Friendship in the Digital Age: Implications from a Philosophy of Communication Approach

Tiffany Petricini

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FRIENDSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
IMPLICATIONS FROM A PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION APPROACH

A Dissertation
Submitted to Department of Rhetorical and Communication Studies

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Tiffany Petricini

May 2020
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FRIENDSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE:

IMPLICATIONS FROM A PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION APPROACH

By

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Approved March 20, 2020

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FRIENDSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
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By

Tiffany Petricini

May 2020

Dissertation Supervised by Janie Harden Fritz, Ph. D.

Friendship is a central relationship-style that grounds us. Much of the literature on the
effects of technology on our relationships, especially friendship, has taken a skeptical approach.
The notion of friendship is historically-situated, thus, it requires attention in each era and has
prompted questions throughout human history. Our time is no exception. Changing cultures and
redefinitions of basic human institutions have led us to our current moment, in which we are
experiencing a loud and continuing debate on the effect of technology on our lives.
Advancements in science have allowed us to understand our past and present in new ways.
Technology, too, has opened the door for new possibilities of encounter. From initial encounter
to our sense of we-ness, this text examines the possibilities and challenges of technology on our
friendships.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two grandmothers. Both inspired me to pursue my education, though neither made it to see me complete my degree. My paternal grandmother, Josephine Rathfon, was a strong matriarch with unshakable faith and discipline. She taught me to be resilient and never give up. My maternal grandmother, Naomi Summerville, was a woman of the books. She was always reading, always learning, and driven by the pursuit of academic projects. Both shaped me to be the person I am today, and paved the way for this project.
I find the acknowledgments section to be the most difficult part of this work, because there are so many people to which I owe my deepest gratitude. Perhaps, as a preview to the work to come, I will thank my predecessors, my successors, my contemporaries, and my consociates. I am very grateful to all of the family who have supported me over the entirety of my academic career. My grandparents, who have all passed since I began study years ago, supported me in every way possible. I would like to thank my mother, Yvonne Summerville, who helped me study for my comprehensive exams for months. My father, Joseph Rathfon and sisters, Cortney Rathfon and Shana Rathfon also provided a plethora of emotional support. My husband and my in-laws, Thomas Petricini, and Jennifer and Thomas L. Petricini, also held me up and did everything in their power to ensure I would finish, including helping financially. I also would like to thank the young family members in my life. My son, Tommy J, has been my biggest fan and greatest supporter. My niece Kallie has always been ready to lend a hand for a good high-five as I’ve trucked along, and Mad, Sienna, and Kasen have consistently provided comic relief as I’ve overcome the tribulations of my writing.

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Introduction: Friendship as a Communicative Phenomenon

A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud. I am arrived at last in the presence of a man so real and equal, that I may drop even those undermost garments of dissimulation, courtesy, and second thought, which men never put off, and may deal with him with the simplicity and wholeness with which one chemical atom meets another. –Ralph Waldo Emerson

For most of human history, philosophers have been investigating and pondering various facets of friendship. Rake (1970) wrote, “Friendship is one of the eternally fascinating topics to which great minds of every age turn with fresh interest” (p. 3). One of the earliest exercises in grappling with the notion of friendship can be seen in Homer’s *Odyssey*. There are several thorough works that have studied friendship over the course of human history. In his work *Friendship in the Classical World*, Kanston (1997) discussed friendship in Homer’s work and also examined friendship in multiple works from as early as the eighth century B.C. to the fourth A.D. (1997). Reisman (1979), too, examined ancient works, including the Old Testament to place the study of friendship into context historically. Plato discussed friendship in several of his works including *Lysis*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus* and several contemporary scholars have interpreted Plato’s work on friendship in more depth (Ferrari, 1992; Price, 1989; Reeve, 2006).

Friendship was a major focal point for Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and of tertiary importance in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Aristotle began his work on friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* by saying that friendship “is either itself a virtue or connected with virtue” and made the argument that friendship is imperative for human flourishing. Cicero would eventually, under the influence of Aristotle and Plato, write an entire work on friendship, *De Amicitia*. Also influenced heavily by Aristotle was Aquinas, who dedicated a large part of *Summa Theologiae* to
friendship. Montaigne wrote his essay *On Friendship* in the mid-1500s and Shakespeare, too, at the turn of the 16th century was working with friendship themes. Several contemporary scholars have examined these themes in Shakespeare’s works (Bloom, 2000; Waithe, 1986; Cox, 2008). Upon researching near any contemporary scholar, one will find some type of work related to the nature of friendship, including Gadamer, C.S. Lewis, Foucault, Ricoeur, Derrida, Levinas, Arendt, Nietzsche, to mention only a few.

The notion of friendship is historically-situated, thus, it requires attention in each era and has prompted questions throughout human history. Our time is no exception. Changing cultures and redefinitions of basic human institutions have led us to our current moment, in which we are experiencing a loud and continuing debate on the effect of technology on our lives. Advancements in science have allowed us to understand our past and present in new ways. Technology, too, has opened the door for new possibilities of encounter. Throughout the ages, friendship has been consistently recognized as a human good that facilitates human flourishing, and as we are in an age of virtue contention, questions about the navigation of competing goods and how they relate to friendship are pertinent.

**Cultural Transformations**

Related to cultural shifts and the redefinitions of human institutions, many friendship scholars have recognized the unique challenges of our post-modern world related to friendships. McPhee (1998), grounded in the work of Giddens (1979; 1981), noted we have a fragmented and undermined sense of community. Kinship, too, has “become fragmented and less relied on” which has elevated the necessity for friendship in our lives (McPhee, p. 98). Suttles (1970) wrote, “Friendships are especially valued in a population where social contacts of outgrown the bounds of kinship, neighborhood, age grades, workgroups, ethnicity, and social classes” (p. 96).
Allan (1998) pointed out that various areas of our social lives have gone through historical transformations, like domestic life, work, employment, gender relations, community involvement, etc. Friendship research in the 19th century has tended to recognize the various different social possibilities for relations (Naegle, 1958; Kurth, 1970).

Brain (1976) argued that there is a need to understand friendship “at times when our ideas are becoming so fluid and changing,” particularly related to our “Western preconceptions of love and friendship” (p. 10). Culture and our institutions are evolving, and we have arrived at an era of virtue contention (Arnett, Fritz, and Bell, 2009; Fritz, 2013). This age is defined by disagreement on most topics, particularly related to the good life. Arnett, Fritz, and Bell explained that “our confidence in one universal sense of the ‘good’ is no longer normative” (p. 1) and “Goods are often in conflict in this postmodern era of difference” (p. 4). The trio added that “The application of those goods is then negotiated and enacted through discourse” and we see this played out in the form of debate in the literature associated with the negative and positive effects of technology on friendships and our ability to flourish.

There is no doubt that technological development has spurred radical shifts in the primary relationships we have in our life. Shifts in communicative technology have thrust us into difference as commonplace and have positioned us to experience alterity regularly. Even in the 80s, Gumpert and Cathcart noticed the revolutionary shifts in communication and technology. They wrote that “The new media have altered our patterns of communication just as surely as the ice age changed the contours of the land” (1986, p. 57). They added “The modern electronic media have affected what we know, who and what we talk about, who talks to us, and who listens. Our knowledge and store of information have been immeasurably increased” (p. 9). Prior to the advent of technology, friendships were created and maintained with those in which
we were in close proximity (Adams, 1998). Technology made possible our ability to not only meet but maintain relationships at a distance. While the restriction of physical presence on friendship has now been removed, problematic romanticized ideals about friendships of the past still are pervasive. O’Connor noted that even if two people made initial contact in each other’s physical presence in the past, “maintaining already established relationships across distances was difficult because contact was infrequent, expensive, or unsatisfying” (1998, p. 157). O’Connor (1998) noted that “The assumption of physical co-presence made some sense in the technological context in which these territorially-bound theories developed” (p. 157). Bakardjieva (2014) explained that post web 2.0, in the world of social media, we are seeing friendship being redefined, and challenged “on grounds of linguistic, cultural and ideological differences” (p. 270). This is no surprise from a communication ethics standpoint.

**Technology Use Today**

Today, technology use is standard and part of the everyday personal and professional lives of most people in the Western world. It is important then to review exactly how technology is being used and conceptualize some of the terms then to help contextualize the nature of this project. According to a 2019 Pew Research Study, nearly all Millennials own a smartphone. Roughly half also own tablets, and about 80 percent of millennials have broadband internet access in their homes. Gen Xers have similar statistics, and the majority of Boomers have smartphones, tablets, and broadband access. The Silent generation trails behind with under half owning smartphones, tablets, and broadband internet. A staggering near-100 percent of Millennials use the internet regularly, 20 percent of which go online from their smartphones only.
While there are multiple reasons that individuals go online, many are social media users. Eight-six percent of millennials use social media (Pew Research, 2019). The majority of social media users visit Facebook regularly, although other options for social media include Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Obar and Wildman (2015) noted the difficulty in defining social media and likened it to a “moving target.” The pair noted four areas that all forms of social media share:

1) They are Web 2.0 technology.
2) They depend on user-generated content.
3) They consist of individuals who are moderated by a larger organization.
4) They “facilitate the development of social networks online by connected a profile with those of other individuals/groups” (p. 9).

Aichner and Jacob (2015) noted several types of social media. They listed:

1) Blogs
2) Business networks
3) Collaborative projects
4) Enterprise social networks
5) Forums
6) Microblogs
7) Photo sharing
8) Products/services review
9) Social bookmarking
10) Social gaming
11) Social networks
Kaplan (2012) differentiated *mobile social media* from standard social media forms. Mobile social media, he argued, have location sensitivities and time sensitivities. He distinguished four types.

1. **Space-timers.** Space-timer types of social media are those which are sensitive to both time and space. An example of this is Foursquare.

2. **Space-locators.** Space-locator types of social media are sensitive to space but not time. An example of this would be Yelp.

3. **Quick-timers.** Quick-timer types of social media are sensitive to type but not space. Twitter and Facebook news feeds are examples of this.

4. **Slow-timers.** Slow-timer types of social media are neither time nor space sensitive. Kaplan gives Youtube and Wikipedia as examples.

An important distinction in the above discussion is made with the mention of Web 2.0. is the term used to signify the major transformation of internet culture after the year 2000. Blank and Reisdorf (2012) have termed Web 2.0 “The Participatory Web.” Bakardjieva and Gaden (2012) explained:

> Although no scholarly consensus exists on the issue, the claim that a substantive reconfiguration of the Internet has occurred in the beginning of the 2000s has settled firmly in public common sense. The label tentatively chosen for the new turn in the medium’s evolution is Web 2.0. (p. 399)
The pair argued that “the hermeneutic utility of social networking sites” opens the door for new horizons for our interactions and interpretations of others (p. 411). Web 2.0 technologies, they argued, require creative labor. They added:

The creative labor that they invent in web 2.0 technologies and practices helps bloggers and SNS participants to find new affinities and solidarities far outreaching their mediate interaction circles. Not surprisingly, along with the vanity fair (of amassing friends and posting fancy self-flattering pictures and stories) in an equally viable stream of Web 2.0 activities, users come together as a political force to resist the commercial imperatives, to formulate civic concerns and mobilize for action. (p. 411)

Friendship and the Good

Friendship is deeply connected with human flourishing. A debate has been playing out over the last several decades related to the ways in which technology has affected friendship. Scientific advancements have shown this to be not just philosophically sound but also empirically so. Many medical disciplines have turned to the study of friendship in the last decade to make sense of the various ways in which friendships affect us and are affected by the world. Johnson and Dunbar (2016) showed that there is a correlation between one’s pain tolerance and the size of their social network. In another study in 2015, increased social network size was correlated with a decrease in depression (Hill, Griffiths, & House). In older adults, social relationship activities were linked with a decrease in cognitive decline (James, Wilson, Barnes, & Bennett, 2011).

We are physiologically and emotionally affected by the quality and quantity of our friendships. Rubin (1986) pointed out that not only do we agree that it is important to have and
maintain friendships, but that there is a social stigma attached to the lack of friends. She noted that lacking friends in our culture is stigmatized and often a source of shame. She also highlights the concern caregivers have for childhood friendships, that is, that parents are concerned with their child’s ability to make friends. Signs of a child struggling to make friends is a developmental warning to parents and educators, and a possible alert that the child may be struggling with flourishing. Friends provide us with a plethora of developmental support. Friends guide us through human development and help young adults transition from family life into full-fledged members of the civil society. Ginsberg, Gottman, and Parker (1986) highlight several other means of support that friends provide, including companionship, stimulation, physical support, ego support, social comparison, and intimacy and affection.

**Technological Considerations**

It is no wonder then, that technology’s effects on friendship have become some contested in our current moment. Some scholars have argued that technology has negatively impacted friendship and our ability to flourish. For example, one thread of research argues that technology has had a negative impact on friendships or that mediated relationships are of poorer quality (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). Turkle’s (2011) popular work, *Alone Together*, argues that technology is driving us inward at the cost of our relationships. Postman (2011), too, argues that technology run amuck is destroying our very human nature and social relationships. In her work, Bennett’s (2016) purpose was “to discover if (and how) eudemonia can continue to be associated with the digital exchange of information and images, otherwise known as contemporary friendship” (p. 245). Working from Elull, Bennett argued that technique diminishes face-to-face communication. She wrote, “The quick, unobstructed access to one another has morphed in short order from something used occasionally into the dominant mode of communication, often
eclipsing the natural reaction to have a conversation or spend time together” (p. 248). She concluded that “media distance us from the other” (p. 255).

Cocking and Matthews (2000) also take a negative view of the effects of technology on our friendships. They explained that the ability to share one’s experience online is limited. They wrote, “Though we think internet ‘friendship’ is quite inferior to non-virtual friendship, we do not think that it is necessarily bad in itself and indeed for some people, it clearly provides an important good” (p. 224). However, the pair found technology to interfere with the ability to flourish in the sense that “to the extent that my Net ‘friendships’ replace friendships I might well have had non-virtually, this will subtract from the good of friendships” (p. 224). In addition to the loss of face-to-face relationships, the pair also argued that the second problem associated with friendship and technology is related to the lack of hermeneutic cues which we will address in the following chapter. They wrote:

We claim that what is lacking here is not merely a partial, or marginal set of factors, but a significant global loss and distortion of the real case. What is distorted and lost, in particular, are important aspects of a person’s character and of the relational self ordinarily developed through those interactions in friendship. (p. 231)

McFall (2012) was skeptical about the effects of technology on our friendships. From his perspective, technology can help with virtue friendships that were formed outside of the mediated realm, but “character-friendships cannot be created and sustained entirely through technological mediation” (p. 221). The problem, McFall argued, is related to the “perceptual and communicative elements” of virtue friendships that “cannot wholly be mediated technologically” (p. 224). Particularly, he noted that this is due to the lack of shared activity.
Other scholars are much more adamant that technology benefits our friendships. In her work on relationships and social media, Chambers (2013) argued that new scholarship is indicating that social media and the internet have created “important sites for cultivating personal relationships” (p. 4).

