I met him, my Internet time went from 2 to 3 hours a day to just minutes

checking my e-mail, and occasionally responding to them . . . I don't go into chat rooms.

There is no need to, I have everything I need in a person" (Appendix D). In this way,

Rochelle's reactions –as well as Bryce's - supported for Romanyshyn's contention that

certain moods can signify a call to return "home" to one's ownmost being and

possibilities.

Nevertheless, in contrast to Gergen's thesis that social saturation enabled self-

expansion, these research subjects found that the self-expansion was enabled more so by

the body-concealing architecture of the Internet and its associated technology. The

prosthetic of the Internet allowed for a research participant's identity to be ambiguous

and only partially present online. This kind of remote presence was experienced as less

anxiety provoking. The decrease in anxiety allowed the research participants to begin

acting upon their preexisting desires for being-in-the-world with others. Thus, the call to

postmodern consciousness and practices had limited appeal for these research

participants. In contrast to Gergen's viewpoint, the journey into postmodern and

modernist possibilities was instead followed by a return to the comfort-zone of the

research participants' embodied possibilities.

As to Robins' contention that cyberspace solicited omnipotent infantile strivings

and Poster's claim that narcissistic tendencies were likewise solicited, the support for

these claims is at best ambiguous. It is not clear from the protocols that the research

participants intended to engage in behaviors that were distinctly insensitive or

demanding. In one instance, it is clear that Rochelle did appropriate her aunt's credit

card without consent, did "sneak" online late at night, and that she did misrepresent her age online. Beyond such practices, Rochelle demonstrated a motivation to correctly identify her age online after preliminary chatting with a virtual other seemed as if it might lead to further interaction. In terms of the virtual other's actions, it is noted that Rochelle and Bryce instead experienced online others as variously deceitful, motivated by sexualized agendas, "mean," or "immature."

In Dawn's case, her significant other perceived Dawn as judging him without any sense of understanding while online. Although he experienced Dawn as emotionally attacking, it became clear to Dawn that she had been relying on him to utilize remembrance of their offline "repertoire" in order to mitigate against such misunderstandings Dawn also added that the absence of bodily presence led to reliance upon "assumptions" or fantasy constructions to guide the interpretation and response to perceived meanings. Without bodily presence, a fluid revision of interpretations and responses was impaired. According to Dawn, "I wouldn't know to make adjustments if I wasn't there" (Appendix K). Thus it was possible that a research participant could experience the other person as self-centered and insensitive, in part, because the absence of online sensual presence limited the possibilities for conveying *fluid responsiveness* to misunderstandings and unintended inflictions of harm (e.g., relational disjunctions) while chatting with the virtually present other.

This discussion of insensitive online behavior opens on to Robins' contention that cyberspace can be a kind of Winnicottian "transitional" or imaginal space for growth. In some ways, this line of thinking is compatible with Turkle's finding that online users experience personal growth if their implicit project was to work through areas of desired

self-development. The findings of this study supported the latter arguments for the

growth potential occasioned by the practice of cyberspace sociality. The research

participants revealed how they did indeed strive to overcome or learn from the

disappointments they encountered in the imaginal space provided for by AIM. The

experience of social frustrations online helped to dispel the illusion that cyberspace

sociality was a space of uninterrupted possibilities for gratification. Though, in most

cases, there was no responsive (m)other present to aid them in reflectively metabolizing

such frustrations, the research participants did resist or modify discursive practices as a

way to continue in their quest to establish meaningful connections. The one exception

was Bryce, who reported that offline friends assisted him in working through his reaction

to feeling "horrible" about the online deception he encountered – "They told me that not

everyone would do that if I changed my approach" (Appendix H). Bryce was indeed

supported in the process of reorganizing his understanding about AIM space after the

"moment of illusion" was shattered.

Implications of the literature re-view on psychological issues. In summary, the

re-view of the literature on psychological issues led to a new understanding that the

achievement of one's possibilities for being genuine in relation to others may be

preferred over against the pursuit of postmodern consciousness. Furthermore, there was

ambiguous evidence supporting the understanding that cyberspace is populated by those

exhibiting a social insensitivity motivated by narcissistic and infantile attitudes. As

discussed above, cyberspace forms of sociality and meaning production were prone to

misinterpretations by the research participants or by the virtual others. Thus, I found that

some virtual social practices seemed harsh or obtuse, in part, because the AIM

architecture included the programmed elision of the sensual body-world background

thereby disabling *fluid responsiveness* to shifting meanings and reactions during virtual

encounters. In one example of misperceived insensitivity, Rochelle stated, "He swears

that I blew him off, but if I did, it wasn't intentional" (Appendix D). In another example,

Dawn described her significant other's indignation following his misinterpretation of her

Instant Message:

> 'Is this what you think of me? If you feel this way, why
>
> are you in a relationship with me?' I looked at the computer
>
> screen in complete horror. He was lashing out at me. He
>
> questioned our entire relationship over my simple statement.
>
> (Appendix J)

On the latter point, it is possible to consider, with reference to Erich Fromm

(1955), that the positive qualities of AIM space engendered "socially patterned"

deficiencies for being-in-the-world with others. By "socially patterned" defect, Fromm

was referring to a culturally constructed loss of human freedom and spontaneity which

passed for psychological health. Fromm claimed that the pervasiveness of such losses

generally passed by unnoticed as socially patterned defects were prereflectively

understood to be givens of existence – in the same way, for instance, that email is now

viewed as a standard form of communication in professional and personal circles.

Fromm went on to state that socially patterned defects have sometimes been reframed as

"virtues." In that way, the strategy of elevating loss to virtue gained currency because the

losses were deemed to serve necessary societal ends. With regard to reframing loss as

virtue, I found a ready parallel where the unreflective production of dualistic or Cartesian

styles of relating in cyberspace reigned. Here the absence of bodily connection to self

and others would have achieved the status of "normality" if research participants had

fully surrendered to narrow Western body-image ideals or Western expectations to place

workplace commitments ahead of personal relationship priorities.

In R. D. Laing's (1965) *The Divided Self*, Laing discussed the consequences

associated with conducting relations from an "existential position" which exiled the

"self" form one's bodily presence. Where the basic unity between mind and body and

other has been experientially divided, Laing suggested that actions emanating from a

"self [which] avoids being directly related to real persons" (p. 86) can begin to feel futile

and perceptions can seem unreal. A phantasy life may then emerge which is increasingly

divorced from infusions of vital corporeal experiences. The sense of "self" may then

become precariously fragile and "unreal" if consistently barred from bodily presence.

"Schizoid" forms of existence may then come into being. Where it is indeed possible that

"schizoid" forms of subjectivity can be stylized by the culturally sanctioned proliferation

of electronically mediated relationships (EMRs), I suggest that a cultural therapeutic

should counter the potential for alienation from "self." That is to say, from a general

perspective, that a researcher's employment of a cultural therapeutic not only asks the

researcher to identify societal "repression" of possibilities for being human, it also asks

that the researcher to point toward a pragmatics for retrieving or resuscitating such

possibilities.

Although cyberspace may solicit schizoid tendencies, the social evolution of

Rochelle and Bryce - which emerged from their online experiences - suggests that the

potential for personal growth in cyberspace can be harnessed for those who are hampered

by some form of social anxiety. Psychotherapeutic interventions can be implemented for

the treatment of social anxiety by titrating the exposure of anxious individuals to the full

immediacy of embodied encounters. For instance, a treatment protocol that begins with

the less threatening reality of "real time" Instant Messaging might allow persons with

social anxiety to incrementally work through their reservations about direct social

encounters. In effect, persons experiencing social anxiety might find the progressive

exposure to an embodied social clearing to be less overwhelming. This kind of therapy

might also include psycho-education about social-emotional competencies as a way to

offset the normalization of social deficiencies intrinsic to virtual sociality. In Dawn's

words, "I know a couple of people personally that found it kind of hard to assimilate back

into real life without having to deal with IM . . . it's almost like dating all over again"

(Appendix K).

   <u>Response to the Continental philosophy literature review</u>. The results of this

research study tended to support and elaborate Hubert Dreyfus' view that the "essence"

of the Internet technology disclosive space is to make things "accessible and

optimizable." The research participants were drawn into the Enframing (*Ge-stell)* of

AIM space, in part, by the promise that a standing-reserve (*Bestand*) of chat-ready others

would be available. Bryce underscored the efficiency of their availability in his research

interview:

  [Y]ou had more choices of people on the Internet. You had all

  those screen names of people who are interested in meeting or hooking

  up . . . Where in the bar someone could just be having drinks with friends,

  they don't really want to be bothered with other people or they could be

there by themselves just having a drink. In the chatroom, people want to

talk. They want to talk, want to meet people, want to talk about things,

about politics, sex, music, whatever. (Appendix E)

The unequivocal accessibility and availability of others was not in question, unless of

course someone like Dawn was seeking out contact with a previously known individual.

In Dawn's situation, accessibility was nevertheless enhanced by AIM technology, but not

always – "Because of the hours we both worked, it was kind of hard to pin each other

down at certain times of the day" (Appendix K).

With regard to the other half of Dreyfus' contention that the essence of the

Internet was to make things "optimizable," it turns out that the optimization of virtual

other's presence was a substantial challenge for the research participants. Whereas

"things" might come to presence in an optimized way, the re-presentations of other's

often drifted into undecidability for the research participants. Without the perceptually

rich background of body and world, the indeterminacy of the virtual other's identity, as

well as, the uncertainty about the sustainability of online rapport in the offline world

could be a source of ongoing uncertainty. In this way, AIM was not necessarily geared to

enhance optimized human presence so much as AOL was inciting excitement about

developing a positive and playful attitude toward the partiality of presence in AIM space.

For instance, AOL's high-energy advertising pitched a postmodern emphasis upon

playing with signifiers regarding an AIM user's identity. AOL encouraged the

implementation of AIM Expressions, Buddy Icons, and the Smiley Dictionary:

Put Tom Cruise on your Desktop! **AIM Expressions** is the

exciting new way to personalize your AIM client and instant messages

. . . . **Buddy Icons** . . . Make your IMs display your online personality.

Choose a cool Buddy Icon . . . . **Smiley Dictionary**: Ever wonder what

people are saying on AIM? Use the handy Smiley Dictionary to

keep up! (Appendix L)

Thus, a modification of Dreyfus' stance on the essence of Internet sociality might

be reworked to specify that the Internet has become a disclosive space which makes chat-

ready others partially accessible and virtually accessorized. The point being that AOL

has in effect incited a kind of 'fashion consciousness' with regard to outfitting the virtual

cyborg.   In other words, AOL's strategy for marketing virtuality has enacted a

pictographic 'beautification' of virtual cyborg presence. The construction of virtual

cyborgs is enfolded in a strategy which incites a postmodern exhilaration about adopting

and encountering re-presented identities progressively disconnected from immediate

bodily referents.

      The Continental philosophy literature re-view implications. As stated earlier,

the implications of successfully carrying out the discursive tactic to normalize and

fetishize electronic presence have potential repercussions within the area of "socially

patterned" deficiencies.

      Response to critical literature on cyberspace. The purpose of employing

critical-hermeneutic features in this study was to provide a basis for building a history of

human subject formation as it has been occurring in twenty first century simulated

spaces. This particular form of historiography attended to the relationship between the

broad narrative of history and the discourse relations within local virtual contexts.   By

fashioning this kind of cultural-historical inquiry, I also intended to elucidate meaning

construction, lived experience, and social practice choices as they unfolded at the dialogical intersection of historically situated discourses and research participant motivations. This entailed an analysis of the new form of "fundamental social experience" in Western culture, EMRs. In and through the window of cyberrealtions this study attended to the "mobile and complex power relations" ordering human praxis in simulated social spaces. In this way, an expanded understanding of human experience could include a perspective on how cultural-historical discourses participated in creating value, assigning meaning, and prescribing social practices. With such an understanding, this study was positioned to make a cultural therapeutic contribution; one which allows humankind to modify cultural-historical practices through an awareness of being embedded in discourse-laden practices.

The sole example of extant critical research into "self-fashioning" through Internet use was conducted by Alan Aycock. My research both supported and extended Aycock's methodology and findings. Through Aycock's limited examination of e-text speech acts, he found that the netizens interacting on the Bulletin Board Service (BBS) for chess players focused on developing a "deep" inner self (e.g., chess skills) akin to the discourse of romanticism. Though I might argue that the skill of chess requires the development of the cognitive powers of reason and strategy, and is therefore a modernist project, I would support Aycock's effort to identify the kind of "self" under development as a means for locating the discursive regime investing, producing, and subjectifying the body. While I would also support Aycock's effort to identify historical discourses, I would add that Aycock's identification of a single historical discourse at work on the BBS could have been extended into an examination of the "power relations" within

which the BBS subjects were situated. Without attention to the play of power and how

subjects play with discursive practices, it can appear as if humankind simply submits to

its subjectification. It can also become unclear as to whether or not netizens are enacting

discourses motivated by the local space, or have somehow imported discourses or desires

which add to the play of symbolic systems.

By my introduction of a more complex inquiry - which included research

participant perspectives, cultural-historical literature, and local site analysis - my study

revealed that the research participants did not necessarily adhere to the enactment of one

particular discourse. Instead, the research participants attempted to prethematically

weave together a variety of discursive practices as a way to achieve meaningful social

encounters. In some cases, the research participants utilized a practice typically

associated with one particular cultural-historical discourse for another discursive purpose

altogether. For instance, Bryce began requesting picture postings from virtual others for

the purposes of moving relationship offline, not for the purpose of submitting to the

disincarnate sociality occasioned by modernism. Bryce, in effect, *cross-appropriated*

one discursive practice in order to achieve the ends particular to a different order of

meaning (e.g., bodily presence). In other cases, research participants submitted to the use

of virtual sociality reluctantly. Dawn felt compelled to use AIM because geographical

distance interfered with maintaining her offline relationship. Nevertheless, Dawn

submitted with displeasure – "Well I just think [AIM] is a cold thing because it lacks

emotion. I mean, no smiley [face] . . . [takes] the place of what someone says . . . A word

that's printed and how it's said is two different things, has two different connotations"

(Appendix K). By introducing the research participants' voices through protocols and

interviews, it was discovered that a virtual practice could signify a multitude of meaning systems. It also became apparent that adopting a practice did not necessarily imply submission to the discursive purpose typically associated with that practice. Instead, the research participants in this study maintained their valuation of *meaningful bodily-being-in-the world* with others even if the local space of AIM disabled such a practice by virtue of its programmed architecture. Here, the cyborg power of expanded spatiality was ambivalently embraced along with the construction of a virtual sociality privileging the *partial* and *remote presence* of others.

  Implications of the critical literature re-view of cyberspace. The implications of this critical-hermeneutic approach to research pointed to the way in which communities can be empowered to recognize the significance of maintaining a free relation to modern technology. In this way, a community can begin to recognize the impact it might have on its future and the future of technology.

  In *Disclosing New Worlds: Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity* (1997), Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores, and Hubert Dreyfus refer to such empowerment as "history making." For Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus history making "changes the way in which we understand and deal with ourselves and with things" (p. 2). The relevance to my research is further extended by the viewpoint of Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus that modernism and postmodernism instantiate "living in a nonhistorical way" (p. 10). Whereas modernism demands the reproduction of objective practices, postmodernism produces an emphasis on change as mode of existence. In neither instance does a "historical consciousness" lead to a modification of such practices. What Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus instead, call for is a process of

"articulation" which allows for the "retrieval" of once valuable practices which have been

marginalized or lost. From there the "reconfiguration" of current cultural-historical

practices can occur in such a way so as to allow some version of those erstwhile practices

back into the relative center of consideration. Hence, from my perspective, the continued

effort to generate critical-hermeneutic research regarding virtual technology can enable

social change by the reintroduction and "resuscitation of our historical skills" (p. 15) and

awareness thereby allowing for the informed practice of free choice.

Conclusion

My initial presuppositions stemmed from my understanding that the body-world

dialogue is a fundamental aspect of human existence. What I did not anticipate was the

elastic way in which the research participants put virtual practices to use in order to

regain a sense of body-world unity. As a result, I gathered a new understanding about

how the research participants could appropriate non-preferred discursive practices and re-

gear them for personally desirable ends. Rather than directly oppose non-preferred

practices, these research participants appropriated such non-preferred discursive practices

as a means to reestablish possibilities for *bodily being-in-the world* with others. Rochelle

provided a description of how she prereflectively appropriated the discursive practices of

Cartesianism and postmodern identity play for non (post)modern ends:

> You can live a fantasy on the Internet, but if you are really looking
>
> for love, don't falsify anything, it just makes for disappointment in the
>
> end . . . I met my boyfriend of a year and a half online . . . When I met him,
>
> my Internet time went from 2 to 3 hours a day to just minutes checking my
>
> e-mail, and occasionally responding to them. And to this day that's how it is.

I still use the Internet to play games, but I don't go into chat rooms. There is

no need to, I have everything I need in person. (Appendix D)

In this way, acts of resistance sometimes involved the implementation of the very

practices which were being resisted. Acts of submission sometimes enabled acts of

transgression. What might this mean about the Enframing (*Ge-stell)* of virtual

technology?

Though my preunderstandings about the subjective and social benefits of

cyberspace were uncertain at the outset of this study, I have now gained an alternate

understanding of the insight Heidegger (1977) gleened by quoting the poet Friedrich

Hölderlin in "The Question Concerning Technology,"

But where danger is, grows

The saving power also (1977, p. 28)

Drawing upon the latter couplet, Heidegger stressed that the "danger" was not modern

technology per se. The danger issued forth from Enframing (*Ge-stell*) and the way in

which it blocked the dynamic disclosure of truth (*alētheia*). Furthermore, the Enframing

(*Ge-stell*) of modern technology compounded the danger by denying that it sends

humankind upon a privative "destining" or path of disclosure. "[F]or this reason the

coming to presence of technology cannot be led into the change of its destining without

the cooperation of the coming to presence of man [*sic*]" (p. 39).

On my reading and reflection, it became clear that the danger Heidegger spoke of

was, instead, humankind's witting or unwitting surrender of the "saving power" – a

surrender of the understanding that in order to recover the "essence" of technology's

marginalized mode of revealing, one must first articulate the kind of narrow disclosure

holding sway in modern technology. Upon retrieving the capacity to make modern technology's danger intelligible, one could then further the saving power by embracing the awareness that anxiety and mood prompt one to faithfully and resolutely practice one's own coming to presence over and against submission to the circumscribed and prescribed practices of a constricting discursive regime. And this, of course, would necessitate that humankind maintain a free, non-docile, relation to the modern virtual technology of cyberspace.

Research Study Limitations and Suggestions

As the geography of virtual life increasingly overlaps with everyday human existence, psychological studies will have to grapple with the transformed anthropology of human being-in-the-world with others. In addition, as the social clearing of cyberspace challenges the possibility for meaningful interactions, it is important to recall the value of meaning for humankind.

The research participants have each in their own way alluded to the dissolution of meaning and understanding amidst virtual social encounters. At various points in Western history the loss of meaning has challenged humanity as well. During the later stages of the mediaeval age, doubts about religiosity and spiritual dogma gave rise to uncertainty about humankind's worth. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Friedrich Nietzsche's proclamation that God was dead challenged the existence of founded spiritual meanings. Concerns about nihilism notwithstanding, the modern technological world now brings computer enabled virtual environments to bear on the possibility of creating meaningless human social spaces in the twenty first century. With the juggernaut of virtual world deployment well under way, it is possible that the death of

grounded meaning may someday be at stake as humankind continues to embrace a wider range of electronic encounters (e.g., mobile phones, text messaging, virtual reality immersion). For the purposes of advancing the project of cultural therapeutics in the psychology field, I therefore suggest that this critical-hermeneutic study still has room for further differentiating the process of *meaning production*. That is to say, I contend that another thread of cultural-historical discourse warrants methodological inclusion into critical-hermeneutic notions about the structure of meaning.

At the outset of this research study, I presupposed that meaning and experience were comprised of macro and micro historical discourses in dialogue with life situated persons. In reference to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of language and Murray's work on imaginizing, I also presupposed that the non-literal understanding of language, as well as an understanding of the imaginal ground of experience informed interpretations of meaning. I now suggest that I did not go far enough in delineating the range of discourses relevant to the practices of online subjectivity, sociality, and meaning production. Indeed, I submit that discourses which are not intrinsic to cyberspace technology warrant future research consideration. Specifically I suggest that, future studies would do well to admit into consideration the alternative value systems research subjects bring with them to virtual encounters. This procedural adjustment would allow research participants' religious values, ethno-cultural backgrounds, sexual lifestyles, and gender perspectives to be included as part of the play of power at work in cyber space. In this way, Foucault's effort to clarify the full complexity of the social field can be advanced. This kind of methodological refinement can further safeguard the interpretation of person-centered data from the researcher's faulty assumptions about the

cultural backdrop informing social practices. The process of researcher understanding and interpretation can thereby achieve a more synthetic level of refinement.

This procedural adjustment could be accomplished by modifying the process outlined for interviewing research participants. Rather than simply mirror and amplify research participant statements, researchers can go further by actively soliciting research participant reflection upon the values informing their practices. Drawing upon Michael White's (1993) understanding of how to introduce deconstruction into psychotherapy practices, the researcher might make efforts to clarify which value systems the research participants believes they are cooperating with. A researcher might then be better prepared to clarify when a research participant believes she is adhering to, for instance, a Gnostic Christian practice of body flight over against a Cartesian motivated abandonment of the flesh. Questions that culturally and historically contextualize practices might include:

1) "[How] were [you] recruited into this view . . ." (p. 24)?

2) "What does this reveal to you about your motives, or about the purposes you have for your life" (p. 45)?

3) "What do you think this might reveal to me about what you value most" (p. 46)?

4) "How do you think this spoke to them of who you are, and about what you believe to be important" (p. 46)?

Such questions can contribute to the development of a culturally sensitive research method which further clarifies the multiplicity of discourses at play in the *multi-voiced flesh of the human world.*

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Appendix A
Consent to Participate in Research Study Form

Duquesne University

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Internet Dwelling, Cyborgs, And The Matrix of
I: An Empirical Inquiry With Critical-
Hermeneutic Features

INVESTIGATOR: Andrew Felder, MA
XXXX Neil Avenue
Columbus, OH 43201
Home Telephone #: 555.555.5555
Work Telephone #: 555.555.5555
Cell Telephone #: 555.555.5555

ADVISOR: Dr. Paul Richer
Psychology Department of Duquesne University
555.555.5555

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the doctoral degree at Duquesne
University

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that
seeks to investigate the experience of attempting to
establish a meaningful social interaction through use of the
Internet. You will be asked to provide a written description
about your experience regarding such social exchanges on
the Internet. In addition you will be asked to allow me to
interview you. The interviews will be taped and
transcribed.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks beyond those encountered in daily life
and no benefits beyond the opportunity to reflect upon the
impact of the Internet.

COMPENSATION: You will not be compensated for participating in this
project. However, participation in this project will require
no monetary cost to you. In addition, an envelope will be

provided for the return of your written description to the investigator.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. No identity will be made in the data analysis. All written materials, consent forms, tapes, and transcriptions will be stored in a secure and locked place. Your descriptions will appear with the identifying information of yourself and other's removed excepting age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status. The tape recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Dr. Charles Hanna, alternate Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (555.555.5555).

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Appendix B
Research Advertisement

<u>Announcement</u>

Request for Research Participation

WHO AM I AND WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT

Greetings! My name is Andrew Felder. I am a doctoral candidate in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University. At this time, I am on a fellowship at Ohio State University. The research you are being asked to participate in is a part of my doctoral dissertation. If you would like to participate in a research study about socializing on the Internet, please contact me by email or at either of the telephone numbers listed below. Any and all correspondence will be kept confidential. If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that will be mailed to you. You may also be asked to participate in a voluntary interview. Additional details can be discussed when you contact me at the telephone numbers or email address listed below.

QUESTIONS?????

You may contact me directly about <u>any</u> questions or concerns.

Andrew J. Felder
5555 Xxxxx Avenue
Columbus, OH 43201
Home telephone) 555.555.5555
Work telephone) 555.555.5555
Email) xxxxxx@osu.edu
Fax) 555.555.5555

THANKS FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!

Appendix C
Questionnaire – Rochelle

For research purposes, please respond to the inquiries listed below. In order to maintain your <u>confidentiality</u>, please do <u>not</u> provide your online screen name.