Munn (2012), focusing solely on MMORPGs, addressed the shared activity argument and while he agreed that “shared activity is a core element in the formation of friendships” he added that “friendships can form in immersive virtual worlds as they do in the physical world” (p. 1). For him, particularly, MMORPGs allow for two individuals to share activity in an online space. Elder (2014), following an Aristotelian orientation, argued that “fulfilling friendships may occur via social media because social media allows friends to share distinctly human activities such as conversation and exchange of thoughts, mutual development of ideas, making art and playing games” (p. 287). Briggle (2008) took a balanced approach and recognized that often, many of the arguments making the case for technology as problematic or detrimental for our friendships fail to address the numerous issues associated with friendship in a non-virtual environment. He wrote that “offline relationships can be constrictive and insincere” and that mediated communication “mitigates this problem by promoting the courage to be candid” (p. 71). He added that online communication attracts a deliberativeness absent in many oral communications.

Soraker (2012) charged us with considering whether “actual and virtual friendships differ when it comes to enhancing our subjective well-being” (p. 209) and one aim of this project is to enter the conversation through a phenomenological and philosophical framework. The hope is to bypass issues surrounding the psychosocial goods of friendship that narrow us into the deontological and utilitarian frameworks and instead can approach friendships in the
technological age from a communicative standpoint. Friendship is extremely deserving of our time and effort as communication scholars. As Rawlins (2009) contended, friendship reaches and impacts every part of our society and world. Sigman (1998) claimed that communication “produces and sustains” all human relationships and Rogers (1998) also emphasized communication as the production center for relationships.

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the effects of technology on friendship as experienced, informed by an attentiveness to the philosophy of communication. Particularly, this project will explore the intersections of media ecology and the philosophy of technology, rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and ethics. This is a task well-suited for the communication discipline. While there is a significant amount of communication research in the quantitative and qualitative scholarship, work in the media ecology, philosophical, and ethical tracks is lacking.

**Rationale for Philosophical and Ethical Approach**

In *Explorations in Media Ecology*, there has been only one published article featuring friendship. Bennett (2016) examined the “inefficiency of friendship” grounded in the work of Ellul. There is a rich field of scholarship that examines the role of technology in friendships, yet media ecology scholars have seemingly overlooked this important element of our lives. Bennett noted that in our historical analyses, we must conclude that the meaning of friendship has shifted in the interpersonal communication realm, Walther’s (1992) Social Information Processing Theory (SIP) examined the effects of technology on relationship development. He suggested that despite our lack of nonverbal cues in the mediated setting, relationships actually do develop, although they do so at a much slower pace. In fact, individuals actually adapt their communication patterns for the various mediums available. Walther extended this work later to
create the Hyperpersonal Model (1996). He argued that computer-mediated communication can actually become hyperpersonal.

Hyperpersonal communication, Walther explained, can be more socially desirable (1996). His model shows that we do tend to draw from stereotypes more via mediated-communication and over attribute certain characteristics. In that same year, Parks and Floyd (1996) presented their research and showed that it was not a question of whether relationships could develop— they were developing. Walther and Parks in a 2002 article added to their earlier work and reviewed multiple theories. They showed several benefits related to communicative technologies, including improved mental health and well-being, access to more resources, more expertise, more support, and the possibility to engage with others who are interested in the same things we are, rather than those who are close to us.

While there is a substantial amount of research on technology and relationships, and technology and friendship, there is little research at the phenomenological level on the shifts that technology has caused in the experience of friendship. Friendships are hybridized in various ways, to be discussed later, but at the contemporary level, the questions that have guided the literature in friendship have centered on whether mediated friendship is possible, authentic, or beneficial. In her work, Bennett (2016) grappled with understanding if friendship in our time is “qualitatively different” and that is one aim of the research that will be presented in this project (p. 245).

**Difficult Definitions**

One possible reason for such a lack of attentiveness from the various humanities-grounded communication traditions is the difficulty of concretely defining friendship. First, there are different kinds of words to describe different kinds of friendly relations. Second, the
areas of central agreement throughout friendship literature are fuzzy and gray. Third, friendship varies at both the macro and micro levels and is both a personal and social relationship. In addition to the historical shifts, defining friendship is also elusive also, as Scult (1989) pointed out, “there is no clear ‘object of investigation’ and therefore nothing to focus on as we work our way around the hermeneutical circle” (p. 204). Here, he is responding to the point that “friendships are” “extremely delicate and complex attempts at human bonding” with no “defined nor any agreed-upon institutional rules or conventions” (p. 203). In attempting to define friendship, one standard approach is to focus on what friendship is not. For example, friendship is separate from kinship, although the two share several attributes. Allan (1979) explored the way in which our roles shape our expectations about particular relationships. He explains that kinship is institutionalized and formal but friendship is not. In the case of family, we have bloodlines or pedigrees and family is institutionally protected in Western culture. Laws are in place that specifically are designed to define kin relations.

Typological Differences and Areas of Fuzzy Agreement

Several scholars are quick to point out that there is a difference between friendship and friendly relations and that we currently have many words to approach friend-type relationships (Gareis, 1999; Bakardjieva, 2014; Kurth, 1970). Scott (2014) noted, “For the exacting language user, terms such as acquaintance, casual friend, close friend, and best friend offer the promise of differentiation” (p. 432). Technology has only complicated in the issue, as now “friending” is a verb in which online social media profiles are linked. There are several agreed-upon elements that help us approach friendship. Rawlins in his work Friendship Matters (1992), showed us that friendships: persist in both public and private, are voluntary, maintain a spirit of equality, have a mutual involvement for shared social reality, and contain some type of affective ties. Thomas
(1993) highlighted that friendships have relatively little structure and the central features are “voluntary self-disclosure, reciprocity, positive mutual regard” and autonomy (p. 63). Suttles (1970) explained that liking is likely to occur when two are similar in status. Dreher (2009) described several common features of friendship:

1. It is done of both party's own free will.
2. There is normally no sexual element.
3. There is unlikely to be physical attraction, unlike in a love relationship.

Like Rawlins, Suttles argued that friendships are voluntary, personal, and generalized. Emmeche (2019) acknowledged the central elements of friendship, adding that similar interests, common experiences, affection, and care are imperative. Ginsberg, Gottman, and Parker (1986) argued that intimacy and affection are central to all friendships across the lifespan and that these two qualities are what differentiate close and distant friends.

**Contextual Variations of Friendship**

Another problem with definitional attempts is related to the fact that our friendships are contextually dependent. They vary by culture, gender, age and many other factors (Gudykunst, 1989; Liu & Yang, 2016; Fritz, 1997). Rawlins (1992) discussed the changing nature of friendships over the course of the lifespan. Childhood friendships are centered on coordinated play and grounded in proximity. As we develop, he explained that our friendships shift from momentary physical playmates to friendships grounded in mutuality and understanding. Allan (1998) wrote, “Changes in friendship patterns develop across the life-course as people’s responsibilities, commitments, and opportunities alter” (p. 72). In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle recognized the changes in friendship over the course of the lifespan and associated this
with changes in the underlying ends sought (e.g. pleasure, utility). Westmyer (1996) noted, “Friendships can exist between older and younger people; differences in sex do not necessarily constitute an obstacle for friendship, socio-structural boundaries can be overcome by friendship and, moreover, friendships between individuals with completely different cultural backgrounds are conceivable” (p. 411). Dreher (2009) pointed out that friendship defies barriers based on age, sex, socio-structures, and culture. In all of these categories, while the literature shows that typically friends are similar in these above categories such as gender, age, and culture—they are not limiting, and individuals of different ages, sexes, and cultures can and do become friends. Despite cultural and temporal variations, friendship is universal (Brain, 1976).

Traditional literature on friendship cannot account for or the above variations, fuzzy arenas, and variations from person to person and place to place. Literature has tended fall into one of three themes. Some threads of research paint friendship as a relationship. While friendship is a relationship, these perspectives, in my opinion, tend to objectify the nature of friendship and cause a shift in our thinking. We conceive of friendship as a tangible thing that we can hold and possess. As such, it creates an idealized notion of friendship at both the macro and micro levels. At the macro-level, it creates unrealistic views about expectations for others and fails to recognize the dynamic nature as friendship. At the macro-level, it leads to romanticized notions about friendship that are inattentive to the historical moment. Other theories frame friendship as a process, many times a developmental process. While I do not reject the excellent research that examines the developmental life stages and the various types of friendships, and appreciate that this approach overcomes the static-orientation of the relationship views of friendship, these views are problematic because friendship as process seems to invoke an expectation of a final form. Friendship as a communicative phenomenon recognizes that each
friendship has a unique story, and friendship, in general, is part of an ongoing human conversation that will always need to be revisited. A third thread imagines friendship as an achievement. In these accounts, friendship must be earned, fought for, or won. Friendship is much more than a trophy, an end, and these accounts endanger the good of friendship and instead quash the important element of particularity within the friendship itself.

**Friendship as Communicative Phenomenon**

To overcome the above problems, this dissertation frames friendship as a communicative phenomenon. It is created, sustained, managed, produced, and reproduced via various forms of communicative work. Framing it in such a way allows us to work through the different areas and recognize the historically situated and evolving nature of friendship. Also, it follows a long tradition which begins with Aristotle.

Friendship as a communicative phenomenon involves various kinds of communicative work. For one, there is the communicative work of identification. Rawlins (2009) showed us that we use language to identify our friends, and we typify characteristics of what we anticipate as being associated with a ‘friend’ and apply it within our everyday encounters with others. Within these friend types, we have very different types of communicative work. Helm (2010) for example argued that among types of friendship, the major differences are grounded in the conceptualization of the friendship itself the two have (which may even be implicit). Westmyer (1996), too, recognized the differences at the communicative level related to types of friendship. She explains “friendship is primarily symbolically constructed, i.e. that it is formed by means of constructive processes based on a collegiately shared symbolism with a repertoire of culturally defined categories” (p. 408). As we frame friendship as a communicative phenomenon, then, the necessity for categorization of types diminishes. Rawlins (2009) focused on storytelling and
dialogue as essential activities of friendship. Whether explicit or implicit, Communication is the base from which all friendships emerge. Sigman (1998) pointed out that it is solely through communication that relationships, in general, are produced and sustained. Thomas (1993) highlighted unless we interact with another person, it’s impossible to know if a friendship is even possible. Rogers (1998) explained that communication is formative in relations.

Rawlins (2009) argued that “Friendships emerge among the personal, relational, and cultural narratives of our lives negotiated within a host of stories already in progress” (p. 47). He continues, “Friendships are ongoing narrative achievements reflexively shaping our identities, convictions, participation, and possibilities (p. 47). Rawlins' work grounds friendship in the communicative realm. This dissertation follows his work to argue that friendship is a communicative phenomenon. Part of this project is to examine how it is that this naming can take place sans reification of the term. Rawlins explains that “we produce the category of ‘friend’ in our daily lives through the people we choose to describe by that term (and negatively through the people to whom we refuse to apply it)” (2009, p. 25). Framing friendship as a communicative phenomenon allows us to avoid the difficulties encountered in attempting to define the essence of friendship in addition to the earlier problems encountered in different types of friendship. Framing friendship as a communicative phenomenon also allows us to attend to the current work from a historically-mindful perspective, a process that is essential to projects within the philosophy of communication. Arnett (2010) wrote:

Philosophy of communication engages particulars contingent on a particular situation, a particular moment, and a particular public contribution to public opinion. Philosophy of communication does not give us unquestioned assurance; it is tested by public opinion
offered as a philosophy of communication road map that details the particulars and temporal suggestions for engaging those particulars. (p. 58)

A goal of this project is to offer a road map that explores the particulars of friendship and temporal suggestions for engaging those particulars.

Laas (2018) argued that definition work is problematic as it draws us away from the ethical and practical implications of friendship. Laas (2018) noted, “real definitions, like other kinds of definitions, are linguistic entities, and as such are unavoidably historically contingent on the definer’s circumstances, goals, and theoretical commitments” (p. 123). Rather than center on the definitional characteristics, honing in on a communicative framework allows us instead to dedicate the inquiry at hand to uncovering the qualitative differences at the phenomenological level with an overall goal to understand friendship in our current moment.

Operating from an Aristotelian framework, this dissertation assumes that friendship is necessary for human life. For Munn (2012), a central element of friendship was “shared activity” (p. 1). Elder (2014), drawing from Aristotle, argued that the hallmark of friendship is the shared life, specifically, a communicative life. He wrote, that friends share “especially reasoning together by sharing conversation and thoughts, and communal engagement in valued activities” (p. 287). Meilaender (1981) explained that for Aristotle, the emphasis was on choice. It is this grounding of friendship in choice, then, that places friendship in the middle of deliberative work and communicative action. Aristotle wrote that friendship “is a thing most necessary for life since no one would choose to live without friends” (1155a). Rawlins operates, too, from an Aristotelian tradition. He explained that “in close friendship, we desire good things to happen to our friend because we care about this particular person. The activities compassing personal friendship occur for the most part in private settings out of public eyes and ears” (2009,
p. 5). He continued that “For Aristotle true dyadic friendships also involve *mutual well-wishing*, which includes reciprocated concern and actions to benefit each friend. They jointly experience the gratifications of their friendship” (p. 5). It would be difficult to find anyone who would argue that friends do not improve our life.

Staging friendship as a communicative phenomenon also offers the possibility for epistemic, ontological, and metaphysical confirmation of being. Branden (1993) explains that through friendship, there emerges a “psychological visibility” that is a “metaphysical experience” (p. 66) and helps separate friendship from kinship and romantic ties, in the sense that friendship as emerging communicatively and maintained through communication places it in a different tier. Kinship and romantic relationships biological underpinnings. C.S. Lewis (1960) wrote that true friendship is difficult to come by. He explains “Friendship is—in a sense not at all derogatory to it—the least *natural* of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary” (p. 88). Thomas (1993) explained that there are also communicative differences between friendships and parent-child relationships in addition to the biological elements. They are related to the “manifestation of choice,” there is no authority of one over the other, and “enormous bond of trust” (p. 49).

Aristotle discussed the nature of relationships like husband and wife and son and father—he said that they are different because the ‘work’ is different. He wrote, “because the work, and therefore the excellence, of each of these is different, and different therefore are the causes of their feeling Friendship” (1171a). All relationships require communicative work, but for friendship, the relationship is produced and maintained solely through communication.