6) Female <u>X</u> Male ____ Other ____ (check one)

7) Age <u>21</u>

8) Ethnic background <u>Caucasian</u>

9) How long have you used the Internet as a way to engage in meaningful relationships? <u>9 years</u>

10) Windows user <u>X</u> Macintosh user ____ (check one)

6) What is your Internet provider name? <u>AOL/Other web sites via AOL</u>

7) What is the chat room address, Instant Messaging Service, or address of the site where your encounter took place? <u>AIM, AOL Chatrooms</u>

8) Please describe a significant time when you attempted to establish an intimate connection with another person on the Internet. Include in your description your experience of attempting to understand the other person and what you attempted to convey about yourself to that person. Also, describe what you noticed about using the Internet to make a meaningful connection with that person. Lastly, please describe how socializing on the Internet has impacted your personal growth and your off-line relationships with others.

(See Appendix D)

Appendix D
Written Protocol #1 – Rochelle

In this section, the first research participant's experiential protocol will be quoted

verbatim. Any typographical or grammatical errors will be printed, without revision, in

order to preserve the potential significance of "errors" contained in the protocol. Within

the text of this protocol, numbers and brackets have been employed as a way to highlight

sentences suggesting distinct units of meaning. Where the same theme recurs within the

same protocol, a superscripted number will indicate how many times the theme recurs.

For instance, the designation "5^2" signifies that the fifth theme appears twice within the

same protocol. If a theme was hermeneutically modified by research participant

interview material, an alphabetic letter will follow each number (e.g., 1a, 2b). The

alphabetic letter will correspond to alphabetic letters placed in the transcript of each

research participant's audio taped interview (See Appendices E, H, and K).

Protocol #1 – Rochelle, 21 y.o., Caucasian, female

1-[It all started when I was in my teens. My parents had just moved to Provo, I was
living with my aunt and my grandmother, who I was very close to, was diagnosed with
severe medical condition. My best friend at the time lived down the street from my aunt
so I was over there all the time. She had just discovered the Internet, and she introduced
me to something that was going to get me in trouble for the next couple of months. Her
brother had the AOL disks and gave me one. I downloaded it onto my aunt's computer
and signed myself up.] **2^2a-**[Using my aunt's credit card, I authorized the use pretending
to be her.] **3^3b-**[After about a month and a half she found out about what I had done, but
with in that month and a half was addicted. I would sneak on late at night, and talk to a
lot of older guys.] **4c-**[I was naive at the time, so I believed pretty much anything they
told me. There was this one guy in Nevada who was married, promised he was going to
come down and visit. He got caught and his wife e-mailed me to let me know that their
electricity was cut off, and he wasn't as rich as he portrayed himself to be.] **5d-**[Then
there were a couple others, and of course I was in love with all of them.]

    6^3g-[It's hard to describe the feeling you get when you do talk to someone online.
It's like you are in your own little world, nothing matters except you and the
person/persons you are talking to.] **7^2e-**[You feel really special inside, like you have
nothing to be afraid of because the person you are talking to isn't judging you for your
looks, just solely on how you interact online.] **8f-**[It's hard to tell someone's sense of

humor online, but usually it goes through. Sarcasm is a big one though.   Sometimes you can't really tell whether or not the person is being just mean, or sarcastic.] **6³g-**[But back to the feelings. It's a relief from everyday life, because you can just be your, and live in a fantasy world if you wanted to online.] **2²h-**[You could portray yourself anyway you want, make a completely different life for youself. It's free of any of the hassle you would get in the "real" world.] **6³g-**[Nothing bothers you, if you don't want to talk to a person, you can very easily block them from your buddy list or just ban them from talking to you at all. If the "real" world was this easy, it'd be so nice, you would get rid of the jerks right off the bat and not have to worry about anyone's feelings] **9i-**[I guess that's why it is so easy to be jerks online, because they aren't face to face with you, so they just do what they want.] **10j-**[But in reality no matter if you are behind a computer screen or in person, it hurts just the same.] **11-**[I've had my share of fights online as well, and believe me, they were just as hard as they would have been if the fights were in person.]

3³-[Back to my rendezvous; nothing really happened with me meeting anyone until after I was out of my aunts house, living in Provo with my parents, and me making the promise to my parents that I wasn't going to meet anyone from online without them knowing and only being allowed be online for an hour a day. Well that didn't last too long. I was sneaking online after my parents were asleep and after I got home from school when they weren't home yet. I got in trouble a couple of times, but then I finally calmed down and listened to my parents.] **12k-**[A little time went by and I finally asked them if I could meet someone in person from online. It took some convincing but they let me as long as they met him first. So they met and I went on my first real date with someone I met online.] **13-**[It was my first and only date with him, but that was just an icebreaker. I met guys more often after that.] **14²l-**I even met some guy that I was going to school with in the fall. He turned out to be a jerk also. Out of all the guys I met online, there weren't too many "nice" guys. I did have a steady boyfriend for a while, but that was after I met the guy I had lost my virginity to. He was older and I met him online and we only met once. I don't regret any of the things I have done, or are going to do in the rest of the paper; I just take it as a lesson learned.] **3³-**[You will notice that all the guys I talk about are way older than I was at the time, and to this day, still are. I never once had intimate relations with a guy the same age as me. I'm not going to analyze why that is at this time and point but at the time it made me happy so I just went with it.] **1²-**[So about a year went by, I was back in Albuquerque and I was bored and lonely. My friends and I were out of touch, I was in a new neighborhood, and I was going to a school far away from the neighborhood, so I really didn't have any friends that were close by. So the end result to that was I placed personal ads. I think I placed a couple in different places. My main focus was on AOL though. I got a few responses here and there. I met some guys in person. Some I only saw once and others I saw a couple of times, nothing too serious.] **14³-**[I did have a couple one-night stands here and there, but I looked at it as me being young and just having fun. I didn't really know what I was getting into with those kinds of situations. I thought, well hey he wants me to sleep with him he must like me. So of course thinking that I did what they wanted and they got what they wanted and I never heard from them again. It was kind of an emotional roller coaster for me, but I soon learned that guys are like that.] **15m-**[After a few of those games, I got a response one day from a guy that was actually pretty funny. He made me laugh so I responded. He

responded back, and it was almost as if we knew each other, we had a lot in common and I was jus so glad that he wasn't into the types of things all the others had been.] **16n-**[He was older, but he didn't seem to mind that I was 18. Well that's what I put on my ad. You had to be 18 in order to place an ad, so I told a white lie, but in my second e-mail to him, I did tell him that I was only 17, and that in two weeks I would be 18.] **17²o-**[We hit it off, even on the phone. We talked on the phone almost every day, for hours at a time. Finally we decided to meet. I don't think I even told my mom I was meeting him, but he picked me up from school and we went back to my house because my mom wasn't home and we just didn't really have anything else to do. We ended up sleeping together, but some how our relatinship wasn't based on sex. I think it's because I had a sixth sense about him, and I even heard from him the next day. That was the start of my second longest relationship.] **18p-**[Let me tell you about my longest which is going on two years. It was about August 2001 and I still had my person ad out. One day I got a response that wasn't too exciting, but hey it was a new interest so I wrote him back. We wrote back and forth and we even chated online on AIMs. We kinda hit it off, it wasn't anything special really. I don't know if he was too boring for me at that time in my life or what, but I just wasn't "feeling" it. So being nice and seeing how we were at least getting along, I gave him my phone number and he called. For some reason though, I thought he was too "shady". Like he was hiding something or he just really wasn't into the conversation. At that time in my life I was always partying staying out late, drinking underage, and just going with the flow. He, at that time, was I guess too boring for me. The one thing we did have in common though, was that we bothed liked going to a local club. We arranged to meet eachother there, or just in passing, say maybe we'll see eachother there, but we never did meet up] **19-**[He swears that I blew him off, but if I did, it wasn't intentional. Well a coule of months had passed, I would look for him online, but he was never online anymore. So pretty much I just forgot about him. I had gotten into a relationship (again from online) that didn't last too long, but it did move fast in the sense that we were already talking about marriage. Well I got out of that one quickly, and wasn't really looking for anything, or anyone persay] **20q-**[Well in July of 2002, my friend and I went to the local club for her birthday. Neither one of us was really in the mood to be there, it was just something to do. I wasn't really caring what I looked like, I was just there, she was drunk because it was her 21st birthday and I was just pretty much laughing at her the whole night. Well, I went outside for a while, and while I was out there, I saw this guy that I noticed kept looking at me, and I kept looking at him, because well hey, he was cute. So anyway, we "eyed" eachother and then I went back inside. Well after I went inside, he followed. He went back to where he was standing with his buddies, and I was just standing there, watching my friend dance with everyone, and he actually came over and asked me to dance. To avoid the awkward silence I introduced myself. He said I think I know you, are you Datsmallmouse? I said yes, he said, well I'm Wu, Smoothdancinguy. It didn't hit me until he said his screen name because he gave me a different first name online. So anyway, that was the start of my relationship now. So I guess it goes to show that even if we hit it off online, doesn't mean we will hit it off in person, and vis versa]

21r-[Ok, now that you know the history of how I became involved in the Internet, let me tell you how it makes a person feel. In general when you are talking to people in chat rooms its kind of fun. Depends on the chat room, and what kind of people you actually

engage in conversation with] **22r-**[The whole problem I had was just talking to people who were mature. You don't find that too often in chat rooms no matter what site you go to] **23²s-**[My other problem was my picture. I'm not a Barbie, and I don't have the Barbie figure, so when people saw my picture they were so cruel; mostly guys and mostly guys my age. Maybe that's why I never dated guys my age. Who knows, so I very rarely gave out my picture and when I did I had to prepare myself mentally] **24t-**[When I posted the personal ads I did have my picture on there, but that wasn't as bad as the chat rooms, because of people had a problem with the way that I looked they wouldn't tell you right then and there. If they didn't like, they wouldn't respond to your ad.] **23²u-**[After a few years of that I got tough, or bitter, either way you look at it I learned how people really are, and that I didn't want to associate with people who were that judgmental about the way you look as to whether or not they will continue to talk to you.] **25v-**[In most cases I just wanted someone to talk to, converse in an interesting conversation. I didn't want to jump everyone's bones. I'm sure the guys had a different frame of mind, but I wasn't going to play their games anymore.] **17²o-**[When you finally get a hold of someone who is stimulating you feel a connection. You think, "Oh wow, we have something in common." And you want to know more and more about this person. It's really addictive. You rush home to see if they have e-mailed you. You wait online to see if they are going to be online the same time you are. It makes you feel special to know that someone has the same interest, or may just be interested in you. You go from talking online, or e-mail, to exchanging numbers, to maybe even dating, or at least just meeting in person.] **14³x-**[And that one person that you do find may look good online, but then you get them on the phone and they are completely different, it's a real let down. Of course you have your expectations, and if they aren't met, then you start all over again. Feeling a little disappointed and taking what you have learned from your previous experience you go back out there and see what you can the next day.] **7²-**[Personal ads are, I think, are a great thing if you aren't into the bar scene or you are a really shy person. It lets you open up to someone with out them staring at you, and with them starting at you, you don't have to worry if you have spinach in your teeth or even worse a booger.] **26y-**[You can be yourself, or you can be anyone you want to be really. You can live a fantasy life on the Internet, but if you are really looking for true love, don't falsify anything, it just makes for a big disappointment in the end.]

27z-[I don't use the Internet to cruise for guys anymore. I met my boyfriend of a year and a half online, and we have been happy ever since. When I met him, my Internet time went from 2 to 3 hours a day to just minutes checking my e-mail, and occasionally responding to them. And to this day that's how it is. I still use to Internet to play games, but I don't go into chat rooms. There is no need to, I have everything I need in person.]

Appendix E
Interview Transcript #1 - Rochelle

Andrew (A) – I am turning on the tape recorder. Okay.

    a[Beginning in the first paragraph, about midway through, you mention, "Using my aunt's credit card I authorized the use pretending to be her." I wonder if you could say more about the experience of pretending to be her.

Rochelle (R) – I wasn't pretending to be her online. I was pretending to be her to authorize the use of AOL. So, like, online I was myself, but just to get the usage of AOL, I would have to call AOL and verify that I am the person on the credit card to use AOL.

A – Primarily to obtain access.

R – Right.]

A – **b**[In the next line you said, "After about a month and a half she found out what I had done, but within that month and a half I was addicted. I would sneak on late at night and talk to a lot of older guys."" Could you say more about that experience of feeling addicted?

R – I had to get on. I was always wanting to know if I had email. I was always wanting to know who was online. And, you know, if it was one of my friends then I would be on for hours. So we'd be talking for hours on end if I didn't get caught (laugh). If somebody came home early, then I would just turn off the computer and run into my room.