Another central notion related to communicative work and friendship is tied to *sharing with*. Soraker (2012) wrote, “If we break the somewhat abstract notion of friendship into
constitutive elements, one clear indication of the value of friendships comes from the value of having someone to share with” (p. 215). The idea of sharing with is a central theme within this dissertation. The sharing of time, space, place, experiences, thoughts, conversations, feelings, etc. will all be explored. For Soraker, sharing with particular is grounded in communication. Soraker wrote, “research indicates that one of the most significant determinants of well-being lies in the ability to share one’s positive and negative experiences with others” (p. 215). Liu (2010) advocated from an Aristotelian perspective to show that shared activity is a necessary component of friendship and “this activity has a phenomenal character perhaps more akin to sense perception than to intellectual apprehension” (p. 585). Munn (2012), too, interpreted shared activity to be central to Aristotle’s conceptualization of friendship. This shared activity will be developed throughout this work. Shared activity is a sharing with, particularly grounded in the communicative world.

In addition to the sharing with component of friendship, another important communicative element of most interpretations of friendship is for the sake of. Cooper (1980) wrote, “To wish for someone else’s good for his sake entails (perhaps means) wishing for his good not as a means to one’s own (or anyone else’s) good” (p. 310). Munn (2012) wrote, “mutual caring is the idea that each friend cares for the other and does so for the sake of the other, not themselves” (p. 2). We act not because it is reciprocal, nor for the sake of the friendship, but for the friend in their particularity.

Friendship as a communicative phenomenon opens the door for rhetorical and communication ethics approaches, due to the role of narrative in developing our character. For various reasons, story-telling between friends is a key component in shaping who we are as persons. Rawlins (1992) wrote that “In telling each other our stories, friends con-construct the
ongoing personal and social significance of our endeavor, setbacks, accomplishments, and hopes” (p. 47) and this, too, connects with the sharing with. Friendship as the highest virtue, and the path to all other virtues, is also manifested through the practice of communicative virtues.

Sokolowski (2002) wrote:

> The ability to engage in friendship, the virtue of friendship, requires that we possess the other virtues, both the individual virtues and the virtue of justice. We have to be morally good in all the other ways in order to be able to enjoy true friendship. If we are intemperate or cowardly, for example, we will find that our intemperance or cowardice will prevent us from even thinking about someone else’s good, or they may make us think wrongly about what is good for our ‘friend.’ (p. 260)

**Chapter Overviews**

The project ahead embraces the tradition of the unity of contraries. It explores the various ways in which specific parts give rise to revelations of the whole related to friendship.

**Chapter Two—Encounter: Persons and the Origins of Friendship**

Chapter two begins from the point this introduction ended, examining friendship as a communicative phenomenon between persons that is created, sustained, managed, produced, and reproduced via various forms of communicative work in which the persons do good things for and with the other. All human relations begin with meeting. Alfred Schutz, Austrian phenomenologist, places intersubjectivity at the center of all social relations. Numerous scholars have worked with and from Schutz’ work, particularly drawing relevance to the importance of his work in understanding communicative action. We take for granted that others exist and that they exist in the way that we exist. We also take for granted that their bodies exist. Our world is
peopled. When we encounter the bodies of others in our world, they are given to us in their originary presence. However, their consciousness is not presented but appresented. In the paradigmatic communicative setting, one’s spatial presence is used as a source for entering or penetrating their subjective experience as well as their givenness in speech. Encounter is the communicative phenomenon in which persons enter into a communicative common environment. As such, it is not dependent on the face-to-face setting and can occur via technology.

Chapter Three—Particularity and Personhood: Humanizing the Friend Through Voice

Chapter Three explores the tension between encounter and particularity. We have the potential to encounter hundreds if not thousands of others on any given day. Friendship emerges from a tension that arises between encounter and particularity. Particularity is the reciprocal recognition of the other’s unique consciousness (interiority) through voice within a context of belief. Voice, in the context of this project, is the expression of one’s interiority. Corey Anton proposes a triadic structure of intentionality and using this, the conclusion is drawn that particularity arises when we mundanely dwell in the voice of our friends, in their givenness. Particularity, also, is not dependent on the face-to-face setting and can occur via technology.

Chapter Four—Dialogue and Digitization: The Language of Friendship

Dialogue and digitization and their role in friendship are the topics chapter four explores. In the last decade of his life, Walter J. Ong explored the nature of hermeneutics in a digital world. Throughout his career, he was concerned with depersonalization. Ong’s work was influenced by Martin Buber’s philosophy. While there is no explicit connection between Alfred Schutz and Buber, there are some basic tenets of their work that may arise from their Jewish upbringing. The voices of all three philosophers unite to inform this chapter, specifically to
show that the Other in friendship emerges as a result of a unity of contraries, specifically between dialogue and digitization. Human thought is binary and “breaks down” the Other. Language is hermeneutic and dialogue is the “building up” of the Other. Dialogue is imperative for friendships in that it is the practice from which particularity arises, and that it is necessary for the co-creation of meaning of the friendship itself. In our digital age, the presence of the other can be hermeneutic and as such, mediated communication is more conducive to depersonalization than spoken. While mediated communication creates more challenges, it does not make friendship impossible.

Chapter Five—Time and Space: Altered Dimensions of Friendship

The next chapter begins with Giddens’s argument that Social systems have been extended in time and space. For most of human history, friendships were limited to those in which we were in close proximity. As communication technologies have evolved, our perceptions and experience of time and space have changed. Friendship is connected to time in two ways. Friends must share the same historical moment. Second, friendship is extended duration, perceived as continuous duration although experienced as fragmented and discrete. Traditionally friendship has been linked to space, although research indicates that lack of shared space is not a barrier. Through the social dimensions of time and space, intimacy surfaces. Intimacy depends on communicative choices. Specifically, the choice: to communicate, to communicate with you, of how to communicate, and to communicate in a way that is unique to our friendship.

Chapter Six—Sunaisthesis: The Synecdochical Activity of Friendship

The final unity of contraries, sunaisthesis, is the activity in which two friends become a “we.” This is the focus of the sixth chapter. Sunaisthesis is central to Aristotle’s work on
friendship; therefore, it is the center of all of his political philosophy. April Flakne argues that the translations of Aristotle’s term were inaccurate. Interpreting both *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, she argued that the term derived from *suzen* (the shared life) and *aesthesis* (perception). *Sunaisthesis* is *living, perceiving, and doing together*.

**Chapter Seven—Conclusion: A Virtue Ethics Approach**

Friendship is a requirement for the good life. Teleological and deontological frameworks are not as well-suited for the task of examining the effect of technological practices on our friendships as virtue ethics and communication ethics approach. An attentiveness to historicity, the particulars, and the communicative practices that inform the goods of friendship are explored. Each chapter theme has a related discussion and conclusion related to the overall notion of virtue ethics.
Encounter: Persons and the Origins of Friendship

“One’s friends are that part of the human race with which one can be human.”

– George Santayana

All human encounter is communicative. Even if we never exchange words with another person, due to the intersubjective nature of our lifeworld, all encounter presupposes a communicative world. To be human is to be with other humans. Therefore, a relevant starting point for our investigation into the communicative phenomenon of friendship is at the beginning of all human relationships, encounter. As a starting point to all human relationships, however fleeting, encounter is essential for friendship. An awareness of the existence of the other is the foundational starting point. This awareness is brought into being through communicative work and performance. This chapter will draw heavily from the work of Alfred Schutz, who inspired a plethora of works on human relationships. Through these works, I will show that corporeal presence is not required in today’s world for encounter, and so, as the fundamental step to friendship formation at the phenomenological level, then, encounter is our first step in all human relations and not only can but does occur in many various mediated settings in today’s world.

Grinnell (1983) showed that Schutz, through his systematic analysis of social relations “arrived at the originating point involving intersubjectivity” (p. 185) and this chapter will follow that tradition. Carrington (1979) pointed out, through Schutz, that all social relations are essentially based on the possibility of communication. Barber (2018) noted that Schutz’ work influenced formative scholars in multiple disciplines. Sociologist John O’Neill’s work on the lived body experience drew from Schutz (O’Neill, 1974). Schutz was a close friend of the phenomenologist Aron Gurwitsch, bonded by their intellectual inquiries and refuge from World War II (Grathoff, 1989). Lester Embree, a phenomenologist and student of Gurwitsch, has
published numerous works about and influenced by Schutz (Embree, 1988; 2013; 2015; Embree & Barber, 2017). Schutz was extremely influential for the work of sociologist Harold Garfinkel, father of ethnomethodology and his student Peter Berger (Psathas, 2004). Berger would go on to work with Luckmann, another student of Schutz to write *The Social Construction of Reality* (1996). Natanson's phenomenological and philosophical works were extremely influenced by his teacher (Natanson, 1986).

Several contemporary scholars are working through Schutz to finish pressing inquiries in today’s world. Knoblauch, specifically, has opened Schutz’ work to the world of communication studies (2001; 2013). Phenomenologists have typically neglected Schutz’ work on communication (Knoblauch, 2013). Bakardjieva (2005; 2014) has worked through Schutz to advance an understanding of social relationships and friendships in the internet age. Zhao (2004; 2015; 2006; 2005; 2007; Zhao & Elesh, 2008) is a major Schutz scholar who has expanded Schutz’ works and advanced his theories in our modern digital age-related to time, space and knowledge in social relationships. Informed by the above secondary literature, this chapter also draws from Schutz’ major works. *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, originally published in 1932 is Schutz’ first major work. It also draws from all four volumes of *Collected Papers*.

**Schutz and Intersubjectivity**

All human encounter is communicative and to show how we will start with the beginning. Schutz began his explanation of our basic human experience grounded in Husserl’s claim that we in our bodies are the center of all inquiries into consciousness. We cannot remove the thought from the person who experiences thought (1970a). Schutz explained that “the personal self rather than the thought has to be treated as the immediate datum” (1970a, p. 57). This personal self then does not doubt, in our everyday life, our existence nor the existence of the
surrounding world. Schutz writes that we “accept as unquestionable the world of facts which surrounds us as existent out there” (p. 58). This is the natural attitude. The world in which we operate on an everyday basis, the world in which we plod through life without pause to question or doubt the existence of self and others, is our everyday lifeworld. We may choose to suspend our belief in these existences, also known as “bracketing,” but in doing so we cease to be flowing in the usual stream of our consciousness of the natural attitude. All of our relations with other human beings begin with this starting point of the natural attitude of everyday existence.

We come to a particular attentiveness when we suspend our belief in the foundations of existence, we also lose our ability to still be within that existence. There is a particular lack of attentiveness we perform to live with others that Schutz addressed. Schutz (1970a) wrote, “Attention a la vie, attention to life, is, therefore, the basic regulative principle of our conscious life” (p. 68). Particularly, Schutz argued that there is a “plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements” and he called this “wide-awakeness” (Schutz, 1970a, p. 69). He wrote that “Only the performing and especially the working self is fully interested in life and, hence, wide-awake” (p. 69). The lack of attention to the fragility of life and our unquestioning everyday existence is attention to life.

When Schutz argued that our taken-for-grantedness of the existence of others is part of our everyday existence, this is essential for our understanding of his project. Our world is naturally intersubjective (1970a). He wrote, “If we retain the natural attitude as men among other men, the existence of others is no more questionable to us than the existence of an outer world” (1970a, p. 163). He added, “The world of my daily life is by no means my private world but is from the outset an intersubjective one, shared with my fellow men, experiences and interpreted by others; in brief, it is a world common to all of us” (p. 163). Gurwitsch in the
introduction to *Collected Papers III* wrote, “We do not, each one of us, experience the life-world as a private world; on the contrary, we take it for a public world, common to all of us, that is, for an intersubjective world” (1970a). Natanson wrote in the introduction to *Collected Papers I* (Schutz, 1973) that “‘the common-sense world,’ ‘world of daily life,’ ‘every-day world’ are variant expressions for the intersubjective world experienced by man within what Husserl terms the ’natural attitude’” (p. xxvii). This is not only the center of our investigation of friendship, but this is the center for all social action. Natanson wrote that within the natural attitude, all persons make sense of their worlds, themselves and others (Schutz, 1973). We live in a peopled-world, and in this peopled-world, even our friendships are often without question. In addition to taking our world for granted, we also take it for granted that the others we take for granted also take their worlds for granted. Gurtwitsch called this reciprocity of taken-for-grantedness a “thorough-going reciprocity” and explained that this was the reason we “can act and work” with others at all (Schutz, 1970a, p. xiii). This acting and working with others includes communicative action and work.

**Corporeality**

Another part of our natural attitude is the actual taken-for-grantedness of the *bodies* of the other, and there is a particular relevance here to the inquiry into the ways in which technology has affected friendship. At the time of Schutz’ work, and later in the extensions of his work with Luckmann, the media that shaped their phenomenological theories were radically different from today. Then, the primary way that one encountered another in the routine of everyday life was in their physical presence. All relationships were bound by space for most of human history. So although Schutz often seems to have given primacy to the face-to-face situation, as we will see,
his emphasis was truly on the communication that occurs between two people rather than their physical existence.

In 1973, Schutz and Luckmann highlighted the nature of nonverbal expressions in the communicative process. Nonverbal expressions are culturally dependent and require us to draw from our learned experience of the meaning of such expressions to interpret meaning. The store of meaning we keep Schutz called our *stock of knowledge.* When we are in the presence of another person, we assign meaning outside the realm of their intentional expression in nonverbal gestures by interpreting it grounded in our *stock of knowledge.* This is a reciprocal process. He wrote, “simultaneous with *my* lived experience of you, there is *your* lived experience which belongs to you and is part of your stream of consciousness” (p. 169), and you have your lived experience of *me.* He wrote, “All interpretation of this world is based upon a stock of previous experiences of it, our own experiences and those handed down to us by our parents and teachers, which in the form of ‘knowledge at hand’ function as a scheme of reference” (1970b, p. 72). All of our experience is embedded in a larger historical context which shapes what it means for us to know.

Our histories and ways of knowing, while shared and developed in relation to others, is still unique to us. Schutz (1970a; 1970b) used Husserl’s notion of *originary presence* as a starting point. Other human beings are both bodies in space and subjective experiencing beings. They are both things and persons, or in Buber’s terms, *Thou’s and Its.* While the body of another person is presented to us in *originary presence,* their subjective experience is impossible to apprehend communicating. Understanding *things* is quite different than understanding *persons.* Schutz (1973) noted that in the world of things grounded in Husserl, “the ‘Other’ also appears as a corporeality, but as a corporeality which I apprehend as a body, and indeed as a
body of another by a process of appresentive pairing” (p. 125). Schutz though departs from Husserl and places our apprehension of the other in the mundane. He explained that we come into understanding others by drawing from our stock of knowledge, which is derived from interacting with others.

Schutz wrote, “their psychological life is not given to me in originary presence, merely in co-presence, it is not presented but appresented” (1970a, p. 25). In the paradigmatic communicative setting, that is, the face-to-face, one’s spatial presence is used as a source for entering or penetrating into their subjective experience. Until though this is confirmed though, through speech, we cannot be certain that our interpretations of those specific expressions are correct. We can never be ultimately certain that our interpretation is correct. The interpretive process relies on our stock of knowledge, grounded in our language system that has been learned. Even when we encounter others within their spatial existence, their physical bodily presence in a face-to-face situation, the body in space is relatively irrelevant—the focus is on communication. Language, specifically, is the system of making meaning of our entire lifeworld, not only our own world but the world we share with others and all cultural objects. Schutz, working from Husserl, wrote:

A book is an outer object, a material thing. I see it as it appears to me, here on my desk, to my right, etc.; but reading it, I am not directed toward it as an outer object but toward the meaning of what is written therein: I ‘live in its meaning’ by comprehending it. The same holds good for a tool, a house, a theater, a temple, a machine. The spiritual meaning of all these objects is appresentationally apperceived as being founded upon the actually appearing object which is not apprehended as such but as expressing its meaning. And if we listen to somebody, we do not experience the meaning of what he says as
something connected with the words in an external way, We take the words apprehensively as expressing their meaning, and we live in their meaning by comprehending what the Other means and the thought he expresses. (1973, p. 314)

Our bodily presence not required for the making of mutual meaning and all meeting is the co-production of meaning in some way.

**Communicative Common Environment**

Schutz stated that with “mutual understanding and consent a communicative common environment is thus established” and he added that within this communicative common environment, the subjects “reciprocally motivate one another in their mental activities” (p. 315). Schutz wrote, “It is, moreover, supposed that the mutual appresentational comprehension of events in the Other’s mind leads immediately to communication” (p. 315). He continues that “For each partner, the other’s body, his gestures, his gait, and facial expressions, are immediately observable, not merely as things or events of the outer world but in their physiognomical significance, that is, as symptoms of the other’s thoughts” (p. 16). In this explanation, Schutz is drawing the significance of bodily presence. His point about being able to ascertain the symptoms of thought is important, but it is not the role of the body that deserves primacy here, but instead, the role of communication.

It is important to pause here to make clear that encounter does not require at all a recognition of the unique individual with whom we share the communicative event. In our everyday interactions, we may meet the mailperson, the bus driver, the teacher—and while we interact with them and are able to understand them and comprehend them, there is no necessity at all to recognize them as unique beings. Schutz (1976) outlined the specific way in which we
encounter others in a face-to-face situation. He explained that first, “I must consciously pay attention to a fellow-man, to a human being confronting me in person” (p. 24). This, specifically, he called an “awareness”—a “Thou-orientation” (p. 24). He wrote:

the Thou-orientation is the pure mode in which I am aware of another human being as a person. I am already Thou-oriented from the moment that I recognize an entity which I directly experience as a fellow man (as a Thou), attributing life and consciousness to him. (1970a, p. 185)

The face-to-face situation, Schutz explained, takes for granted the Thou-orientation (1976). Each and every time we communicate, doing so requires a belief in the other as “an entity which I directly experience as a fellow man” (1970a, p. 185). If we did not believe them to be a fellow being capable of comprehending us, we would not reach out communicatively for a response in the first place. This is an encounter. Encounters are moments in which we reach out communicatively to others. If we revisit Schutz’ discussion on attention, remember that to be in “an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements” means to be wide-aware (1970a, p. 69) and that “Only the performing and especially the working self is…wide-aware” (p. 69).

Encounter emerges through the performing and working among others, specifically, communicative work. It does not require a face-to-face situation. While a face-to-face situation presupposes this situation, through language I can confirm that the other with whom I encounter in a mediated setting is human (at least for now, in our age, where no meaningful artificial intelligence has been known to pass the Turing Test).
Possibilities for Encounter

Because encounter is communicative, it is not dependent at all on the face-to-face situation and can occur across mediated settings. Imagining all of the possibilities for an encounter is a daunting task, if even possible. We have initial encounters in which we come into contact with the person for the first time, and we have repeated encounters, in which we have previously met the person and are encountering them again. It is undeniable that the majority of the relationships we have in today’s world are hybridized. Even spouses text message each other when apart. By defining encounter as moments in which a shared communicative environment is possible, we can account for those moments in which mutual understanding is never achieved nor desired to be achieved. We can also account for all of the various settings in which it is possible to encounter others in our modern world.

To exemplify this point, I will use Facebook. Facebook is currently the world’s largest social network with nearly 2.5 billion users. On Facebook, users can interact both with individuals they already have met face-to-face or with individuals in which they have never met in person. Facebook has been promoting their groups feature recently, encouraging users to connect with others who have common interests. In addition to encountering others in groups, that is, having moments in which a shared communicative environment is possible, Facebook also makes suggestions to their users to “friend.” In these situations, there is a possible shared communicative environment. We are “encountering” others. Sometimes we might know the people who are suggested, and sometimes not, but in each case, a communicative common environment is possible. They are somehow within our communicative reach, therefore, we encounter them.
Some platforms are much more conducive to initiating encounters than others. Phone calls, for example, are relatively unlikely to be main centers for initial encounters, but they are not impossible. In fact, when we call to arrange a doctor’s appointment, for example, we are encountering another via telephone, and sometimes, if the person answering is new or the doctor is new to us, we are indeed encountering the person on the other line for the first time. Popular rhetoric is full of stories of relationships that were spurred by accidental text, from young men being invited to dinner to couples finding marriage with a text sent to the wrong number. Encounters are essential for all human relationships and can happen in any environment in which a shared communicative environment is possible.

Schutz (1976) noted that it is possible for a Thou-orientation to never move forward to any other type of relationship. For example, if I am on a bus and outside of the window and I see a woman and a child walking and I am aware of them, even though I turn to them and recognize their existence, they have no possibility of reciprocating the attention I now give them. In this case, it would be a one-sided encounter. However, in the mutual recognition of each other’s existence, Schutz explained that “a social relation becomes constituted” (p. 24). This, he considered the ‘pure’ We-relation. Schutz placed a heavy emphasis on the We-relation in observing the bodily expressions of the Other to confirm “phases of my own consciousness” with “‘corresponding’ phases of your consciousness” (p. 25). He argued that “I ‘participate’ in the conscious life of another Self only when I am engaged in a concrete We-relation, face to face with a fellow-man” (p. 26). But, immediately after, he moves towards a discussion of language and meaning. Schutz explained that “The We-relation, however, consists not only in the community of time, that is, in the synchronization of two interior streams of duration; it consists also in the community of space, that is, the bodily and thus exterior presence of fellow-man face
to face with me” (p. 26). *Collected Papers III*, he again emphasizes the face-to-face, but he writes that what ultimately characterizes the We is when “the partners are aware of each other and sympathetically participate in each other’s lives for however short a time we shall call the pure We-relationship” (1970a, p. 186). In the Thou-orientation, we can follow particular bodily movements by the Other and interpret it to gain insight into the psychological life of the Other, but to do so presupposes a system of meaning—language.

To be ‘present’ to another means to enter into a Thou-orientation in a way that is open to reciprocation. Again, this is an encounter—the possibility for a shared communicative environment exists. And none of it, actually, is dependent on one’s actual bodily presence within sight of another. Schutz writes, “the experience of a fellow-man in a We-relation is, strictly speaking, also ‘mediate’: I apprehend his conscious life by interpreting his bodily expressions of subjectively meaningful process” (p. 26). All social relations begin from this general process of an initial encounter.

In our world today, on an everyday basis we encounter other human persons on a regular day to day basis. I encounter others from the moment I awake. My family surrounds me. While I drink my morning coffee, I encounter others as I scan my social media feeds and read breaking news stories from the night before. As I drive to work, I pass multiple others, driving to their various destinations, and, too, I also encounter others who walk or bike. When I arrive at work, I encounter students and colleagues both in person and through my technology. Each person I encounter could be an opening, a potential friend. But, too, it just may be so that the encounter I have is with someone I am already close to. No matter how brief my participation in their existence, my daily life is saturated with encounters, whether mediated or not.
Repeated encounters inform our stock of knowledge in such a way that we can say that we might “know” another person. Encounters involve various layers of knowing, but not necessarily a particularly knowing.

Schutz (1976) wrote:

In the pure We-relation I apprehend only the existence of a fellow-man and the fact that he is confronting me. For a concrete social relation to become established, however, I must also know how he is oriented to me. In face-to-face situations I gain knowledge of this specific aspect of my partner’s conscious life by observing the concrete manifestation of his subjective experiences in the common stream of the We-relation. (p. 27)

Maines (1989) argued that there has been a “transformation of modal ways of knowing others based on the social organization of information” (p. 195). He pointed out that there are two ways of knowing others—categorical and personal knowing, and showed how friendships involve both types. Maines showed that “In small preindustrial communities, continual copresence without personal knowing was for all practical purposes impossible” (p. 196). In today’s world, it is possible to have repeated encounters with another person and yet never “know” the other person. “Knowing” someone takes us beyond encounter, into the next chapter.

**Who We Encounter: Schutz on Our Contemporaries**

Like for Ong and Buber, the face to face is the paradigmatic form of all communication. Natanson in the introduction to Schutz *Collected Papers I* explained that:

The ‘face to face’ relationship is fundamental for all other structures of social relatedness. In my face to face encounter with consociates I share a community of space within our reach in
which I interpret the other's acts, but I share a temporal community as well. Consociates are involved in an on-going temporal flow, bounded by common spatial limits. (p xxxiii)

Schutz used spatial and temporal terms to make sense of how we form relationships with others. He wrote:

I, the human being, born into the social world, and living my daily life in it, experience it as built around my place in it, as open to my interpretation and action, but always referring to my actual biographically determined situation. Only in reference to me does a certain kind of my relations with other obtain the specific meaning which I designate with the world “We,” only with reference to “Us,” whose center I am, do others stand out as “You,” and in reference to “you,” who refer back to me, third parties stand out as “They.” (1973, p. 15).

Contemporaries

Schutz discussed three types of individuals that can be applied to the notion of encounter. There are contemporaries, which are individuals that we share the same historical moment with. Predecessors are individuals who came before us. Successors are those who will come after us. Schutz explained, from the outset that we know contemporaries from past recollections. We apprehend the experience of our contemporaries, in a “They-orientation”, Schutz argues, as “anonymous processes (1976, p. 225). We may also experience them in a “Thou-orientation,” he noted, when we apprehend their experience “within their setting in his stream of consciousness” (p. 224-5). When They-oriented, Schutz argued that we experience the other as an abstraction. Because of this, he argued that “My knowledge of my contemporaries is, therefore, inferential and discursive” (p. 225).
Mere contemporaries, Schutz explained, are “Others who are not face-to-face with me, but who co-exist with me in time” (p. 37). He wrote:

The gradations of experiential directness outside the face-to-face situation are characterized by a decrease in the wealth of symptoms by which I apprehend the Other and by the fact that the perspectives in which I experience the Other are progressively narrower. We may illustrate this point by considering the stages by which a fellow-man confronting me becomes a mere contemporary. Now we are still face-to-face, saying goodbye, shaking hands; now he is walking away…It is impossible to say at which precise moment the face-to-face situation ended and my partner became a mere contemporary of whom I have knowledge but no direct experience (1976, p. 37).

Schutz continued:

The gradations of directness can be also illustrated by the series ranging from a conversation face-to-face, to a conversation by phone, to an exchange of letters, to a message transmitted by a third party. Both examples show a progressive decrease in the wealth of symptoms by which I experience my partner and a progressive narrowing of the perspectives in which my partner appears to me. (1976, p. 37)

Contemporary itself, I believe, comes from Schutz understanding of sharing time together. He wrote” I know that he is in some Here and Now of his own, and I know that his Now is contemporaneous with mine, but I do not participate in it, nor do I share his Here” (1976, p. 38). Specifically, as we transition from the physical co-presence of being with the Other, Schutz explained the following:
Thereby we investigated a border province lying between the domain of directly experienced social reality and the indefinitely experienced world of contemporaries. The closer we approach the latter, the lower the degree of directness and the higher the degree of anonymity which characterizes my experience of others. Accordingly, the broader world of contemporaries itself contains various stratifications: My patterns in former We-relations who are now mere contemporaries but who are restorable to face-to-face situations; partners in the former We-relations of my present partner in a We-relation who are potentially accessible to my direct experience (your friend whom I have not met yet); contemporaries of whom I have knowledge and whom I am to meet shortly (Professor X whose books I have read and with whom I have an appointment in the near future); contemporaries of whose existence I am aware, as reference points for typical social functions (post office employees involved in the processing of my letters); collective social realities which are known to me by their function and organization while their personnel remains anonymous—although I could, under certain circumstances, gain direct personal experience of the individuals in questions (the House of Lords)’ collective social realities which are by their very nature anonymous and of which I consequently cannot gain direct personal experience under any circumstances; objective configurations of meaning which are instituted in the world of my contemporaries and which are essential anonymous in character (the Articles of the Constitution the rules of French grammar); and finally, artifacts in the broadest sense, which testify to some subjective meaning-context of some unknown person, i.e, the sense which the artifact ‘had’ for its creator, user, handler, etc. All these stratifications of the large domain of indirectly experienced social reality are characterized, in a graduate series, by different degrees of
anonymity and by transitions from relative nearness to direct experience to absolute detachment from it. (1976, p. 41)

Schutz explained specifically that are “mere” contemporaries are given to us. He wrote:

The Other who is a mere contemporary is not given to me directly as a unique particular Self. I do not apprehend his Selfhood in a straightforward and prepredicative experience. I do not even have an immediate experience of the Other’s existence. I can only experience the Other in acts of inference by which I judge that the Other is such rather than otherwise, by imputing him certain typical attributes. Whereas I experience the individual Thou directly in the concrete We-relation, I apprehend the contemporary only mediately, by means of typifications. (1976, p. 42)

To explain this, he talked about the various ways that we can encounter our contemporaries. First, he reminded us that we experience others as the same even when we are no longer in a communicative common environment with them. To show how we experience and understand this other, Schutz argued:

The act by which I apprehend the former fellow-man as a contemporary is thus a typification in the sense that I hold invariant my previously gained knowledge, although my former fellow-man has grown older in the meantime and must have necessarily gained new experiences. Of these experiences I have either no knowledge or only knowledge by inference or knowledge gained through fellow-men by indirect sources. (p. 42)

Important for our purposes especially, Schutz argued that “It is abundantly clear that all such knowledge of contemporaries points back to, and is legitimized by, an originary direct
experience of a fellow-man” (p. 42). However, he did note that “I can also gain knowledge about my contemporary social world in other ways than the one just cited” (p. 42-3). Cultural artifacts are how we do such, he explained. Schutz wrote:

My experiences of things and events in physical reality, of objects manufactures by men, of tools and artifacts, of cultural objects intuitions and action patters, too, refer to the world of my contemporaries (or point back to the world of my predecessors, a circumstance we shall discuss later). (p. 43)

When it comes to exactly how it is that we can encounter those no longer in our presence, that is they share a historical moment with us but not space, he argued that we apprehend them sometimes through their tools and artifacts. We then interpret these. Schutz wrote that “Such interpretations are by their very nature derivative. They consist of inferences based on and mediated by my experiences of fellow-men, either of particular fellow-men or of fellow-human beings in general” (p. 43). One of the major differences, Schutz noted throughout his works, was that in the face-to-face situation we experience a flow of consciousness simultaneously as the Other experiences their flow, and we can confirm it. Thou-orientations, for Schutz, was a subset of a general They-orientation. Schutz argued that when we experience contemporaries, they appear as anonymous. For him, the We-relation could only manifest in the face-to-face. The We-relation was a double Thou-orientation, and it depended on “the immediacy of a shared vivid present” (p. 46). Schutz argued that:

Whereas my experience of a fellow-man in the We-relation is continuously modified and enriched by the experiences shared by us, this is not the case in the They-relation. Each new experience of contemporaries adds, of course, to my stock of knowledge; and the ideal types by which I am oriented to others in a They-relation do, indeed, undergo
modifications as a result of shifts in my situation. But these modifications remain minimal as long as a given situation and my interests in it—which have determined the original application of a given typifying scheme, remain constant. (p. 55)

The reason for this, he explained, relates to the following. He wrote:

In the We-relation I can verify my assumption that the way in which I experience my environment can be co-ordinated with the way in which you experience yours. I am wont to extend this assumption to my contemporary and to say that if he were in my situation, his experiences would be roughly identical with mine. This assumption, however, cannot be verified. The question whether my partner’s interpretation of the world is congruent with mine cannot be resolved with certainty in a They-relation. (p. 55)

The problem here, is that this is also not necessarily so in the We-relation, as we can never know this for certain. In order to be closest as we can, it requires confirmation through words and speech, through voice.