A – Are you saying that it felt like you needed to be online - that you couldn't resist being online.

R – Yes.]

A – **c**[In the next line you say, "I was naïve at the time so I believed pretty much anything they told me." Perhaps you could say more about that.

R – (Laughter). Yeah. Well, they were older guys and they were significantly older. I was sixteen or seventeen at the time and they were like 34, 36 at the time; and the one's I remember specifically, both of them lived in New Mexico and one would tell me that he was going to fly me down or that he was going to come down and visit me and you know, all this other stuff. And one of the guys, actually, his wife saw one of the emails that I had written him or one of the conversations that we had and she emailed me back saying "Oh by the way, he is married, he's a firefighter, but he is broke since he got cut off last week." So, yeah . . . that's pretty much how it went.

A - That's when you began to realize people were –

R – No not necessarily (laughter).

A – Not necessarily then either.

R – No. It took awhile for me to realize what the intentions of people were online.]

A – **d**[Then in the following line you say – referring to the married man – " . . . and of course I was in love with them all." What did you mean?

R – Yeah. They gave me false hopes and I guess at the time that's what I needed because my grandma had passed away like a couple months prior to that, but . . . it was like a filling-the-void type thing. And you know, it was the feeling that I needed, because, okay, I'm a big girl and I never had a boyfriend and, you know, all of this made me feel special, made me feel like I was actually wanted.]

A – **e**[You talk a little bit more about that in the next line. You say that, it makes you feel "special inside," like your in "your own little world" and "nothing to be afraid of because the person isn't judging you for your looks just solely on how you interact online."

R – Exactly.

A – Does that capture the meaning for you? Is there anything else you would add to that?

R – No, that's pretty much it.]

A – **f**[Afterwards, you went on to talk about "sense of humor online." You said, " . . . usually that goes through." Then you mention, "Sarcasm is a big one though. I can't really tell whether the person is just being mean or sarcastic."

R – Yeah. Right.

A – Are you referring to something about being online and it being difficult to tell the difference?

R – Sometimes it is, because, I mean they're just words on the screen and you have to hope that the other person is hoping or thinking that your just being sarcastic. Or, vice versa, the other person might be saying something kind of rude, but you know how sarcasm can come off as rude, and vice versa. It's kind of hard to distinguish between the two online because they're just words on the screen.

A – If you could add something else to the words on the screen to clarify the meaning of sarcasm what would that be.

R – Actually there's really nothing except to tell the person, "Oh by the way, I'm just

kidding (laughter)." You know, or a smiley face like a colon and, what do they call them, a parentheses. You know, like the online faces (laughing).

A - The emoticons.

R – Right.]

A – **g,h**[Afterwards you said, "But back to the feelings. It's a relief from everyday life, because you can just be your . . ." and I presume you mean 'yourself' (R – "Yeah) ". . . and live in a fantasy world if you wanted to online. You could portray yourself anyway you want . . . make a completely different life for yourself." Can you talk about that experience.

R – Actually, I was just generalizing because I've never done it. And, you know, I don't tell people automatically what I look like. So some people, you know, they're all gung ho about meeting me or whatever, so I either tell them what I look like or I send them a picture and then they become a jerk and just stop talking to me automatically, or they say a few words and then stop talking to me. I've though about it, you know, saying I'm 5'7", blonde hair, big boobs and a wonderful body. But what's the point? Because if you really start to like this person, then they're gonna find out eventually what you really look like. So I've never actually done it. But, it's a way of getting away and it could be a fantasy for some people.

A – You were actually wanting to be known as who you were when you were online. You wanted to portray yourself as accurately as possible.

R – Right. Yeah, I mean I didn't tell them about everything. I'd tell them my age and, you know, I'd give them a very, very, very vague description if they asked me what I looked like. And, it just typed out automatically really because I was asked so many times – 5 feet 6, auburn hair, blue eyes I would say constantly. I never said anything about body type or anything like that. So some people, would you know, just look at it or whatever, but . . . (garbled).

A – Rather then say false things about yourself, you would just leave things out about yourself, describe some things and not others.

R – Right.

A – Speaking about "jerks," You said, "If the real world was this easy, it'd be so nice, you would get rid of the jerks right off the bat and not have to worry about anyone's feelings." I believe you were talking about the blocking option.

R – Oh yeah (laughter). It would be so nice in real life (laughing).

A – So that's actually something that the Internet added to the experience of social interaction for you.

R – Oh yeah, because on AOL it was very easy to block a certain screen name. Even if it wasn't just blocking, you could automatically know who this person was and you could just hit quick cancel and you wouldn't even have to talk to that person.

A – You didn't have to deal with them. You just click the button and your done.

R – Right. Kind of like, I've had a work experience previously . . . just recently. There's some ugly people at work. Ugly, not ugly looking. There's some mean hearted people that are just out to get you for one reason or another that they have, that you have no idea why. So if it was that easy to just click that person out, life would be so much easier (laughing).

A – So the Internet becomes a buffer between you and others, a buffer that you don't have in every day life.

R – Oh yeah. Because I say my mind, but only to people that I know. Like, I hate confrontations. I don't like authority. Not that I don't like authority, but it's hard for me to deal with authority if I have a problem with it. You know, like my boss, she contradicted herself a lot. And, it just bugged the crap out of me and I kept it inside, and I vented to other people, but not to her. I didn't bring it to her attention because she's my superior, and I guess to me, superiors are not the person to be wrong, so for whatever reason, I didn't bring it to her attention. So it would eat me at work.

A – I think I'm hearing you say it's easier to be assertive online.

R – Oh very (laugh).]

A - **i**[Speaking more about people who are "jerks" online, you mention, "I guess that's why it's easy to be a jerk online, because they aren't face to face with you, so hey just do what hey want." It sounds like you were coming to some conclusions about how the online experience allows people to treat others.

R – Yeah, and also though, you can see what type of person they'll be in person also, because you know how it is, jerks are just everywhere – not everywhere, but there are some. And, if they're that type of person online, then they're going to be that type of person in person. And some may say things more outright and more bluntly, you know, than in person, but they're still that type of ugly person.

A – Even if they aren't as direct in the offline world, they still have that capability to be insensitive.

R – Yeah right, because if they're not saying it to me, they're probably saying it to a friend, you know, something indirectly, not directly to me? They'd still be that type of person, not just directly.

A – So, to you it seemed as if the use of the Internet allowed them to be more direct.

R – Oh yeah.]

A – **j**[You went on to say, even "if your behind a computer screen, it hurts just the same." Could you tell me a little bit about that.

R – Well you know, your just typing words. And, you know, people say words don't hurt but it's true words do hurt (laughing). And, regardless if you know this person or not it's still takes a little hit to you. And, of course you get up and, you know – "forget about this person, they're just not worth it" – but at that point in time you get mad or you get emotions. You get emotional. And, instead of just sitting there typing words, there is emotion behind it.

A – So even without the person being present, the words can have an emotional impact.

R – Oh yeah. I remember getting in fights in chatrooms (laughing) over what people would say. It was pretty stupid stuff that you'd think that they'd get over by the time . . . because of how old they were. You know, you'd think they'd get over it, but that's why some people don't grow up (laughing).]

A – **k**[Then you move into the third paragraph, and you start to talk about "rendezvous" . . .

R – Hmmm (laughing).

A – . . . and you mentioned your parents, "It took some convincing but they let me as long as they met him first." Could you talk some about the "convincing" that it took.

R – Well it was pretty much just them telling me what I can and could not do to meet this person. Like my very, very, very first date, I was 16 going on 17 and he was like 18. I had met him online and we were just going to go to a movie or whatever, but parents had to meet them first. I couldn't just go out and meet them. You know, even in a public place they would have to meet them first. And then like gradually I started meeting people behind there backs, like when I started driving (laughing). I'd you know set up meetings – "Well I can do this after work or after school." - and my mom wouldn't know blah, blah, blah. I started meeting people behind my mom's back so they wouldn't know or whatever.

A – It was important not to have your parents meet them.

R – Depending on what our intentions were, both me and the person I was meeting. Depending on what the intentions were. Like my longest relationship, he picked me up from school. My mom didn't know. And, we met and everything and I took him back to my house. We'd been talking for a month and a half online and on the phone, and finally had met in person. My mom didn't meet him first. So I met him first, and we kind of went back out.]

A – **l**[A little bit later, you went on to say, "Out of all the guys I met, there weren't too many "nice" guys." I wonder if you could talk about that.

R – Well, you know online they would sweet-talk you. I guess it's no different than guys in real life. I wouldn't generalize all guys and be all "They're jerks," or whatever, but there are some guys that, yeah, they sweet talk you and you know, say the right things to get you to do what they want you to do. And that's what they did. They, you know, "I can't wait to meet you, I enjoy talking to you." And they'd either meet me and have their way with me pretty much and then they'd never call me again. Or , you know, yeah they'd never call me again.

A – And in that sense the lack of follow-up was inconsiderate and unkind in your eyes.

R – Right.]

A – **m**[A little later in that paragraph, you talked about one person you met. You said, "It was almost as if we knew each other. We had a lot in common" I wonder if you could talk about the experience of being online and feeling as if you knew each other – getting that feeling even though you were communicating through the Internet medium.

R – Well pretty much he had the same sense of humor I did. So I didn't have to worry about saying something sarcastically or kind of off-the-wall and him not getting because, you know, there are some people who just don't get it, and he got it. We'd make fun, poke fun, you know, just like poke fun at each other, you know, just back and forth, and you know, he had a good sense of humor. It was like mine and kind of sarcastic but you know, funny in the same way, and we'd just bounce off each other. You know, I'd say something, he'd say something back and we'd go back and forth at it.

A – On the one hand, he understood your meanings, and on the other hand he seemed to think in the same way and respond in a way that was familiar or easy for you to relate to.

R – Right.]

A – **n**[You go on and talk about another person. You mention, "You had to be 18 in order to place an add, so I told a white lie, but in my second e-mail to him, I did tell him that I was only 17." I wonder if you could talk about that.

R – Okay. I just felt I needed to be straightforward and let him know just in case he was older than he said he was, you know; and, to let him know just in general. I think it was November or December when he responded to my add, and my birthday was in January, so I wasn't to far away form 18, but I just figured I should tell him up front and let him know instead of lead him on.

A – Somehow, you made a decision that at some point you should let him know.

R - Oh yeah. I think I told every body that responded to my ads that I was 18, I mean 17 instead of 18.

A – You would do that with anyone you started chatting with.

R – Oh yeah.]

A – **o**[You go on to say, "We hit it off even on the phone." I wonder if you could talk about how you got the sense you were hitting it off on the phone.

R – The sense we're hitting it off on the phone is that we're having a good conversation. There's energy there instead of, "Okay, what do I talk about now." You know, there's a good conversation going. He makes me laugh, and I in return make him laugh. So that's a good conversation for me.]

A – **p**[You then went on to talk about the longest relationship you had been in at that point. You mentioned that in the phone conversation, "For some reason though, I thought he was too 'shady.' Like he was hiding something or he really wasn't into the conversation." I wonder if you could talk about how you were picking that up over the telephone.

R – He wasn't really talking and that could mean – you know, if he's interested in me, if we're interested in each other, then there's going be more to talk about than just asking me questions like, "So, what do you do for work?" – just very, very vague questions. And, actually I think we only talked once, but we were talking online on the phone and I wasn't really interested. I think I accidentally on purpose lost his phone number and I never called him again and he never called me. So I lost contact with him in that way, and then we met in a club (laughs).]

A – **q**[At the end of the paragraph you say, "So I guess it goes to show that even if we hit it off online, doesn't mean we will hit it off in person, and vice versa." Can you tell me a little bit more about coming to that conclusion?

R - Well, like the two longest relationships I've had, you grow to learn about a person both online, or on the phone, or in person, and you know, you can hit it off really well with a person online. But then you meet them, and there's just nothing to talk about. You know, you just have nothing in common. But you meet a person you thought you had nothing in common with and you hit it off greatly. You know, you just find something and go with it (laugh). You run with it actually (laughing).

A - The rapport you develop can be really different online and offline.

R – Right. That's how I ended up with my boyfriend now. I wasn't really interested with him online and on the phone. And that's why I kind of backed off. He got in trouble at work for having AOL and instant messaging and stuff, so that was are only way of communication, so that kind of ended. So six months later we met in person, and we

didn't realize who each other was until I introduced myself. Then we started dating in person, and it just went from there. I found out that being shady is part of his character. He's very cautious; I guess you'd say not shady, cautious.]