Schutz did note the importance of language in speech in this section of his materials. He wrote that “In communicating with my partners in social relations I use sign-systems. The more anonymous my partner, the more ‘objectively’ must I use the signs” (p. 56). He adds, regarding language that:

The reason for this is quite clear: in the social world into which we are born, language (in the broadest sense) is admittedly the paramount vehicle of communication; its conceptual structure and its power of typification make it the outstanding tool for the conveying of meaning. There is even a strong tendency in contemporary thought to identify meaning with
its semantic expression and to consider language, speech, symbols, significant gestures, as
the fundamental condition of social intercourse as such. (pp. 160-161)

Related to contemporaries in time and space, Schutz argued that despite all “social distance,”
“contemporaries are in principle able to act on one another” (1970a, p. 119). He continued, “The
world of contemporaries contains, of course, regions which consists of former fellow-men—
whether these may or may not again become fellow-men for me—and potential fellow-men” (p.
119). He then continued, “Furthermore, there is the world of our predecessors which acts upon
us while itself being beyond the reach of our action, and the world of our successors upon which
we can act but which cannot act upon us” (1970a, p. 119).

Consociates

Schutz contrasted contemporaries with consociates. Consociates are those with whom we
share a face-to-face relationship. Schutz noted that “consociates are mutually involved in one p.
16 another’s biography (1973, pp. 16-17). He continued that “they are growing older together;
they live, as we may call it, in a pure We-relationship” (1973, p. 17). Like with contemporaries,
we still draw on our typifications and stock of knowledge to understand the Other. We also
cannot ever be certain of their complete particularity. Schutz wrote:

Summing up, we may say that, except in the pure We-relation of consociates, we can
never grasp the individual uniqueness of our fellow–man in his unique biographical
situation. In the constructs of common-sense thinking the Other appears at best as a
partial self, and he enters even the pure We-relation merely with a part of his personality.
(1973, p. 17).
Bakardjieva (2005) in explaining consociates, wrote the following regarding Schutz and Luckmann’s (1973) work that “Mass media, for example, enlarge the number of types of contemporaries of whose existence I know in general, that is, whose existence I can infer on” (p. 101). She continued on:

However, just as not all those within each other’s immediate reach are consociates (e.g. complete strangers riding on the same bus) and all those beyond each other’s immediate reach are contemporaries (e.g. family members temporarily away from home, not all those online are consociated contemporaries). Keeping in touch with family members by email and chatting with friends non-anonymous on the IRC are obviously extensions of the interaction between consociates; likewise, online business transactions and impersonal correspondence between agents of organizations are an integral part of the communications between contemporaries. (p. 101)

Zhao (2004) specifically calls for an update to the Schutz differentiation between the realm of consociates and contemporaries as a result of electronic technologies. He wrote:

The use of electronic communications technologies extends human perceptual reaches beyond the limits of human naked senses, resulting in the rise of third realm—the realm of consociated contemporaries, where people interact face-to-device with each other in conditions of telecopresence. The emergence of this social domain in cyberspace reconfigures the structure of the lifeworld by providing individuals with an opportunity to establish we-relationships in a new type of shared meaning context. (p. 92)

Zhao clarified an issue in Schutz work. He wrote:
In a face to face situation, individuals enter a ‘we-relation’ through mutual orientation, and the recurrence of such a relationship over a prolonged period of time turns complete strangers into *intimate fellows*. (p. 93)

He continued:

A social realm is defined in terms of the combination of certain temporal and spatial characteristics, with the former containing not only the dimensions of immediacy but also the dimension of duration. It is the recurrence of a given contact situation over a prolonged period of time that results in a given social realm. This is a point that has not been made particular clear in Schutz’s writing.

*Social Relations*

Schutz does not mention friendship specifically in many places, but he does mention it in some detail. He attacks the notion of friendship from arising out of the mundane by placing it in the social sphere. Friendship is part of a we-relation, and Schutz explains that we often understand particular “courses of acts as unities within larger (and more lasting) meaning-contexts” (p. 71). He argues that the “unity of” a “friendship” which is “resolved in multifacted relations situated in social time...which partly consists of living we-relations, partly of relations among contemporaries” (p. 71). Schutz explains that the very nature of friendships is that they are fragmentary, and this is an important point when I discuss the tech revolution on the phenomenology of friendship. He writes, “Strictly speaking, these social relations are not continuous but rather repeatable” (p. 71). He continues that what we conclude from this analysis is that “there are social relations that essentially can be constituted only in the immediacy of living we-relations” (p. 72). But, for friendship, Schutz does recognize the something more. He
writes, “there are also chosen relations for which a certain intimacy and depth of lived experience are constitutive, for example, an amorous relations, a friendship)” (p. 72). He does not continue to explore this in more depth, but he does ask “Thus, apart from the originary structure of such social relations, the opportunities for the restorability of a living we-relation pay an important role” (p. 72). The question is, “How long can one, for instance, be a father, a husband, a friend at a distance?” (p. 72). He writes, although not explicitly referring to technology, that “Here, undoubtedly, the social transformation of time is of great importance” (p. 72).

The addition of this section has been to decide as to whether it is possible for a social relation, and friendship, could develop between two persons who are not in a face-to-face relationship, and also, to then develop whether or not they can develop between individuals who are contemporaries, or who are successors/predecessors. Shutz wrote that “The social relation in the face-to-face situation are characterized by reciprocity of the Thou-orientations of the two partners” (1976, p. 33). He wrote, “If I am merely observing, my Thou-orientation is, of course, one-sided” (p. 33). He continued “My observation is conduct oriented to him but his conduct need not be oriented to me” (p. 33).

**The Role of Knowledge in Encounter**

Our knowledge is ever-changing, dependent on our interactions and experiences and social transformations. Schutz writes “it must be emphasized that the stock of knowledge is in a continual flux” (p. 75), and “It is clear that any supervening experience enlarges and enriches it” (p. 75). Most of our knowledge is derived socially via language and all of our knowledge serves as a map from which we navigate our world. There is a difference between knowledge of, knowledge about and knowing. Knowledge of implies our basic awareness of their possible
existence. I can know of a person whom I have never met, or I can know about them, yet I may not know them. When I have knowledge of I have a mediated awareness of their existence. For example, I might know of my best friend’s friend but not know about them or know them. I might encounter them on Facebook even as a suggested friend. Knowledge about implies more certainty about the existence of another person. If someone says “I know about them,” they might mean “I have basic demographic facts about them” or even “I’ve heard stories and can predict what they will do, but have never shared a communicative environment with them.” Again I may encounter this person via a friend suggestion for my best friend’s friend, whom I know quite a lot about through my best friend.

In each of the above, I have taken a Thou-orientation. Failure to share a communicative environment will not open a We-relation. Knowledge about assumes knowledge of, but having knowledge about another does not imply that I can understand them. Ultimately, being able to say we “know” someone means that we have some degree of accuracy related to our ability to anticipate their “in-order-to” motives. Schutz (1976) wrote, “Above all, I cannot understand other people’s acts without knowing the in-order-to or the because motives of such acts” (p. 12) and for this knowing of our friends, specifically, there is required a sense of history within their life that is required that transcends encounter.

Even if we have a good ability to anticipate someone’s motives, it does not necessarily even mean that we are friendly with them. Schutz explained that there are “manifold degrees of understanding” (p. 12). All of our understanding of others is understood from our “own lived experience” (p. 175). What complicates this more so, is the idea that human beings communicate with and without intent. To have a degree of accuracy, and for friendship to develop, we need to have repeat encounters. That is, encounters need needs to continue through
time, and occur more than once. We cannot, for example, be friends with someone in the future. Our knowledge informs our way of navigating our world, the objects within that world, and the people embedded in the world. Our knowledge also informs our expectations of our friends.

With this in mind, no matter how we encounter others, we draw from our stock of knowledge to understand who they are and how they are. Whether it might be the bus driver with whom we exchange a polite, “How are you,” or an online troll, we anticipate generalized patterns of communicating as well as expectations about who they are. Technology is reshaping our lifeworld and our relationships within it Bakardjieva (2005). This chapter has attempted to show that one way that the lifeworld and our relationships are changing is related to the basic level of human interaction, encounter. Technology is only expanding horizons for encounters, not destroying them. Popular but faulty rhetoric suggests that individuals are solitary and alone, slaves to their devices. They ignore possibilities for social relationships as they are stuck in their devices. The research, however, shows us that whether it be through blogging, chatting, singing, reading, or any of the other various means of communicating in our media-saturated environment, our possibilities for encounters are rich.

In the next chapter, we will explore the tension of breaking past encounters with the recognition of uniqueness in a mediated environment. In this chapter, we discussed some ways in which we encounter others. Encountering others does not guarantee a friendship, though. Instead, what must happen is a recognition of the other’s uniqueness, their individuality that is particularly theirs. The chapter will examine the work of Walter Ong, Corey Anton, and Don Idhe to explore the intersections of intentionality, voice, and personhood. It examines the role that technology plays in impeding or facilitating this recognition, and makes connections to following chapters that discuss discourse.
Particularity and Personhood: Humanizing the Friend through Voice

“Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: ‘What! You too? I thought I was the only one!’”

--C.S. Lewis

In Collected Papers I, Schutz argued that the “predominant function of the face-to-face relationship” is to “experience one another in our individual uniqueness” (1973, p. 317). If this is true, then what does it say for the possibility of being experienced as unique in a mediated setting? Rawlins indicated the importance of the friend’s ability to perceive “the other’s own selfhood” (2009, p. 31). When we are in the presence of our friends, we drop these undermost garments, perceive the other’s own selfhood, and experience the other’s individual uniqueness. We know that they know us for who we really are, and we know them as they are. The recognition of the other’s unique consciousness is recognition of their particularity, of their unique interior, and this is only possible with the manifestation of voice.

This chapter will begin with a conceptualization of the term particularity, placing it in the communicative realm. It draws from several scholars, although the emphasis in this chapter is on the work of Walter Ong, who has written extensively on interiority and the development of communication technology. Particularity is essential for friendship. Friendship requires a recognition of the particularity of the other. That is, I do not just see the other as human, as opening, as discussed in the basic encounter chapter, but instead, I recognize this person for all of their uniqueness and individuality, as a specific person rather than just a person, and that they, too, do the same for me.

Gronbeck (1991) argued that Ong’s greatest contribution could actually be the work that he has done to advance our understanding of human consciousness. In Ong’s works of
consciousness, Gronbeck showed that Ong placed consciousness directly within the communication. Zlatic (2017), an Ong student and friend, also highlighted Ong’s importance in connecting the self to communications media. He wrote that Ong’s personalism was derived from his life and interactions with others. What makes communication more than information sharing, Zlatic explained, is that in communication, interior is shared with interior. While this sharing can occur without any sharing of words, he noted the following:

There is a mysterious, sometimes unspoken, component of communication: an intentionality between inexplicable interiors that precedes language use. This understanding of communication rejects visualist classifications of objective/subjective, for to understand a person requires not objectification but encounter, an intersubjectivity of sharing of interiors that is best represented through sound, the material medium that unites two interiors. (p. 367)

I have discussed in previous works that Ong’s work is continuously relevant (Petricini, 2017). Multiple scholars continue to draw from Ong, particularly in the media ecology tradition. In addition to his hundreds of works, he has roughly a dozen books in his corpus. Ong kept meticulous records and his entire collection is archived at St. Louis University, where he earned his master’s degree and returned to settle for his career. This chapter will draw from several of Ong’s most influential works, including Presence of the Word, The Barbarian Within, and some of his articles. It will also draw from the work of Corey Anton who has done work on interiority and Ong. Through these two scholars, I will show that particularity is the reciprocal recognition of the other’s unique consciousness (interiority) through voice. Whereas encounter requires the possibility of a shared communicate environment, particularity requires it.

Psychological Visibility
Nathaniel Branden, a psychotherapist, and lover of Ayn Rand argued that one of the central benefits of friendship is a recognition of my own particularity which he calls *psychological visibility* (1993). He explained that in confirmation of our own being through our interactions we others, we experience a sense of joy. This joy is related not just to the visibility of our own consciousness but in the confirmation that life is possible. Branden wrote:

> When we encounter a person who thinks as we do, who notices what we notice, who values the things we value, who tend to respond to different situations as we do, not only do we experience a strong sense of affinity with such a person but also we can experience our self through our perception of that person. (p. 70)

We find joy in the recognition and confirmation of self when we become visible as unique beings. We encounter thousands of others, especially in our technological world today, and the majority of them are not friends nor will ever become friends. But sometimes there are moments where we notice that the other person in our encounter seems to see the “real” us, and this brings us joy that we hope to hold on to. This visibility is the reason we seek intimate human relationships like friendship in the first place, Branden argued.

Sociologist Gerald Suttles (1970) noted the necessity for recognition of uniqueness in friendship. He lists four essential characteristics of friendship, and three are relevant to this notion. First, he showed that in friendship, “The other person in the relationship is positively evaluated as a person *qua* person rather than for incidental advantages that may accrue as a result of an encounter with him” (p. 98). Second, he added, “It is appropriate to appreciate the objective qualities, private property, or social characteristics of a friend only because they represent the person himself rather than for any universal value attached to them” (p. 99). Finally, he added that “The person who is a friend must be appreciated as a unique self rather
than simply a particular instance of a general class. To suggest that a friend could be adequately or arbitrarily replaced by someone else who meets the same general criteria is usually felt to be antithetical to ‘true friendship” (p. 100). Ginsberg, Gottman, and Parker (1986) showed that even in childhood, we already can recognize that not just anyone will do when it comes to friendship. We seek particular persons for friends.

To be able to recognize the other in their uniqueness is a form of communicative work. To move beyond encountering someone and typifying them, objectifying them as one body among many, we must perform a series of communicative acts. Anton (2002) wrote, “Common sense, as informed by modern science, tells us that persons and the world are things” (p. 185). Ong suggested, in The Barbarian Within (1962), that “At the heart of the linguistic situation” and “at the heart of all human operations of understanding” is a “twinning” (p. 42). This foundational process of human intellect is a setting apart. When we say “this,” this is “not that.” Ong wrote that “Man knows compendo et dividend” (p. 42). Ong called our setting apart binarism, and says it is “endemic in human intellect” (p. 43). In breaking down, we do objectify and dehumanize others, but, this process also is how we come to know and understand others.

The word for friend and the thought of friend are neither the same sort of thing as the sensorily present friend. The reason for this is because, as Ong argued, “The paradigmatic sense of presence is the presence of one conscious human being to another” (2017, p. 24). Ong is very explicit about the idea that we have an actual sense of presence, as in SENSE, a felt sense of other persons. He works through an example of a chair, to a plant, to a subhuman, to an animal to show that we as humans have very different senses of the presence of objects and things before us, and humans before us. What differentiates this full sense, as in what makes human presence felt so much different than the presence of all other objects in the universe, is
reciprocity. Ong asked us to imagine the emptiness of an animal’s eye in understanding the problem with reciprocity. While to encounter another we need not ever have a reciprocated awareness, for particularity to occur reciprocity is required.

This mutual recognition is foundational for friendship or any intimate relationship. In his interview “Why Talk,” conducted by Walter Altree (1973), Ong discussed the nature of our isolation in thought and the role that communication plays in building intimacy. It is impossible due to our human limits to ever completely understand another without a doubt. The closest we can get to another is an estimation, and this is achieved through their communicative acts and our interpretation. Ong writes:

Even a husband and wife never find out what it feels like to be the other. They try, they get awfully close. But no matter what, each of us remains isolated in his or her own consciousness, each one in his own little prison. (2000, p. 374)

The isolation, though, is also our grace. Ong notes that our ability to distinguish I from others, to set apart, is the foundation of our ability to communicate.

**Shared Interiors**

Words are at the fundamental level the opening of consciousness to the other for the sharing of interiority. All thought and all communication are only possible through relationships with others, and Ong says that all communication “goes on in a context of belief” (year, p. 265). All communication, no matter in which form, expects a response. When we speak to others, we are making a statement about our belief in their existence. Ong wrote that each communicative act we engage in with another is a recognition, a recognition of “a presence to whose word I can, in turn, attend and in whom I can thus believe through acceptance of what he has to say” (p.
In turning and communicating with another person, we believe them to be alive and capable of reciprocating. Anton stated that “presence and interiority” are key to understanding the basic fact of Ong’s phenomenology—that “persons...are interiorities who are present in voice” (p. 74). We believe in their existence in each communicative action we partake.

**Triadic Intentionality**

For Anton, intentionality provides a pathway for understanding person and world that avoids the various problems associated with the objectification of other inherent in language itself that we see as problematic in other ontologies. Anton proposed an understanding of the triadic structure of intentionality that is useful here in an understanding of how intentionality gives rise to voice and interiority. Anton (2002) explained that the three components of intentionality are: intentios (“intentional activities), intentums (“their correlative intended objects), and a peculiar proper (“specific intendableness”) (p. 187). Anton clarified that “When we consider some object, any object at all, our object is not in ‘the object itself,’ but rather in the object given its ‘intendableness’” (p. 188). He used a pen for an example, and here, I would like to substitute instead the word friend to show how this triadic structure is important to understanding the relationship between interiority, particularity, and friendship. On one hand, there is “an act of seeing, the object begin seen, and the seeableness” of the friend. He also noted perhaps we instead think through the “touchableness” of the friend. In this case, there is the act of touching, the friend being touched, and the touchableness of the friend. He told us to “Note that the thing seen and the thing touched are the same, and yet are manifested differently according to the differing manners of making contact” (p. 188). This, he argued, shows that “This intentional relatedness implies that any perceived entity in so far as it is perceived, is an entity in its perceivedness” (p. 188). A point that Anton made that is essential to the current
project is that “‘intendableness’ cannot be reductively isolated to deriving either from the world or from the subject. It is, on the contrary, a dialogic constitution” (p. 188). In the everyday realm of encounter, the natural attitude, the mundane then, drawing from our earlier point, Anton would argue that “intentional threads, while pre-reflective, are taut such that the ‘intentio’ is absent and we mindlessly dwell in the ‘intentum.’” (p. 189). The givenness of our friends is manifested via voice in a context of belief. We mindlessly dwell in our communication with our friends, their interiors given to us.

When we hear our friend, for example, rarely if ever are we focused on the hearing itself and instead “dwell in what is heard” (p. 189). We also do this with speech. We speak without attending to the fact that we are speaking. And, if we take this further, we can see that we listen without attending to the fact that a friend is speaking or that we are listening, we instead dwell in what the words make manifest, that is the interior of the other and especially their uniqueness. He also points out that we are not singularly experiencing one sense and no others, but instead, we can imagine that we dwell in the existence of our friend no matter how we encounter them, that is, what is primarily in focus as another speaks to us. In those moments in which we confirm our friend as unique, and they confirm us as unique, we hardly pause to utter, “Wow, you are unique.” Rather, in the process of the revelation of interiors, we recognize something special about the person--their voice.
Voice in a Context of Belief

In the previous chapter, when we discussed the different possibilities for an encounter, within these encounters communication was not a required component. While an encounter is communicative, it does not rely on the sharing of a communicative environment. Also, communication does not necessarily lead to particularity. While all reaching out might be revelatory of an interior, it is not necessarily recognized as this interior. Voice is the revelation of this particular interior. Friendship requires mutual recognition of each friend’s interior.

Voice is exterior for Ong, and all communication is a break out of our own interior and an attempt to grasp the other (2002). All communication is in a way a breakthrough into interior, but dialogue specifically leads to particularity. Ong notes that “this dialogue assures me also of the uniqueness of your consciousness and of its ultimate inviolability” (p. 270). We will discuss dialogue and friendship later, and this dwelling in the givenness will be important. Anton has argued that voice for Ong “is not only the paradigmatic sound in the human world, but it is also a key phenomenon for understanding persons” (2012, p. 73). Is voice only possible however through sound?

While Ong (2000) does not exclude the ability for the presence of interiority to be made clear through strictly sound, he does privilege sound. He wrote that “true interiority is communicative” (p. 117). However, sound, he argued, conveys more information about physical and psychological elements. While he noted sound’s ability to convey interiors in space, such as a cave, he does recognize that hearing is not the only way in which we can explore interiors of objects in general. He noted that both movement and touch can convey information about interiors. But again, there is a danger in placing the same weight in human beings as we would an object like a cup or a cave. Sound is the paradigmatic way voice has been heard for most of
human history. Dance (1989) writes, regarding sound’s primacy to paradigmatic human dialogue:

> Ong senses that this initial utterance may constitute the primal means of knowing—of knowing other, of knowing self, of knowing outside, of knowing inside. This utterance of self may well be the primal noetic which allows the human being to make known to itself and to others its ‘I.’ (p. 188)

Sound is particularly important in the “revelation of the other” (Dance, 1989, p. 186)—their interiority, their thoughts, their words. Soukup (2012) wrote, “Sound reveals the interior. The social structures of all human life presume those interiors” (p. 41). Soukup wrote of the ability of sound to establish a sense of immediacy and simultaneity, although texting can now be nearly as simultaneous as spoken conversation if one’s physical skills and technological access allows.

Our senses form our place of being in the world, Ong explained how sound, specifically, shapes our being. Ong wrote on the topic of simultaneity that, “Because it situates me in the midst of a world, sound conveys simultaneity” (p. 130). Sound, he suggested, establishes a sense of the present in presence. When we are in actual physical presence, we share everything going on at oncedness. In addition to simultaneity, sound is also connected to human thought. Ong wrote that sound “has proved in all cultures the most immediate sensory coefficient of thought” (p. 140) and again, this is correlated with our interactions with others. There is a direct connection between thought and sound. Still, though, this does not mean that voice is only possible through sound.

Ong asks us when pondering voice, to consider what might happen when the speaker wears a mask. While for him, the mask is related to Greek tragedy, a similar pontification might
be “what happens to voice and belief when the other person is behind the screen?” Drawing from Heidegger, Buber, and Lavelle, Ong showed us that the other’s “sense of self remains outside my direct awareness, and yet I can feel its aura and know that there is some interiority with whom I am dealing” (2002, p. 268). In the contact we make with the other, Ong argues that it is “mediated by exterior phenomena that implements commerce between interiors” (p. 269). Brook (2002) worked from Ong. She argued that “sight alone” cannot “deal with interiors” and that “other senses can help to reconstitute the interiority of experience” (p. 70). She continued:

Focusing on the other senses, the way we can and sometimes do use them presents the interiors in a way it could be argued is closer to them as given. That is, the encounter with interiors in the world which carries a veracity to the experience and to the interiors themselves. (p. 74)

Givenness is essential here for this idea and brings us back to the earlier discussion of Anton. When we add our voice to a communicative event, we are giving our interior. If we imagine an impersonal conversation, quite scripted, there is no revelation of voice and hence no true sharing this particular interior. We might stand next to someone in the elevator and comment on the weather. This is a manifestation of interior, but it reveals nothing really about the self and the words could belong to anyone. But the revelatory of voice moves us again from an to this. In our comments on the weather, if we move from a general script to a revelation about our childhood and a snowstorm we remembered, we then have added our voice. In such a conversation, it is possible that our revelation may not be noticed, nor may be reciprocated. It may be recognized, but not reciprocated. But, in revealing our voice, we are giving something away.
A Side Note—Buber’s Confirmation and Particularity

There are elements of this discussion that may sound similar to scholars of Buber’s work. Having been influenced by the work of Walter J. Ong, I cannot ignore that he was influenced greatly by the work of Buber. While this section specifically does not draw from Buber, one of the main themes throughout Buber’s works was that of confirmation. Sarah Scott, philosophy scholar, wrote in the peer-reviewed *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry that for Buber, It is “In confirmation one meets, chooses and recognizes the other as a subject with the capacity to actualize one’s own potential. In order for confirmation to be complete one must know that he is being made present to the other” (n.p.). She drew our attention to the fact that “confirmation is not the same as acceptance or unconditional affirmation of everything the other says or does” (n.p.). She continued that “Since we are not born completely focused and differentiated and must struggle to achieve a unified personality, sometimes we have to help an “other” to actualize themselves against their own immediate inclination” (n.p.). Scott identifies several terms that Buber uses to “describe the grasp of the other that is necessary for confirmation” in the I-Thou relationship including; ‘embrace,’ ‘inclusion,’ ‘imagining the real,’ and ‘synthesizing apperception’” (n.p.) and this rings true of elements we have seen and will see throughout this work on friendship.

One hesitancy with using the term and instead choosing the term particularity in this work is related to the psychologizing of the term for the field of psychotherapy swept up and adapted as part of the self-actualization hierarchy. Friedman (1988) traces the adaptation and conversation with the work of Carl Rogers related to confirmation. Friedman wrote that “Buber is unalterably opposed to that psychologism which wishes to remove the reality of relationship
into the separate psyches of the participants” (2005, p. 29). Confirmation cannot occur intrinsically. Instead, it can only manifest between persons. Friedman added:

Being made present, as a person is the heart of what Buber calls confirmation. Confirmation is interhuman, but it is not simply social or interpersonal. Unless one is confirmed in one’s uniqueness as the person one can become, one is only seemingly confirmed. The confirmation of the other must include an actual experiencing of the other side of the relationship so that one can imagine quite concretely what another is feeling, thinking, perceiving, and knowing. (p. 29-30).

Technological Implications

Soukup (2004), an Ong student and friend, wrote concerning belief that “Electronic media include either delay or distance; they require both a belief in the interlocutor and a belief about the media” (p. 7). Soukup, concerning electronic communication and interiority, explained, “In creating written words, a writer must also create an audience—not the immediacy of another interiority who will call forth the writer’s interior, but an artificial, imaged person” (p. 9). He continued, “Here, too, we come to belief that, for the writer create a text as something separate from the writer’s own interior and separate from any actual person. The possibility of writing exists in the imaged other, but gives up the possibility of an interactive response” (p. 9). He further added that “The notion of response to a presence, to a voiced word, disappears and is attenuated to behavior” (p. 9). Later, again related to electronic media and the notion of voice, Soukup asked if electronic media invite us or summon us to belief. He explained that “They, like writing, are artifacts, objects separated from us; unlike writing, they speak with their own voice, although it is voice deferred. And, like writing, these newer communication forms share in the faith that arises with the possibility of communication” (p. 10). Because voice is the
language of interiority, it can invoke these possibilities with any medium. Voice is what summons a belief in the other. Voice is not the sound of the other but instead the combination of words that are strung together to reach out from inside the other.