A – **r**[As you go into the next paragraph, you described talking in chatrooms as "fun," but "depends on the kind of people you actually engage in conversation with." You then add, "The whole problem I had was just talking to a people who were mature." I wonder if you can tell me a little more about that.

R – Yeah (laughing). You could always tell the mentality of a person by what they say online, how they act online, and what they do online. You know, they have their stupid little games, or stupid little things where you can scroll. That's what they call it, scrolling in the chatrooms where they put up stupid pictures or print things over and over and over again and take up the whole screen. It would interrupt people actually trying to talk in the chatroom, so I viewed those people as being immature because they're just doing it for the hell of it. You know, they're not there to chat. And also, people in general, what they would say. If you make a comment in the chatroom and they say something really stupid, you could generally tell that they're a teenager or that they're stupid (laughing).]

A – **s**[In the next few sentences, you talk about not posting your picture. You said, "Who knows, so I very rarely gave out my picture and when I did I had to prepare myself mentally." I wonder if you can talk about that need to prepare yourself.

R – I'd just have to wait, you know, in the few seconds of waiting for them to actually get the picture in their email and then wait for their reaction. So it's kind of anticipation. And then, the whole time your anticipating what they're going say you have to be prepared for a come back. Because if their going to say, "Oh your fat and ugly," sometimes if they say that, I'd just cancel and never talk to them again. Other times I'd be really mad and I'd fight back with them. And I actually made a friend doing that (laughing). I was really feisty at the time and I started fighting with him. He was like, he made a comment about my weight and I don't exactly remember the conversation, but I just remember that after yelling at him back and forth we actually just calmed down and we actually just started talking s people and we started talking online. Never met him, never talked to him on the phone or anything, he was just an online chat buddy.

A – So how you responded made a difference.

R – Yeah

A – It sound s like there is a moment of anticipating approval or disapproval when communication moves from text to image.

R – Oh yeah.]

A – **t**[We're in the last paragraph right now. You talked about posting the personal ads. You said, " . . . I did have my picture on there, but that wasn't as bad as the chat rooms,

because of people had a problem with the way that I looked they wouldn't tell you right then and there. If they didn't like you then they wouldn't respond to your ad."

R – Yeah.

A – That made it easier.

R – Oh yeah. Because, I mean, if your looking through pictures, you know, say, just hanging on your wall, and you pick up one and your interested, so - we're back to the adds – so you reply and then it's great. But if you don't, then you know, whatever. So if your looking through something if your not interested, then you don't have to bother that person. You don't have to tell them or give them, you know, insults or anything. It's just passed on, go to the next one. So it's spared feelings (slight laugh). Really spared (laughing).]

A – **u**[Well, then you go on in the next line and say something interesting. You said, "After a few years of that I got tough, or bitter, either way you look at it I learned how people really are, and I didn't want to associate with people who were judgmental . . ." Could you say more about that.

R – Well, you have a type of person that you want to be friends with, that you want to hang out with, that you wanna just be around. And, just, there are a lot of people online that I particularly do not want to be around. So, you know, I guess it made me realize that if I stopped going on there I could actually spare my feelings; get some of my self confidence back because, you know, actually go on with life and meet people in a different way. And just going to work or whatever, you can feel out people that way too. I didn't have to rely on being in chatrooms, being online, checking my email every five minutes. I didn't have to rely on that. There's actually a real world out there, and I realized that (laugh).]

A – **v**[You go on to say, "In most cases I just wanted someone to talk to, to converse in an interesting conversation . . . I'm sure the guys had a different frame of mind, but I wasn't going to play their games anymore." I wonder if you could talk about the kinds of games you perceived were going on.

R – That's like I said earlier. Like, guys want to talk to you and get you interested and then meet you and then have other things in mind. And, that's pretty much what I meant by playing their games. Because, it's you know, it's a cycle really. Because you meet a person, you start talking to them, your interested, you meet them, you know. They call, they don't call; and then if they don't call your back at starting to talk to people again, you know. So it could be just a cycle.

A – It sounds like you were becoming clearer that they had a different agenda than you had.
R – Oh yeah. Unfortunately, it became clearer too late (laugh).

A – You wish you had picked it up sooner.

R – Oh yeah. But I give people benefits of doubt. So if it's a new person, okay, maybe your different. You know, and it's a different situation. You know, your not as tall, your not as old, your not as young; either way, I'd give people the benefit of the doubt, but it would always come back and kick me in the ass (laugh).]

A – **x**[A little later, you say, ". . . you do find someone who may look good online, but then you get them on the phone and they are completely different, it's a real letdown." I wonder if you could talk more about perceiving that difference between how they look online and how they are coming across offline.

R – You know something, you look good on paper (laughing). That's pretty much what it was. You know and then in reality it just doesn't pan out the way you want it to. That's pretty much what I'm saying there. It looks all good on paper, but you get it and it's just doesn't work out for ya.

A – How they were offline seemed like reality.

R – Well it's a wake up call (laugh). You get to talk to somebody online of course you know, they may be very book smart, but when it comes down to it, if they don't have any common sense and they don't know what your talking about, then it's just a kind of an end right there. Because, they're not going to understand what your talking about, common sense or no common sense. You know, I have more common sense, than I do book smarts, but I still understand stuff. And so, I understood their book smarts online, but when it comes to talking to a person in real life, it's common sense and sense of humor that was pretty much lacking on the computer that I didn't pick up.

A – Was it possible to pick that up online?

R – Umm, common sense is actually pretty hard because there's a lot of smart people out there but when it comes down to it, you can't really tell until you actually meet the person or talk to the person on the phone. And, you know common sense is just a big turn off for me. If I didn't see it or hear it on the phone (laugh), I wasn't really interested.]

A – **y**[Among the last few sentences, you said, "You can be yourself, or you can be anyone you want to be really. You can live a fantasy life on the Internet, but if you are really looking for true love, don't falsify anything . . ." I wonder if you could talk more about that.

R – Well yeah, you can post a picture – I can cut and post a picture from any magazine and some people will actually respond to that add and actually spark a conversation. Of course, they're talking to you as a person, or not you know. You can go with whatever image you pick. When it comes down to it, they're eventually gonna want to meet you. If it comes to that point, then they're gonna be disappointed and your probably gonna be more disappointed in yourself for doing that in the first place (laugh) because you're not

going to be that person at all. There's really no point in falsifying anything. If anything, the biggest thing I can think of is maybe age. That's not a big deal, at least that's not a big deal for me. Whether they were older or younger, I preferred older, not that if they were older or younger it didn't matter. As long as they could talk to me as a person, not a piece of meet or whatever. So falsifying isn't really what I suggested to do online (laugh).   Especially if you play games with people, that's a totally different story.

A – It sounds like you were more interested in the quality of the interaction.

R – Oh yeah. I mean, I'm not going to say I'm a loner, but I have moved a lot. I don't have a lot of long-term friends. I've gone to fourteen schools in ten years and you know every year I had to make new friends and new friends, so I don't have a lot of friends. In general, I just want friends to hang out with, to go do stuff with. In general, online, it's pretty much male talking to female, or female talking to male. There's no same sex conversations going on, and if there were, that's a different ball game too. I was just looking for a conversation, for friends, for anything. I pretty much got into the wrong crowd – a crowd, quote unquote online. So I got into that habit and it just took off from there.]

A – **z**[In the last lines, you talk about meeting your boyfriend of one and a half years, and being happy ever since. You close out the description you sent me by saying, "I still use to Internet to play games, but I don't go into chat rooms. There is no need to, I have every thing I need in a person." I wonder if you could talk more about the significance of those lines.

R – Now I have a friend, I have somebody to do stuff with and in the chatroom it's pretty much a meat market. Even if you talk to some person, they're eventually going to want to meet you and start dating you or whatever. So, you have this intention when you go into a chat room to meet somebody. It's a dating scene. It's not a chatting, "Let's all be friends" type thing. It's a chatting, I mean, a dating game. Like in the Provo chat I told you about, everybody dated everybody else. Everybody knew who everybody else was because everybody had dated one of them at one time or another. It sounds like a love triangle, but it's more like a love octagon (laughing) type thing; because this person is this person's ex-boyfriend, girlfriend, whatever, but this person also knows this person because they dated and you know it just goes on. I don't do that any more because there's no need to. I have no need to fill that void that I had when I first started chatting.

A – It sounds like you were using the Internet to try and have meaningful conversations all along.

R – Right. At the time, I probably didn't know (laughing). At sixteen or seventeen you don't know what you're doing. You're just – "This is cool, it's a new thing," you know. And then as it goes, you still don't know what the hell you're doing, but once you find it, it all comes together – "Oh, that's what I was doing (laughing)."
A – It became clearer over time.

R – Right, right. Of course, "This is fun, I'm chatting with lots of different people," (coughing) – excuse me – but now that I have what I was looking for apparently, I don't need to go look for it some more. The initial reason I was online was to find somebody. So I had fun chatting while I was online, but in that process I was still looking.]

A – Thank you Rochelle.

Appendix F
Questionnaire – Bryce

For research purposes, please respond to the inquiries listed below. In
order to maintain your <u>confidentiality</u>, please do <u>not</u> provide your online screen
name.

1) Female _____ Male <u>X</u> Other _____ (check one)

2) Age <u>27</u>

3) Ethnic background <u>African-American</u>

4) How long have you used the Internet as a way to engage in meaningful
    relationships? <u>1998-2001</u>

5) Windows user <u>X</u> Macintosh user _____ (check one)

6) What is your Internet provider name? <u>Verizon</u>

7) What is the chat room address, Instant Messaging Service, or address
of the site where your encounter took place? <u>AOL Instant Messenger</u>

8) Please describe a significant time when you attempted to establish an
intimate connection with another person on the Internet. Include in your
description your experience of attempting to understand the other person
and what you attempted to convey about yourself to that person. Also,
describe what you noticed about using the Internet to make a meaningful
connection with that person. Lastly, please describe how socializing on the
Internet has impacted your personal growth and your off-line relationships
with others.

(See Appendix G)

Appendix G
Written Protocol #2 – Bryce

In this section, the second research participant's experiential protocol will be quoted verbatim. Any typographical or grammatical errors will again be printed, without revision, in order to preserve the potential significance of "errors" contained in the protocol. Within the text of this protocol, numbers and brackets have been employed as a way to highlight sentences suggesting distinct units of meaning. A thematic analysis of each grouping of highlighted sentences will immediately follow the protocol printed below. Where the same theme recurs within the same protocol, a superscripted number will indicate how many times the theme recurs. For instance, the designation "5^2" signifies that the fifth theme appears twice within the same protocol. If a theme was hermeneutically modified by research participant interview material, an alphabetic letter will follow each number (e.g., 1a, 2b). The alphabetic letter will correspond to alphabetic letters placed in the transcript of each research participant's audio taped interview (See Appendixes E, H, and K).

Protocol #2 – Bryce, 27 y.o., African-American, male

1a-[I first started meeting people by going into chatrooms, using my yahoo messenger to communicate. It was fun, and exciting, and innovative to me.] **2^2b-**[I am a shy person at first, so it is hard for me to meet new people but, the Internet gave me an outlet in which to communicate. I could say almost anything without feeling odd. I could ask questions I wouldn't normally ask someone if they were standing before me.] **3c-**[I would talk about sex, politics, and other things that appealed to me.] **4d-**[I found that the Internet made it easy for me to be acquainted with someone.] **5e-**[My first experience to meet someone new on the Internet was horrible because, the person lied about his age and appearances. When that happened, I immediately stop using the Internet as a way to meet a partner.] **6f-**[A few months past and I weren't meeting people on my own so, I decided to go back to the Internet.] **7g-**[I met a really nice guy; we would instant message each other all day until the day we met. I learned many things about him through the Internet so by the time we met I knew many things about him. That meeting on the Internet involved into a three-year relationship. That relationship was my longest.]

2²h-[I've found that socializing on the internet has impacted my personal growth by giving me more opportunities to meet people that I wouldn't normally talk to, or be able to talk to because, of my shyness.] **8-**[The Internet also gave me more places such as clubs, groups, bars, nightclubs and sporting events, to meet people.] **9i-**[It has also given me more courage and confidence in my off-line relationships because; I now know the types of people that are attracted to me, and how to approach them.]

Appendix H
Interview Transcript #2 – Bryce

Andrew (A) – Okay. The tape recorder is on.
a[In the first paragraph, you mention that you are using Instant Messenger to communicate. In the second sentence you say, "It was fun, and exciting, and innovative to me." I wondered if you could say more about that.

Bryce (B) – At that time it was new to me. It was new. I was experiencing someone talking to me and I'm not, let me see . . . It was fun having someone talk to me and I not know what they look like, you know, not knowing anything about them. Just talking, being very frank with them about anything – my personal life and other things.
The technology was exciting to me also because at that time I became more educated on computers. It was also a learning process for me – how to download things how to talk, how to use all the symbols that you can use like smiley faces and different stuff.

A – The learning process intrigued you. (B – Yeah.). And if I understand you, not knowing what they looked like made it fun. Also having online others not know anything about you made it interesting.

B – Yeah.]

A – **b**[Right after that third sentence you say, "I am a shy person at first, so it is hard for me to meet new people but, the Internet gave me an outlet in which to communicate." I wonder if you could talk more about the kind of outlet the Internet provided you with.

B – I would say, because, in person me meeting people was hard because of rejection; because I think I'm basically like any other person, but I was very shy. I didn't grow up going out, hanging out with a lot of people. Being on the computer where I could be myself, or not myself, and being out of my character was fun and it was something new for me, and talking with people. You know there are all kinds of things on the Internet. That was pretty much it. I was shy in person, but on the computer, I wasn't shy at all.

A – Somehow you weren't shy at all. You go on to say, "I could say almost anything without feeling odd. I could ask questions I wouldn't normally ask someone if they were standing before me." I wonder if you could talk about what it was that allowed you to talk in these ways.

B – Because I wasn't in the person's face. I wasn't looking into their eyes. They weren't hearing me talk. I wasn't hearing them talk. They couldn't tell or sense nervousness in me. I couldn't sense it in them. It was just . . . that was basically it. Just being able to not stand in front of someone looking into their eyes. That was the thing that would make me nervous the most; when I would stand in front of people and look into their eyes talking.

A – Something about not being seen (B – Yeah) and almost hidden was important.

B- Yes!]

A – **c**[In the next line you say, "I would talk about sex, politics, and other things that appealed to me."

B – Yup! Well, I would talk about sex – the kinds of things they like and I like when it comes to sex. We basically were just talking about sexual fantasies and things that I would normally not talk about when you first meet someone and you can do that on the computer because they're not in front of you. You can ask the questions you really want to ask when there's someone in front of you – and you don't want to ask those questions because it seems odd to talk about that when you first meet someone.
        With politics, just talking about politics in general, I mean, that wasn't a big thing because I can talk about politics with just about anyone whether I'm in front of them or not. But that was something, another outlet. But sex was a main factor in that.

A – In a way, you felt less inhibited. You could talk about things a bit sooner than you would face-to-face (B – Yes.)] **d**[In the next line, you say, "I found that the Internet made it easy for me to be acquainted with someone." Would you add anything more to that?

B – The only thing I would add to that would probably be that I repeated myself because it was easier for me to meet people because you had more choices of people on the Internet. You had all these screen names of people who are interested in meeting or hooking up or whatever. Whereas if you go out to a bar to meet people, it's much harder or difficult to strike up a conversation and all of this stuff.

A - In a sense, you knew there were people there looking for someone to chat with.

B – Yeah, looking for someone to chat with. Where in the bar someone could just be having drinks with friends, they don't really want to be bothered with other people or they could be there by themselves just having a drink. In the chatroom, people want to talk. They want to talk, want to meet people, want to talk about things, about politics, sex, music, whatever.

A – The intentions of others were clearer to you online as opposed to offline (B – Yes.).] **e**[In the next sentence you say, "My first experience to meet someone new on the Internet was horrible because the person lied about his age and appearances."

B – Yeah, that was true. I had a very bad experience. Even though that was a bad experience it wasn't so bad, but it wasn't . . . I don't know how I'm trying to say this. It was a bad experience, but I kept moving forward because I still met other people and it wasn't that bad. On top of that, I tried it one more time and I met people that I liked; whereas that time it was a bad experience. Now I've had one bad experience about coming up on the street or anything. I just can't give up with one bad experience.

A - Can you say more about what was "bad" about your online experience?

B – The only thing about meeting people on the Internet, if you don't have pictures a lot of people will lie about their age or the way they appear – their appearances. It's just so many things they can lie about because nobody can see you. They don't know you. I think everybody has done it before, maybe not to such an extreme. I know most people have done it, at least once. When you're in front of someone you can't lie about your experience. You may be able to lie about your age. That's only if you look good. But, if you look old, you just can't really lie about that.]

A –**f**[In the next line, you say, "A few months past and I weren't meeting people on my own, so I decided to go back to the Internet."

B – Yeah, I stayed away, but people told me I wouldn't meet anyone. They told me that not everyone would do that if I changed my approach. So I started asking for pictures. It's hard to lie about your appearance with pictures.]

A – **g**[In the next line you say, "I met a really nice guy, we would instant message each other all day until the day we met."

B – Yeah, that's been my longest relationship to date. He talked to me different than other people on the Internet. Um, online people wanted to, would just want to talk to me, and a lot of them just wanted to, you know, just hook-up. And, even if they would talk and didn't like you, they would, you know, keep talking even if they didn't want to get to know you. They would still want to have sex and whatever. He talked to me differently. He wasn't about what the others wanted.

A – Something about the way he chatted with you conveyed that he was a "nice guy."

B – Yeah – he chatted to me. Even after a while, he would still want to continue chatting. We'd talk for long periods and even IM each other. He wasn't someone I would normally talk to. He was southern, you know, not city (slick? sheek?). If he was in front of me, he's not someone I would normally talk to. He's from the south.]

A – **h**[In the next line you say, "I've found that socializing on the internet has impacted my personal growth by giving me more opportunities to meet people that I wouldn't normally talk to, or be able to talk to because, of my shyness." I wonder if you could elaborate further.

B – The Internet helped me get to meet people I wouldn't normally meet. I like to travel so I get to meet people. On the Internet I could talk to people in Australia or Ireland. I'm a pilot, and I'm going to Australia to meet friends I've known or never would have met without the Internet. Um, the Internet has been a bridge, for me, to people who I couldn't have connected with because of geography, or because of my shyness. The Internet is like this place full of people wanting to meet others. It makes it easier for me to overcome my shyness.]

A – **i**[You seem to accentuate that point by saying, "It has also given me more courage and confidence in my off-line relationships . . ."

B – Yeah, that's because I didn't used to approach people at all. That was my no-no thing to do. I would not approach anyone. And recently, I've been approaching people, just going up to them, dancing with them, or doing whatever. But, I'm still shy, I don't do it all the time, but when I get my moments I can do it. And like, I used to be unable to do it in the past.

A – Something about the Internet empowered you to approach people more often than you normally would.

B – Yeah, because I could see the type of people that I could draw. I was shy before and I would say, "Well, they would never like me." And then I saw the kind of people that liked me – then maybe I could go up and say, "Hey" or whatever.

A – You learned what kind of people might be more accepting (B – Yeah) or interested (B – Yeah) in you (B – Yeah). In the next line you say, "I now know the types of people that are attracted to me (B- Yeah) and how to approach them (B – Yeah)." I wonder if you could elaborate more on what you learned about "how" to approach others.

B - Let me see. Some people like aggressiveness and some people like the little shy kind of thing. And, I would know which kind of role to play. In meeting a certain person, should I be the overbearing person or should I be the quiet shy kind of person. And that's how I knew that with people.]

A – This is where your description ended. Thank you very much.

Appendix I
Questionnaire – Dawn

For research purposes, please respond to the inquiries listed below. In order to maintain your <u>confidentiality</u>, please do <u>not</u> provide your online screen name.

6) Female <u>X</u> Male _____ Other _____ (check one)

7) Age <u>29</u>

8) Ethnic background <u>African-American</u>

9) How long have you used the Internet as a way to engage in meaningful relationships? <u>Several years now</u>

10) Windows user <u>X</u> Macintosh user _____ (check one)

6) What is your Internet provider name? <u>AOL</u>

7) What is the chat room address, Instant Messaging Service, or address of the site where your encounter took place? <u>IMS on AOL</u>

Please describe a significant time when you attempted to establish an intimate connection with another person on the Internet. Include in your description your experience of attempting to understand the other person and what you attempted to convey about yourself to that person. Also, describe what you noticed about using the Internet to make a meaningful connection with that person. Lastly, please describe how socializing on the Internet has impacted your personal growth and your off-line relationships with others.

(See Appendix J)

Appendix J
Written Protocol #3 - Dawn

In this section, the third research participant's experiential protocol will be quoted

verbatim. Any typographical or grammatical errors will again be printed, without

revision, in order to preserve the potential significance of "errors" contained in the

protocol. Within the text of this protocol, numbers and brackets have been employed as a

way to highlight sentences suggesting distinct units of meaning. A thematic analysis of

each grouping of highlighted sentences will immediately follow the protocol printed

below. Where the same theme recurs within the same protocol, a superscripted number

will indicate how many times the theme recurs. For instance, the designation "5^2"

signifies that the fifth theme appears twice within the same protocol. If a theme was

hermeneutically modified by research participant interview material, an alphabetic letter

will follow each number (e.g., 1a, 2b). The alphabetic letter will correspond to alphabetic

letters placed in the transcript of each research participant's audio taped interview (See

Appendixes E, H, and K).

Protocol #3 – Dawn, 29 y. o., African-American, female

1a-[Well due to job training updates, I had to interact with my significant other using other means of communication. The long distance telephone call became a bit of an expense. So using the Internet was the next option.] **2b-**[For a while emails were exchanged. I found the emails to be very cold and impersonal. I would assume one thing and something else was implied. This happened on both of us. Using emails over a period of time lead to miscommunication. Although people can write their expressions, verbal communication (i.e. tone and voice inflections) makes words come alive and more meaningful.]

      3c-[With that in mind, Instant Message (IM) was agreed upon both of us to get back some of what verbal communication offered. IM offered a psuedo-telephone call.] **4d-**[So this worked for a while, until an incident happened and made using IM a task. IM started to become tedious. To list one's complaints became tedious due to the loss of verbal communication. The complaints were not expressed in a heart-felt compassionate way. When using IM one has to now write from a different perspective. I was writing

like I spoke and not how I wrote. I found writing one has to calculate on how to present information to give readers a clear and concise view of their world or perspective.]

5e-[On one particular IM, I felt that my significant other could have handled a situation with a co-worker in a different manner than escalating an argument (sparing details due to irrelevancy). I Imed him stating 'I am surprised at you'. This statement was interpreted as 'How dare you judge me. You were not there to see how this person reacted. You are making it seem as if I was totally irrational. Is this what you think of me? If you feel this way, why are you in a relationship with me?' I looked at the computer screen in complete horror. He was lashing out at me. He questioned our entire relationship over my simple statement. All I meant by the statement was how I was surprised he got into a confrontation with his coworker because he is usually a jovial person.] **6f-**[But before I Imed him back a response, I scrolled up to view the beginning of the IM where he sated how stressed he was with the training program. We also briefly discussed stress. So when I Imed him with what I meant by the statement, he apologized and reiterated how stressed he was.] **7g-**[My example only implied a fraction of how the Internet can handicap social interactions with people.] **8h-**[Many time after using the Internet, many people assumed whatever they wanted to conversation to be without actually listening to what the conversation is about. Assuming and hearing has taking social skills be it verbal or written out of the art of conversing. Allowing the world to listen with a deafening ear.]

Appendix K
Interview Transcript #3 – Dawn

Andrew (A) – I am turning the tape recorder on. **a**[In the first few lines you say " . . . I had to interact with my significant other using other means of communication. The long distance telephone call became a bit of an expense. So using the Internet was the next option." I wonder if you might say more about the Internet as "the next option."

Dawn (D) – Well to cut costs really. That's what that was about – being the next option. Because of the hours we both worked, it was kind of hard to pin each other down at certain times of the day.

A – Cost and convenience were considerations.

D – Yes.]

A – **b**[In the next line you say, "For awhile emails were exchanged. I found the emails to be very cold and impersonal." I wonder if you might talk more about the "cold and impersonal" aspects of the email exchanges.

D – Well, I mean because with emails you kind of interpret them any way you want to interpret them as opposed to what is actually going on. You can kind of feed your own emotions or whatever – you know, does that help you? Am I elaborating enough?