Soukup (2004) explained that “The voice, as Ong notes, implies not only the self and interiority; it implies a divided self as well, for every speaker simultaneously takes on the role of listener” (p. 10). Soukup brings to the forefront the notion of rhetoric. He summarized Ong’s 1977 essay “From Mimesis to Irony.” He writes, “Formal oral performances have both a particular audience situation and a particular rhetoric. This implies that each frame has its own rhetoric and its own rhetoric situation. The voice in its immediacy summons the hearer to belief” (p. 11). Continuing on, he wrote, “The voice in its immediacy summons the hearer to belief. Rhetoric here fosters a shared interiority, a shared understanding of the world” (p. 11). He added that “The dramatic performance, in contrast, with its characters and masks summons belief through a rhetoric of imagination. This rhetoric calls forth roles, including the role of belief” (p. 11). Each medium then has a specific rhetorical situation that summons belief. There is a difference between performative and descriptive acts, Soukup noted. He wrote, “Each frame, each medium, adds something to the language and thus to the relationships that we humans enter” (p. 11). He then explained that “If the living voice summons us to belief through its immediacy, it makes a double claim: Whatever the locutionary status, a word of address summons us to belief in the other and belief that the other’s locution has the status that it claims” (p. 11-12). He continued, “Another way to put this is that the locution’s content (meaning) makes a claim on us to belief in the voice of the speaker” (p. 12). Then, drawing from The Pragmatics of Human Communication, Soukup pointed out that “Every word of address does at least two things—it expresses a content and describes the relationship between speaker and
hearer” (p. 12). In addition to belief about the person, Soukup also noted that electronic requires a belief “about the medium, its fidelity, its reliability, its transparency” (p. 12). When we send a text message, for example, we believe that our message will be received.

Interior can be revealed through mediated means. Voice is projectable through mediated means. Reciprocal recognition, too, is possible through mediated settings. Just like walking on to an elevator, mediated communication can certainly be scripted and reveal nothing. However, in sending a message out there in which I reveal this interior, I am believing that it can be received and often, it is received. I might send a message to a friend about a snowstorm, and that friend, hours later, can certainly respond in a way recognizes my unique interior and our asynchronous communication can be a reciprocal recognition of the other’s unique interior—we have entered the space of particularity.

Soukup (2004) explained mediated belief like this: “The frame again interposes an additional relationship message: not ‘Here is a content,’ but “here is (1) a content at a distance, (2) a relationship with a person addressing you, and (3) a relationship to the frame that is far away from you” (p. 12). Ultimately, Soukup concluded at the end that electronic media can relay belief, but only through “layers of hermeneutic action” (p. 14). He wrote, “The more unlike the frame of utterance to the immediacy of voice, the more extended the demands for interpretation” (p. 14). He wrote, “The frames of secondary orality pose challenges that foster a hermeneutic of suspicion” (p. 14). The idea of the hermeneutic of suspicion and the increased need for interpretation in our media-saturated world moves us to the next section of this work, where we will examine the interplay of digitization and dialogue. Zlatic wrote, “new media can promote personalist encounters in original ways” (p. 31). Related to speech, Zlatic (2004) wrote, “All speech is a cry, a call from one interior to another” and “All discourse, whether oral,
written, printed, or digitalized, cannot escape this grounding” (p. 34). All discourse then allows for the call from one unique interior to the next.

In the last chapter, we noted that technology was advancing in ways that allowed for the human encounter to radically change. The goal of this chapter was to examine how particularity emerges from an encounter, and to examine whether or not it could still occur outside of the face-to-face communicative setting. Particularity emerges in the reciprocal development of voice, and voice, as we saw here, is the language of interiority. Interiority can be conjured through all human discourse.

In the next chapter, we will continue the conversation by visiting Ong’s work on depersonalization and hermeneutics. In addition to Ong, Buber and Schutz will also be utilized to gain insight in the relationship between talk, text, and technology. Jumping off from the nature of human thought in this chapter, the next chapter delves deeper into the ways in which intentionality and interiority guide interpretation.
Dialogue and Digitization: The Language of Friendship

“Ultimately the bond of all companionship, whether in marriage or in friendship, is conversation.”

– Oscar Wilde

One of the most pressing issues that Ong explored at the end of his life was the increasingly difficult problem of hermeneutics in an electronic world. Two years ago, his final manuscript was posthumously published, Language as Hermeneutic. Of particular concern for Ong was depersonalization. Farrell, in the introduction to Presence of the Word, explained that for Ong, depersonalization refers to “situations in which we no longer advert to a person or are aware that someone is speaking” (p. xix). Farrell added that what Ong meant was that “we do not advert to the person behind the word, so to speak, the human voice from which such an utterance might come because the written or printed texts with words seem to detach them from a person” (p. xix). As mediated communication became standard practice and many of our regular interactions now occurred through a screen, this continues to be a concern.

Depersonalization is more than just an occurrence related to textual communication. Buber, in his work on dialogue, recognized that humans naturally flow from I-Thou orientations to I-It. It is a feature of human communication—one so problematic that Buber dedicated much of his scholarship to exploring its effects. One way depersonalization manifests with current technology is related to the reduction of the other as an information-giving tool rather than a person. Bakardjieva (2005) explained that we “suffer” through a series of reductions which include “intensity and spontaneity, of reciprocity and tangibility” (p. 65). As we will see later though, the association of reduction with loss is sometimes wrong. In the previous chapters, we explored the relevance of the work of Schutz and Ong to inform this project. In this chapter, we
will begin by reviewing some of the basic tenets of the work of Martin Buber on dialogue. Buber’s work greatly influenced Walter Ong, particularly Ong’s work on presence. His accounts of presence, belief, and voice were grounded ultimately in Buber’s conceptualization of dialogue (Farrell, 2012). While Ong’s admiration for Buber is clear throughout his works, I have struggled to find a connection between Schutz and Buber. At the time of writing, I have found only one piece of literature examining common themes and connections between Buber and Schutz. Grinnell (1983) studied the use of the “Pure we” in Schutz and compared it to Buber’s “I-Thou.” Grinnell noted, “fundamental to both Schutz and Buber are the notions that intersubjectivity is tied to the lived presence of the self with other” (p. 185). Martin Buber was born in 1878 in Vienna. Schutz was born about two decades later in 1899, also in Vienna. Both were born into Jewish families. Both attended the University of Vienna, although Schutz studied law and was there about two decades after Buber who studied philosophy. While there is no explicit connection, Schutz’s work on interpretation can inform our understanding of dialogue in this work.

The central concern for this chapter is not whether dialogue is necessary for friendship. It is. Nor is it whether dialogue is possible via mediated settings. It is. This chapter instead shows that while dialogue can occur online, there are several implications associated with the nature of our interpretations of others that are unique to our electronic age. All communication is hermeneutic. Dialogue, the language of friendship, is hermeneutic. Technologically-mediated communication has altered our understanding of others. Zlatic (2017) explained that “All language use is hermeneutic” and “all writing is digitization” (p. 371) Sara van der Berg, Ong scholar and co-editor of Language as Hermeneutic, wrote in the introduction that “Ong set forth several principles basic to his understanding of interpretation: all meaning is negotiated between
people; all language is hermeneutic; and digital technologies evoke interpretation as a corrective to the apparent totalizing of information that the dichotomous structure of digitization conveys” (2017, p. 2). To address and explore the implication of these issues on friendship in our age, this chapter begins by drawing from Buber and Ong to overview the basics of dialogue. It then transitions to Schutz to explore how our interpretation of others and the surrounding world is communicative. After, Ong’s thoughts on textual communication are overviewed to respond to several current themes that need to be re-examined in today’s world. It concludes by making connections to technologies today and friendship.

Dialogue

When we think of the term dialogue, we are likely to imagine a conversation between two people. Perhaps we might imagine the dialogue in a movie or in a fiction text where the narrator breaks and the characters then talk. Dialogue though is more than words. Friedman (1965a) a Buber scholar, wrote that “genuine dialogue can take place in silence, whereas much conversation is really monologue” (p. xvii). For Buber, human dialogue is grounded in “the sign” (1965a, p. 4). Specifically, he argued that “the sign” meant “sound and gesture” (p. 4). He added, though, that written language actually can be considered dialogue in “special circumstances” (p. 4). The example of a special circumstance that he used was two friends sitting in a meeting passing notes back and forth. In this setting, the friends are engaged in dialogue. He added that the absence of sound and gesture (sign) does not eliminate the possibility of dialogue, however, it would be impossible for an outsider to understand the nature of the dialogue of silence without being an active participant. Farrell, in the introduction to the 2000 edition of Ong’s Presence of the Word, also wrote of the special relationship of silence to dialogue. He wrote, “But person-to-person communing, the communing of spirits, is exemplified
paradigmatically in live conversation, and perhaps in moments of silence together, too” (p. xix). While dialogue is more than just words, they are an important element of dialogue. Silence has word-dependent meaning.

Words and language play central roles in authentic dialogue and lead to the creation of a realm of mutual meaning between two persons. Buber noted that there are three specific modes of our being in the world related to our utterances. He called them “present continuance, potential possession, and actual occurrence” (1965b, p. 110). Potential possession, he explained, is “the totality of what has ever been uttered in a certain realm of language” (p. 110). Actual occurrence is “its spokenness” and he explained that what sets it apart from the other two is that it presupposes “a historical acquisition” (p. 110). For Buber, present continuance is the “totality of that which can be spoken in a particular realm of language in a particular segment of time, regarded from the point of view of the person who is able to say what is to be said” (p. 110). The importance of present continuance here Buber argued is that it is the foundation for both “genuine author” and “genuine dialogue’ (p. 110). Genuine dialogue lacks scripting. Scripting is a limitation of the words and utterances that can and should be said in a particular place at a particular time. Scripted dialogue finds its existence outside the between of the two participants as such, it has no place in the spontaneity and generative space of genuine dialogue.

The ‘between’ two persons is an important element of dialogue. Both Buber and Ong recognize the social nature of thought and its place in language. Thinking is speaking to oneself. From their points of view, thought is only possible because of language. While thought can be spontaneous, and it may be generative in the sense of a new idea, it lacks its generation in the shared space that emerges between two persons in dialogue. Ong argued, “The origins of thought and language in the individual’s history make evident the radically social nature of thought
itself” (2000, p. 140). He added, “As we know it, thought appears only in a linguistic setting” (p. 145). He added, “There is a limitless variety of nonverbal activity connected to thinking, but when our thought is fully developed, it manifests itself as verbalized, although the thought may be interior and the word not thinking” (p. 145). For Ong, to be generative thought still has to be verbalized so that it can become part of our ongoing language. To be able to alter language means to be brought into being between persons, which again highlights the generative nature of language.

Buber called the “between” “the oscillating sphere between the persons” (1965b, p. 112). Buber showed that the between is a dynamic space that emerges between two people who come together in genuine dialogue. It comes into being with communicative work and can disappear. It is not permanent between two persons. It requires a turning of being towards the other in complete truthfulness. The between is a generative space for both meaning and being. This is how dialogue becomes the language of friendship. As we discussed in the previous chapter, the reciprocal recognition of being, particularity, is an important element of friendship. This emerges through dialogue in the between. To show exactly how in the space of the between through genuine dialogue, friends are mutually received in their givenness and confirmed as their unique selves, Buber’ writes the following in Knowledge of Man (1965b):

Relation is fulfilled in a full making present when I think of the other not merely as this very one, but experience, in the particular approximation of the given moment, the experience belonging to him this very one. Here and now for the first time does the other become a self for me, and the making independent of his being which was carried out in the first moment of distancing is shown in a new highly pregnant sense as a presupposition-a presupposition of this becoming a self for me, which is, however, to be
understood not in psychological but in a strictly ontological sense, and should therefore rather be called ‘becoming a self with me.’ But it is ontologically complete only when the other knows that he is made present by me in his self and when this knowledge induces the process of his inmost self-becoming. (p. 71)

But also in this space, the meaning of the relationship itself as friendship is co-created and given meaning. In addition to the creation of Thou, the meaning of friendship itself is co-created in the dialogic space of the between. Wright (1978) wrote that because friendship lacks formal constraints and definitions, it is solely dependent on interpretation.

In his 2009 work, The Compass of Friendship, Rawlins set the stage for dialogue as necessary for human friendship. He wrote that “Time together, straightforward talk, shared stories, and mutual respect produce the ‘co-knowledge’ of creating friendships” (p. 1) and that friendships are a space for the co-creation of “deep understandings allowing for shared moral visions and rights unique to their friendship” (p. 1-2). Dialogue moves friends to a space in which a co-creation of a meaningful existence is possible. Regarding interpretation and hermeneutics, Rawlins (2009) wrote, “Our perceptual process of noting similarities and differences goes on constantly, even as we act and communicate in ways that change their significance or create new alignments among them” (p. 17). Like in the previous chapters, we come to know others by setting them apart and coming together—distancing and drawing near.

**Interpretation**

In the dialogue of friendship, the interpretive process is reciprocal and ever-changing. Cocking and Kennett (1998) wrote, “It is not that I must reveal myself to, or see myself in, the other, to any great extent, but that, in friendship, I am distinctively receptive both to the other’s
interests and to their way of seeing me” (p. 505). Because of the receptivity and reciprocity, beyond the meaning-making of the friendship itself and the visibility of the unique self, Cocking and Kennett argued that we then “develop in a way that is particular to the relationship” (p. 505). They added, “the self my friend sees is, at least in part, a product of the friendship” (p. 505). For Cocking and Kennett (1998), this interpretative process is key for the flourishing of the friendship. Helm (2010) slightly disagreed with Cocking and Kennett. He did believe that they were correct in the important role that friendship plays in our lives, but that they were wrong when they attributed “our receptivity to direction and interpretation” as dispositional and internal. Instead, he argued that we need a normative perspective. This is important, because while the meaning of friendship is created in the ‘between,’ there are certain normative constraints imposed from the outside that direct friendship that we discussed in our first chapter.

These normative constraints are part of our stock of knowledge that informs how we interpret others and our relationships. Schutz drew from Husserl but also diverged from him, dismissing transcendental intersubjectivity and instead placed intersubjectivity in the mundane. In *Collected Papers I* (1973), Schutz thoroughly addressed analogic apperception. Husserl (and multiple other phenomenologists, including Ong) have argued that human thought is binary. Schutz wrote, “Husserl, in the later period of his life, studied the general phenomenon of paring or coupling which is, according to him, a general feature of our consciousness” (p. 294). At a very basic level, if we are “copresent” with a table, we see only one part of the table but know it as “table.” Here, Schutz wrote, that “this perception of the visible front side of the object involves an apperception by analogy of the unseen backside, an apperception which, to be sure, is more or less empty anticipation of what we might perceive if we turned the object around or if
we walked around the object” (p. 295). We fill in the missing pieces in our perception to create a whole.

We have particular expectations about the un-sensed portion of the object based on our stock of knowledge, and our expectations (anticipations) may not be entirely correct. Schutz explained that:

we may say that the frontside, which is apperceived in immediacy or given to us in presentation, appresents the unseen backside in an analogical way, which, however, does not mean by way of an *inference* by analogy. The appresenting term, that which is present in immediate apperception is coupled or paired with the appresented pair. (1973, p. 295).

We discussed this twinning in chapter three, also, related to the uniqueness of friendship. Being in the world, we piece together discrete experiences to create a flowing stream of continuity in perception.