A – It seems as if you're saying there is something about – (interruption)

D – Well I just think it's a cold thing because it lacks emotion. I mean, no matter how many smiley faces and you know the thousand and . . . million-and-one icons for different emotions, it doesn't take the place of what someone says, you know. A word that's printed and how it's said is two different things, has two different connotations.]

A – A couple of sentences later you said, "Using emails over a period of lime lead to miscommunication." I wonder if you have any recollections about what kind of miscommunication.

D – Well, it depends on what kind of day someone was having, and um, saying one thing and saying something like "I need more time" and then that other person might be having a real stressful day or something – "Well I can't give you anymore time. What do you expect? Why would you send me that?" You know?

A – There is something about the time to devote - (interruption)

D – I mean because if you say something that's really open, people can kind of judge that any way they want to. Like for instance, there was one email, it was like, "Well, I need to see you. I need to talk to you about something." It was like, "Well, you need to be patient."

"Well I thought that's what I was being."

A – Being patient in terms of availability to communicate?

D – Yes. Or even, 'cause you know, being patient in terms of being able to communicate period - via email or phone conversation.

A – You weren't always readily available.

D – Right.]

A – In the next line you say, "Although people can write their expressions, verbal communication (i.e. tone and voice inflections) makes words come alive and more meaningful." I wonder if you could talk about how tone and voice inflection make communication more meaningful.

D – I think just because of the way how things are said - -just in general. That's what I meant by that.]

A – **c**[Then you go into the second paragraph, and you say, "With that in mind, Instant Message (IM) was agreed upon both of us to get back some of what verbal communication offered. IM offered a psuedo-telephone call." I wonder if – (interrupted)

D – (Laughing) Could you read that statement again?

A – Sure. "With that in mind, Instant Message (IM) was agreed upon both of us to get back some of what verbal communication offered. IM offered a psuedo-telephone call."

D – Well that's what I think Instant Messages are. You get that opportunity to communicate back and forth almost instantaneously; as if you were talking but it still has that email appeal to it. That's why I call it pseudo. It's not really telephone call but it's kind of like a telephone call.

A – You get to respond in real time to each other – (interrupted)

D – Exactly. Instead of waiting for somebody to process that thought and send it to you like a day later or an hour later.

A – You get more of the immediacy (D – Yes). And it's pseudo because it lacks the voice (D – Yes.)] **d**[In the next line you go on to say, "So this worked for awhile, until an incident happened and made using IM a task. IM started to become tedious. To list one's complaints became tedious due to the loss of verbal communication." I wonder if you could talk about the tedious aspect – (interrupted)

D – I mean, it's kind of hard – well, it's easier to say everything that's bothering you, or you know, to say it. But to type it down so that person gets the same feel, as if you're

saying it, because sometimes people talk different than what they write. So there's a miscommunication in that.

A – They talk different than what they can write.

D – Yes. They explain in work language or business jargon or whatever.

A - So the written language is a little more formal.

D - It could be. Well cause a lot of times I feel people are so structured to make sure what they say comes across, as opposed to just saying it sometimes. And sometimes when you just say it your like, "Ha, I don't get it."

A – When it's more structured, it can be less spontaneous – (interrupted)

D – Exactly, as a telephone conversation can be.]

A – You seem to describe this a little more when writing, "The complaints were not expressed in a heart-felt compassionate way. When using IM one has to now write from a different perspective. I was writing like I spoke and not how I wrote. I found writing one has to calculate how to present information to give readers a clear and concise view of their world or perspective." Can you talk about those statements a little more?

D – I don't even know what I meant right now.

A – Would you like me to read that back again?

D – Yes.

A - "The complaints were not expressed in a heart-felt compassionate way. When using IM one has to now write from a different perspective. I was writing like I spoke and not how I wrote. I found writing one has to calculate how to present information to give readers a clear and concise view of their world or perspective."

D – I still don't know where I was going with that statement. I think that still goes back to the whole slang thing – how you speak and how you talk and how you write. Um, I don't know (laughing). I'm sorry, I think I just had a brain freeze.

A – That's okay. The point seems t to be that there was a difference for you.

D – Oh definitely.

A – You seem to be contrasting the heart felt compassionate way of expression with – (interruption)

D - As opposed . . . right. It's just like when you write and you just say, "This is how this goes. This is how I felt." With the lack of emotion, you can only feel but so much through Instant Message.

A – So it's hard for the person to really feel things even though you are putting thins in words.

D – Exactly. And feeling is a part of communication.]

A – **e**[You go on and describe an incident in the third paragraph – "On one particular IM, I felt that my significant other could have handled a situation with a co-worker in a different manner than escalating an argument. I Imed him stating, 'I am surprised at you'. This statement was interpreted as 'How dare you judge me. You were not there to see how this person reacted. You were making it seem as if I was totally irrational." As you close out this section, you said, "I looked at the computer screen in horror." I wonder if you could talk about the horror you experienced.

D – Well I think because I felt as if we're in this together, and we're just talking – it's called conversation. It's not to say one person is right and one person is wrong, but if I say that "Well, you know, I'm surprised you responded that way," meaning because I know you as a different person, I can see you as a different person from that. Like, I thought we knew each other and we don't.

A – You were kind of relying on him to understand what you meant beyond – (interrupted)

D – Right. I assumed that part because we had a repertoire together, but that's not what it was.

A – With that kind of repertoire, you didn't feel as if you had to be more explanatory – (interrupted)

D – Exactly. Because your treating it as if it's a telephone conversation. I mean, it's the same thing, it's just in a different mode. We're still communicating.]

A – And then you said, "I looked at the computer screen in complete horror."

D – Well, it's because I felt as if I was being put on defense mode when I shouldn't be. If we're on the same team, and you know, I have this opinion, then let's just discuss it. Let's not jump to the opinion, "Well you wasn't there, you don't know what went on and that wasn't what happened." But I think on his part as well, I didn't get everything from him and he didn't get everything from me.

A – The information was incomplete on both sides.

D – Right. Yes.]

A – **f**[Next, you say, "But before I Imed him back a response, I scrolled up to view the beginning of the IM where he stated how stressed he was with the training program." I wonder if you could talk about your decision to scroll back.

D - Umm, I think it was in context to what we were saying, I think. Because for him to say that like, for me to be like in horror of him not understanding where I was coming from, or maybe I wasn't understanding where he was coming from. I figured I'd scroll back and see if I was on the same track. It's like, almost like if you have a phone conversation with somebody and then you try to remember what you said in case you offended somebody. But then here, I actually had the words that I said. I didn't have to think about it. I could just scroll back and look at it.]

A – "So when I Imed him with what I meant by the statement, he apologized and reiterated how stressed he was."

D – Exactly. So it's just like, you said it but then you forgot for a minute how stressed you was and now you remember all over again. You know. And this was just a phone conversation it wouldn't have been this intense.]

A – **g**[Next line, "My example only implied a fraction of how the Internet can handicap social interactions with people." I wonder if you could just – (interrupted)

D - . . . elaborate on that fraction? What other areas could possibly . . . ? Well, I think for one, umm, not just a conversation via telephone, via in person, or in the flesh I should say, but umm, it's just humorous because I think people will become so accommodated or used to talking to people one way. Like if this is how we're gonna do things, then we're gonna communicate via email. So when I see you, I'm gonna kind of be like, "Okay, what do I say?" You know. You kind of shy away because you've had that barrier, that computer in between you. I know a couple of people personally that found it kind of hard to assimilate back into real life without having to deal with IM. Because I think people can say things and write things, but they can't verbally say it to a person. And then it's like, well, it's almost like dating all over again.

A – Because it feels awkward again?

D – Yeah (laughing). "Oh my God, say the right thing." You know?]

A – **h**[In the next line you say, "Many time after using the Internet, many people assumed whatever they wanted to conversation to be without actually listening to what the conversation is about. Assuming and hearing has taken social skills be it verbal or written out of the art of conversing."

D – Let's see. I'm trying to think of a specific thing. Just assuming umm, that maybe a person will either say, "I feel very alone." No that's not going to work.

   A lot of times people don't say what's on their mind. They assume that the person already knows certain things. It's something that we take for granted. I think just in

general, like with the Internet thing, you have to spell everything out just to make sure everybody's on the same wavelength. And that's a lot of work at one time because you have to be detailed oriented sometimes. If your receiving the text, you can't very well think like that person. So if you had a stressful day, and you know, and you go and check your emails, and it's just like, "What does this mean?" You know. It's like you already have all this aggression going on within you. And to see something that you really don't understand kind of puts it on a whole other plane. So you automatically are defensive.

A – You sometimes base your understanding on what's going on with you because – (interruption)

D - . . . because that's a part of you and you can't turn that off and on.

A – In your understanding, that is more likely to happen with words on the screen than it is when face-to-face.

D – Yes. Because when your face-to-face you can't hide everything. I think your body language insinuates what's, you know, really going on.]

A – I'm going to read the last two lines (D – Okay). You say, "Assuming and hearing have taken social skills be it verbal or written out of the art of conversing. Allowing the world to listen with a deafening ear."

D – (Laughing) Oh God, I was being really philosophical right there. I think a lot of times people hear what they want to hear or read what they want to read and they take whatever experience they want from that. But not actually what it is. And to me, it leads to one big miscommunication.

A – That seems more likely on the Internet than off the Internet?

D – Yes. Because when your face-to-face, when you say something to somebody, you kind of have an idea whether they agree with you, don't agree with you; understand what your talking about, or don't understand – just by body movements, facial expressions.

A – You miss the opportunity to recalibrate what your saying (D – Laughing) based upon how the other person is reacting.

D – Yes. Because, I mean, sometimes when people say things and your like – I might say, "I don't like what your wearing." And somebody might take offence to that instead of saying, "I don't like that color on you but I like that style." You know, and it's a different way of saying the same thing. Just one way has negative connotation.

A – And you wouldn't know to make that adjustment.

D – Right. I wouldn't know to make that adjustment if I wasn't there. You know.
Because a lot of times people think of about how they say things to people. That's just
the way it works. It's a hard thing to do.]

A – The last line seemed to address the perspective of the listener – "Allowing the world
to listen with a deafening ear."

D – It's in your interpretation. It's like I can hear you but I can't hear you. I understand
what you're saying, but I'm not comprehending what your saying.]

A – Thank you very much.

Appendix L
Local Internet Site Data #1: America Online (AOL) Analysis

. Below, Lawrence Lessig's description and analysis of the broad domain of AOL

is reproduced verbatim.

1-["As a member of AOL you can be any one of five people. This is just one amazing feature of the space. When you start an account on AOL, you have the right to establish up to five identities, through five different "screen names" that in effect establish five different accounts. Some users, of course, use the five screen names to give other family members access to AOL. But not everyone uses an AOL account like this. Think about the single woman, signing up for her first AOL account. AOL gives her up to five identities that she can define as she wishes – five different personae she can use in cyberspace . . . .

So in AOL you are given a fantastic power of pseudonymity that the "code writers" of real space simply do not give . . .

That is a first feature of the constitution of AOL – a feature constituted by the code.]   **2-**[A second is tied to speech – what you can say, and where.

Within the limits of decency, and so long as you are in the proper place, you can say what you want on AOL.] **3-**[But beyond these limits, speech on AOL is constituted in a more interesting way. Not the constraint of rules. My point instead is about the range of permissible speech governed by the character of the potential audience. There are places in AOL where people can gather; there are places where people can go and read messages posted by others. But there is no space where everyone gathers at one time, or even a space that everyone must sooner or later pass through. There is no space where you could address all members of AOL. There is no town hall or town meeting where people can complain in public and have their complaints heard by others. There is no space large enough for citizens to create a riot. The owners of AOL, however, can speak to all. Steve Case, the "town mayor," writes "chatty" letters to members. AOL advertises to all its members and can send everyone an e-mail. But only owners and those they authorize can do so. The rest of the members of AOL can speak to crowds only where they notice a crowd. And never a crowd greater than twenty-three.

This is another feature of the constitution of the space that AOL is, and it too is a feature defined by code. That only twenty-three people can be in a chat room at once is a choice of the code engineers. While their reasons could be many, the effect is clear. One can't imagine easily exciting members if AOL into public action. One can't imagine easily picketing the latest pricing policy. There is no place where members can complain en masse . . . .]

4[2]-[A third feature of AOL's constitution also comes from its code. This is traceability. While members are within the exclusive AOL content area (in other words, when they're not using AOL as a gateway to the Internet), AOL can (and no doubt does) trace your activities and collect information about them. What files you download, what areas you frequent, who your "buddies" are – all this is available to AOL. These data are extremely valuable; they help AOL structure its space to fit customer demand . . .]

5-[AOL is not exclusive in this enabling capacity. It shares the power. One wonderful feature of the online space is something called "buddy lists." Add someone to your list, and when he [*sic*] comes online you hear the sound of a creaking door and are notified he is online. (The "buddy" need not know he is being watched, though he can, if he knows, block the watching.) If that person goes into a chat area and you "locate" him, you will be told in what chat area he is . . .]

4²⁻[Consider one final feature of the constitution of AOL, closely linked to the last: commerce. In AOL you can buy things. You can buy things and download them, or buy things and have them sent to your home. When you buy, you buy with a screen name, AOL knows (even if no one else does) just who you are. It knows who you are, it knows where you live in real space . . .

AOL knows who you are – this is a feature of its design. All your behavior on AOL is watched; all of it is monitored and tracked back to you as a user. . . And with this [data], and the link it provides to you, AOL is a space that can better, and more efficiently, sell to you" (Lessig, 1999, pp.67-70).]

Appendix M
Local Internet Site Data #2 – America Online Instant Messaging (AIM) Description

<u>Local Internet Site Data #2: America Online Instant Messaging (AIM) Description</u>

The AIM interface window will be described below based upon the *AOL.Instant Messenger*™*: Get AIM*® (2004) Web page description. The AIM buttons described in the description below are AIM Expressions™, Buddy Icons, AIM Remote, Smiley Dictionary, Acronym Dictionary, AIM Express, encrypted AIM, AIM Chat Rooms, Send IMs to Mobile Phones, and IM Forwarding. Keystroke functions such as bolding, italicizing, font size, and font color options are not addressed on the AIM Web page since they are standard functions. AOL's discussion of the AIM Developer Programs, AIM Bots and Enhanced File Transfer portions of the AIM windows will not be addressed here since they do not directly pertain to communication practices on AOL. That said, the AIM description is as follows:

1[4]**-**["Connect with your friends and family – anytime, anywhere! AIM® 5.2 for Windows, *Download Now!* Already an AIM member? Upgrade Now!]

2[2]**-**[Fun with AIM. Put Tom Cruise on your Desktop! Download "The Last Samurai" Expression . . . **AIM Expressions**™ is the exciting new way to personalize your AIM® client and instant messages! System Requirements: In order to use AIM Expressions™, you will need to install the latest version of the AIM® software. *Click here* to download now.]

Buddy Icons . . . Make your IMs display your online personality. Choose a cool Buddy Icon . . .
Choose form hundreds of cool Buddy Icons:

2 Fast 2 Furious, AM. Symbols, American Wedding, Analyze That, Angels, AOL Inside, Brittney Cleary, Brother Bear, Bubble Gum, Bugs, Cartoon Network, 'The Cat in the Hat,' Charmed, Charlie's Angels, Classic Movies, Eight Crazy Nights, 8 Mile, Elf, Final Fantasy XI, Finding Nemo, Flags, Flowers, Freaky Friday, Friday After Next, Gilmore Girls, 'Gothika,' Grind, Halloween, Hanukkah, Harry Potter, Holiday, 'Honey,' How To Deal, Hulk, Humor, 'Intolerable Cruelty,' Jay-Z, Johnny English, Kangaroo Jack, Knockaround Guys, 'The Last Samurai,' Limp Bizkit, Looney Tunes, 'Love Actually,' 'Love Doesn't Cost a Thing,'

Marine Life, Moods, Music, Music Alt., Music Artists, Nature, NBA, New Year, Office, Open Range, Patriotic, 'Peter Pan,' 'Return of the King,' The Ring, Romantic, 'The Rundown,' Science Fiction,' Seasons, Smileys, Sports, SWAT, TBS, Tell Them To…, Terminator 3, 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre,' The Two Towers, Verb, The WB's Best Series, Zodiac Symbols.]

1[4]-[You can add **AIM Remote** to your Web site!
AIM Remote[™] [buttons]:
{I am Online. Send me an IM.}

{Add me to your Buddy List.}

{Join my Chat Room.}

{Send me E-Mail,}
It's simple and fast to add AIM Remote to your Web site. Our helpful wizard will guide you through six easy steps that take less than five minutes to complete. Click the Start button below. *Start.* AIM Remote works with AOL Instant Messenger 2.0 or higher. Need to get the latest version? *Click here for the latest AIM version*].

2[2]-[**Smiley Dictionary**: Ever wonder what people are saying on AIM? Use the handy Smiley Dictionary to keep up! Once you've got it down, go join a Chat to give it a try.
Note: You can also use the Smiley pull down menu in your Instant Messenger window.

Smiling (Ctrl+1), Frowning (Ctrl+2), Winking (Ctrl+3), Sticking-out-tongue (Ctrl+4), Surprised (Ctrl+5), Kissing (Ctrl+6), Yelling (Ctrl+7), Cool (Ctrl+8), Money-mouth (Ctrl=Shift+1), Foot-in-mouth (Ctrl+Shift+2), Embarrassed (Ctrl+Shift+3), Innocent (Ctrl+Shift+4), Undecided (Ctrl+Shift+5), Crying (Ctrl+Shift+6), Lips-are-sealed (Ctrl+Shift+7), Laughing (Ctrl+Shift+8)]

3-[**Acronym Dictionary**: Get your message across quickly and save yourself some
keystrokes, too. Refer to this handy chart for the most commonly used acronyms among AIM users and before long, you'll be communicating faster than ever with friends, family, and colleagues.

AFAIK	As far as I know
AFK	Away from computer keyboard (for wireless users)
AIM	AOL Instant Messenger, also verb for FTPing files via AIM
ASAP	As soon as possible
A/S/L	Age/Sex/Location
ATM	At the moment
B	Back
BBS	Be back soon

BC	Because
BCNU	Be Seein' You
BFN	Bye for now . . .]

1⁴-[AIM Express: How do you get in touch with your online buddies when you are away from your home computer? How can you send instant messages when you can't download the AIM software? The answer is simple – AIM Express! Simply by clicking on the button below, you can use this FREE tool to view your own personalized list of buddies and send them IMs. Thanks to AIM Express, it's never been easier to stay in touch!

Click on the start button below to try AIM Express. Then, either enter your Screen name and password, or click on the register button to sign up for a free account today!

Start . . .

AIM Express Features: AIM Express lets you send instant messages directly from a Web browser, such as Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, to anyone who has registered for AIM or who uses the America Online service. AIM Express respects your privacy and, best of all, its FREE. To use AIM Express, you must be a registered AIM user or subscribe to America Online . . .

Key AIM features include:
- Send instant messages
- See who's online in your buddy list window
- Start of join buddy chats]
- **4²-**[Block members who misbehave]

1⁴-[Any computer with a Web browser that is connected to the Internet can run AIM Express . . .]

5-[Encrypted IM: Now you can send and receive encrypted IMs! AIM 5.2 introduces the ability for AIM members to send and receive end-to-end encrypted messages – IM, Chat and File Transfer – allowing for message privacy and member identification. Messages are encrypted and decrypted using industry-standard encryption methods – messages sent between AIM members can be digitally encrypted and signed. For more information on using encryption with AIM, *click here* (See Appendix O for Extended AIM Encryption Description).]

6²-[AIM Chat Rooms: Before you chat you must first have AOL Instant Messenger (AIM) on your computer. Click here for AIM.

4²-[Please keep in mind that these chat rooms are NOT monitored.

Please review our chat rules and guidelines (See Appendix N for AIM Chat Room Rules and Guidelines) to make the most of your chat experience.]

6²-[Hot Chats

Hot Chats	TV Computers & Science	Family & Home
Health & Wellness	Hobbies & Interests	International
Lifestyles	Local	Love & Romance
More Chats	News	Personal Finance
Sports & Recreation		Travel]

7-[Send IMs to Mobile Phones: Sending IMs to mobile phones just got easier. Now you can create nicknames for your Buddies' mobile numbers, making it easy to find them at a glance. Just enter an easy-to-remember nickname, when you add a mobile phone number to your buddy list.

IM Forwarding: Have Instant Messages delivered to your cell phone, when you're away from your PC! With AIM 5.2, you can be online, all the time, anywhere. Register your cell phone with IM Forwarding, and you'll continue to receive your IMs after you sign out of AIM. To activate or deactivate IM Forwarding for your Screen Name, click the IM Forwarding button in IM/Chat Preferences."]

Appendix N
AIM Chat Room Rules and Guidelines

"AIM Chat Room Rules and Guidelines
We encourage you to be responsible and to respect our community as well as others participating within the community. Your conduct should be guided by common sense, basic "netiquette", and these chat guidelines.

AIM/Web Chat is not intended for use by individuals under the age of 13.

We discourage any of the following activity that:
- Repeatedly uses language inconsistent with the community standards of the area from which the chat originated.
- Impedes or otherwise prohibits communication; disrupts the discussion including, without limitation, using screen names in topical chats that are offensive to the topic and repeatedly posting off-topic comments in a topical chat.
- Contains vulgarities directed toward another individual or group.
- Depicts violence in gratuitous manner, without journalistic or artistic merit, primarily intended to agitate or cause emotional distress.
- Is intended to victimize, harass, degrade or intimidate an individual or group of individuals on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation. Hate speech is unacceptable anywhere on the service.
- Solicits personal information from a minor (under 18 years old). Personal information includes full name, home address, home telephone number, or other identifying information that would enable "offline" contact.
- Contains or facilitates the transfer of software viruses or any other computer code, files or programs designed to interrupt, destroy or limit the functionality of any computer software or hardware or telecommunications equipment.
- Contains material that defames, abuses, threatens, promotes, or instigates physical harm or death to others or oneself.
- Solicits for exchange, sale or purchase of sexually explicit images, and/or material harmful to minors; including but not limited to, any photograph, film, video, or picture or computer generated image or picture (actual or simulated).
- Infringes anyone else's intellectual property rights, including, but not limited to, any copyright trademark rights of publicity, rights of privacy, or other propriety rights.
- Attempts to harvest or collect member information, including screen names.
- Impersonates or represents any person or entity in an attempt to deceive, harass or otherwise mislead another member. You may not pretend to be an employee or representative of AOL, or any of the America Online, Inc. family of companies, or affiliates.
- Attempts to get a password, or other private information from a user. Remember: AOL employees will NEVER ask for your password.
- Links to and/or references content not allowed under these guidelines.
- Otherwise uses the service in a manner deemed inappropriate by AOL.

Note: It is important to remember safety while online. Always use caution when providing any personal information about yourself anywhere online. It's also a good rule-of-thumb to check the Privacy Policies of any unfamiliar or new web sites you visit. When communicating in a chat room be mindful that many people will be able to view it and the inclusion of information such as your name, your address or telephone number is never recommended.

Take advantage of AIM's **IGNORE** feature.

      AIM Chat is provided with an **IGNORE** button. To stop receiving messages from someone in a chat room, select the person's screen name in the field that lists everyone in the chat room and click Ignore. An X appears next to the selected person's screen name and their text will no longer appear on your screen. You might consider using blocking or filtering software for chat environments like AIM chat, and instant messaging, available through sites like www.getnetwise.org."

Appendix O
Extended AIM Encryption Description

"Encrypted Instant Messaging

AIM users can now send and receive messages, participate in chats and send files using industry-standard digital encryption using AIM (version 5.2.3211 or higher, Windows operating systems).

Messages sent between AIM users with security credentials are digitally signed and encrypted and remain encrypted during message transmission. Referred to as "end-to-end encryption," the AIM encryption protocol is based on S/MIME e-mail cryptographic standard.

Ferris Research Insight Bulletin
Ferris study looks at the Public Key Infrastructure PKI-based security in AOL's Enterprise AIM Services over SSL-based encryption (PDF)

Enterprise AIM Services
Our new Enterprise AIM Services™ offering provides businesses the services and tools needed to manage AIM communications, ensure security and maintain consistent user identities across e-mail and instant messaging. This includes:

AIM: Desktop communications tool with access to over 195 million registered members

AIM Enterprise Gateway: Enhances security, management and control for IT professionals

AIM Private Domain Service: Maintains consistent user identities across corporate communication tools

AIM Federated Authentication Service: Authenticates users to the AOL Network from your Corporate Directory

AIM Security Credentials: Digital certificates can provide reasonable assurance of the identity of users, and enable encryption exchanges between security-enabled clients."