*A Side Note—Husserl’s Contribution*

To perceive means filling in the gaps. When we perceive a chair, we know it as a chair, although we might only see one dimension of the chair. When we perceive a friend, we fill in the gaps but we fill them in in a much more complex way. In any case, the entire perception draws from retentions and protentions—we recollect and anticipate the future of the intentional object in a single perception. The protention is the biggest interest here. If I am with a person, I assume they are real without question in the everyday natural attitude. I draw from all of my prior experiences both with this person that have contributed to my stock of knowledge as well
as my prior experiences with others, and from non-interactions but recipes that have been socially passed to me. When it comes to a chair, or a desk, or a tree, what comes to mind is the essential characteristics which make the object what it is, above all other objects. This is the eidetic reduction.

Schutz draws from Husserl specifically in his framing of intersubjectivity and its relationship to temporality. In *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1964), Husserl attempted to uncover the flow of duration in experience when the content of our experience is a series of nows. Time, he argues, consists of a now, a retention, and protention. Events that are “just now” become just past. They are no longer a “present melody” Husserl explained, but accumulate in memory. All perception is not lost, but instead becomes retained in consciousness. If I experience cold, I retain that feel of the cold. Merleu-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002) wrote:

Husserl uses the terms protentions and retentions for the intentionalities which anchor me to an environment. They do not run from a central I, but from my perceptual field itself, so to speak, which draws along in its wake its own horizon of retentions, and bites into the future with its protentions. I do not pass through a series of instances of now, the images of which I preserve and which, placed end to end, make a line. With the arrival of every moment, its predecessor undergoes a change: I still have it in hand and it is still there, but already it is sinking away below the level of presents; in order to retain it, I need to reach through a thin layer of time. It is still the preceding moment, and I have the power to rejoin it as it was just now; I am not cut off from it, but still it would not belong to the past unless something had altered, unless it were beginning to outline itself against, or project itself upon, my present, whereas a moment ago it was my present. When a third
moment arrives, the second undergoes a new modification; from being a retention it becomes the retention of a retention, and the layer of time between it and me thickens. (p. 485)

All of our experience in the flow of duration is made up of just now, just past, and immediately next. In the now, we anticipate what may happen next. It is not a slow, paused, intentional anticipation but an automatic feature of our experience. In doing so, the next instant projections are our protentions. Our perception is experienced as duration, however, should we direct our intentional powers toward duration the content of our consciousness now shifts in the experience. Schutz (1970a) adapted Husserl’s project on temporality to explore human action, which for Schutz is communicative action. He wrote that:

A special problem as to the anticipations of future events originates, however, in the sphere of human action. For the purpose of this paper the term ‘action’ shall designate human conduct as an ongoing process that is devised by the actor in advance, that is, based on a preconceived project. (p. 289)

Schutz argues that “All projecting consist in an anticipation of future conduct by way of phantasying” (p. 289). Projection, for Schutz, is more than just phantasying. There is the act of imagination, but there is also “motivated phantasying,” he argued. He added “motivated by the anticipated supervening intention of the carrying out the project” (p. 289). For Schutz, there is a limiting factor on the imagined, the motivated, and the real. He wrote,

The practicability of carrying out the projected action within the imposed frame of reality of the Lebenswelt is an essential characteristic of the project. This refers, however, to our stock of knowledge at hand at the time of projecting. Performability of the projected
actions means that according to my present knowledge at hand the projected action, at least as to its type, would have been feasible if the action had occurred in the past. (p. 289)

He added in another text:

Any experience refers likewise to the future. It carries along protentions of occurrences expected to follow immediately—they are so called by Husserl as a counterpart to retentions—and anticipations of temporally more distant events with which the present experiences is expected to be related. In commonsense thinking these anticipations and expectations follow basically the typical structures that have held good so far for our past experiences and are incorporated in our stock of knowledge at hand” (1970b, p. 137)

**Analogic Apperception**

We also do the same in our experiences with others. Schutz (1996) explained that our experience of others is incomplete. He wrote, “I have experienced only some discrete stretches of the enduring life of the Other” (p. 201). He added, “I know his past—up to the present moment—only intermittently and it is not likely that my encounters with him coincided with what were his truly ‘relevant moments,’ moments he considered and continues to consider to be of great relevance for him” (p. 201). We are incapable of truly ever having complete access to the Other’s experience. Schutz explained that “this is so because I lack the knowledge both of the relevant factors of his past life and of the intrinsically personal effects they had on him and co-determine his present feelings and decisions” (p. 201). Ultimately, at this very basic level of meeting, we can say that “The total present of the Other, including memories of his that are co-determining influences on his present conduct, is not accessible to me” (p. 201). Despite this
accessibility, we make particular inferences about that inaccessibility of others, drawing from our stock of knowledge. Particularly with our friends, Briggle (2008) pointed out that the accumulation of knowledge we build about our friends allows us to make decisions in their best interest, even in their absence.

Every day, we encounter various objects. Schutz wrote that “Among those objects which we experience in the vivid present are other people’s behavior and thoughts” (1970b, p. 166). As we listen to another person speaking, Schutz argued, “we participate in the immediate present of the other’s thought” (p. 166). Schutz showed us that we are unable to grasp our stream of thought in the vivid present. Instead, we can only reflect. Should one, however, stop to think about the grasping of that stream of thought, I no longer experience it but instead now reflect. Schutz (1976) wrote, “My experience of the fellow-man is direct as long as I am straightforwardly engaged in the We-relation, that is, as long as I participate in the common stream of our experiences. If I think and reflect on our experience, this directness is broken” (p. 26). Essentially, our partner becomes an object—the object of thought. As discussed earlier, objectification and depersonalization are issues that stem from the nature of human thought and language, as we continuously draw from our stock of knowledge and apply information, sometimes incorrectly, to guide our interactions.

Maines showed that friendships are both personal and categorical, and as such, a relational label emerges (not categorical). We draw on our typifications to structure the relationship. To further emphasize how this is important to friendship and social relationships in general, Schutz (1976) wrote:
In the pure We-relation, I apprehend only the existence of a fellow-man and the fact that he is confronting me. For a concrete social relation to become established, however, I must also know how he is oriented to me. In face-to-face situations I gain knowledge of this specific aspect of my partner’s conscious life by observing the concrete manifestation of his subjective experiences in the common stream of the We-relation. (p. 27)

Continuing from Schutz in *Collected Papers I*, he wrote “that the We-relation as such transcends the existence of either consociate within the paramount reality” and he continued that it “can be appresented only by symbolization” (p. 353). He noted that “My friend is to me and I am to him an element of the reality of everyday life” (p. 353). He added, “But our friendship surpasses our individual situation within the finite province of meaning of the paramount reality” (p. 353). For Schutz, the parties to the situation are those which define the particulars of that situation. He adds that “A joint interest makes them partners, and the idea of *partnership* is perhaps the most general term for appresented We-relation” (p. 354). All types of human social relationships rely on appresentation to various degrees, even friendship.

Schutz advanced the idea that all of our encounters are filtered through our scheme of interpretation which is our stock of knowledge. Not only do all encounters become interpreted that way, but as we are with our friend, we add to our stock of knowledge about that specific person and the relationship itself, which then becomes a reference point from which we understand the other person. Through repeat encounters, a social relationship emerges and our ability to interpret the other becomes more accurate.

Related to our apprehensions of other persons whom we are no longer in corporeal co-presence with, Schutz argued that we do so by “means of a fixed concept, or type, derived ultimately from direct experience but now held invariant” (1970a, p. 223). If, though, we learn
of someone through another person, that is, mediated by a second person, Schutz explained that “I have no concrete vivid picture of my own with which to start: I must depend on what my friend tells me” and “I have to depend on my friend’s assumption, not my own, that the contemporary he is describing has not changed” (p. 223). When we are oriented to the other, or aware of their presence, Schutz said that this “serves to call attention to the peculiar way in which I apprehend the conscious experiences of my contemporaries” (1970b, p. 225). He argued that “I apprehend them as anonymous processes’ (p. 225). He called this a “They-orientation” and contrasted it to a “Thou-orientation.” He wrote, “When I am Thou-oriented, I apprehend the other person’s experiences within their setting in his stream of consciousness” (p. 225). He wrote, that our awareness in the They-orientation is an abstraction and “My knowledge of my contemporaries is, therefore, inferential and discursive” (p. 225). Because all language is hermeneutic and because of the nature of human consciousness, all knowledge of all others is inferential and discursive.

In *The Social Construction of Reality* (1996), drawing heavily from Schutz, Berger and Luckmann advanced the idea that our stock of knowledge at hand is the ground of all interpretation for all of our experience. However, even in our face-to-face situations, they acknowledged three central problems. They wrote, “the knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life is not homogeneous; it is (1) incoherent, (2) only partially clear, and (3) not at all free from contradictions” (p. 75). All interactions are interpretive, all communication is hermeneutic. Ong explained that there is a reciprocity in discourse, a reciprocity that creates as it is created. He wrote, “Thus reciprocal discourse commonly interprets itself bilaterally (or multilaterally if more than two are engaged in it) as it proceeds. It negotiates meaning out of meaning” (p. 42). He continued that “Dialogue…is
hermeneutic in hermeneutics’ natural habitat” (p. 42). Then, “Oral conversation advertises the intersubjectivity of all human thought and its tie-in with the intersubjectivity of expression” (p. 42). Ong wrote the following passage to clarify how, exactly, all language requires interpretation:

There is no end to interpretation. In its quite ordinary and simple sense, to interpret means to bring out what is concealed in a given manifestation, that is, in a given phenomenon or state of affairs providing information. We can interpret not only verbalized expression, but anything that provides information: a sense, a roll of thunder, a gesture, a personal attitude shown in various ways, an utterance. (2017, p.13)

While all communication conceals, there is a special concern when it comes to mediated communication.

Hermeneutic Presence

Don Idhe in Technology and the Lifeworld delineated the various relationships humans have with and through technology. Idhe recognized the argument that pervades modern scholarship that “technologies are thought to take us away from ordinary and face-to-face experience and distance us from others, nature or even objects” (Idhe, 2010, p. 3). Idhe, instead, argued from the position that “contemporary technologies actually embody or re-embody our fleshly experience in new ways, in interactive ways” (p. iii), and he worked to uncover “the new ways in which contemporary experience is transformed through new or re-embodiments” (p. iii). Working through Idhe and drawing from Clark’s (2008) claim that writing is extended thought, I have argued elsewhere (Petricini, 2019) that our encounters of others online are hermeneutic
encounters. We now are in a world where we can solely encounter others via mediated settings. This means that we, too, also can interpret them strictly through mediation.

Bakardjieva (2005), too, made the connection that our communication with others is hermeneutic. She wrote, “The response of the Other comes to me through a hermeneutic relation: I–(technology– social world)” (p. 64-65). In a hermeneutic relation, we “read” others. But this reading requires several extra layers of interpretive ability, including some beyond our control (such as access to the internet).

I have written earlier that “All human communicative exchange is between persons, human persons, their bodies, and although mediated in various forms, it is still between bodies” (Petricini, 2019). When we communicate with others today, most of our communication is hybridized. We interact with our closest partners both in-person and via screens. Drawing from Idhe’s phenomenology, we perceive the screen and through the screen. Whether through text, video, or audio, we encounter others in a filtered way. The more we remove the other from the totality of our senses, the more we rely on our interpretive abilities to fill in our understanding of them and the less we rely on information communicated by them.

**Reduced Cues and Effects**

Up until now, the purpose has been to show the role of interpretation in dialogue to pave the way for the following implications. Mediated communication has changed elements related to dialogue. The conclusion that it has changed it for the worse is not supported by the research. Mediated dialogue is possible and requires additional levels of communicative work for success. There is no doubt that mediated communication reduces the available cues that aid in interpreting meaning when we engage in communication with other persons face to face. Often, if we are emailing someone or text messaging them, we have no opportunity to see their bodily gestures or
facial expressions that may indicate that the words they are saying may not reflect how they feel. We are unable to reach out and hug them or touch them at all. The sensory cues that make up the full experience of presence are absent.

It is important to consider though the hybridized nature of today’s relationships. It is nothing out of the ordinary for one to send an email to a colleague that is in the office next to them. I often turn to email out of respect to her particularity. Email creates a reminder that makes life easier than pop into her office, and it allows her to address my communication on her time, rather than intruding. When my son was younger and was sleeping, often I would text my husband in the next room rather than risk a minimal whisper that would wake my son. Rarely do we communicate with someone strictly via mediated settings, even our friends. Technology has seemingly been transformed in response to these reduced cues. When I travel, I can send home videos of my time away. I can take pictures and receive pictures from home while I’m gone, and I can even call and video chat with my family at bedtime and read a story to my son.

Failing to be attentive to the hybridized nature of most relationships has created a scholarship form of tunnel vision that is one problem. Additionally, even if cues are absent, absence can be beneficial in various aspects of our lives and is not always indicative of loss. Bakardjieva wrote, “both my means of self-expression and the codes in which the social is represented to me have to be adapted to the structure of the mediating technology (and the social institutions and practices growing upon it)” (p. 65). She cautioned us that this can be a source of alienation. Ong agreed that communication technologies have created alienation. In many works and lectures, he showed that reading increasingly became an interiorizing and solitary activity. While they do promote alienation and objectivity, they also have promoted introspection and intimacy. In an interview with Wayne Altree, Ong says, “Words are
interiorizing. They relate things to my consciousness, but they also enable me to relate my consciousness to itself” (2002, p. 385). Interiorization, specifically, for Ong in this interview is about the fact that “Man can say ‘I’ He can come back and take possession of himself, get hold of his own consciousness” (2002, p. 385). Briggle’s (2008) work also supports the idea that the absence created can be quite positive. He wrote, “the reader of the written words will interpret them in light of his experiences” and he continued “Through this interpretive process, meanings emerge and indeed the very indicator itself is partly constituted by this work at the receiving end” (p. 77). He continued, “Through dialogue, the written words will take on new, emergent meanings that suppose initial intentions on the writer’s part as they are interpreted by the reader” (p. 77). He even argued that “because the act of writing plunges the friends toward great depths of introspections, these interpretive processes can take place at a more profound level” (p. 77).

Walther and Parks (2002) have shown also that there are particular cues filtered out of mediated communication, but there are also elements of mediated communication that are not present in the face-to-face. Citing multiple studies, the pair identified several benefits of mediated interpersonal communication. They wrote that studies reported improved mental wellbeing, access to superior expertise, support, and relationships grounded in similarity (versus solely proximity like in the past). Zhao explored Schutz and other relevant literature to show that mediated exchanges allow people to “express themselves more openly, engaging in intimate exchanges of feelings and thought with one another free from the concerns that constrain human interactions in geospace” (p. 101). In addition to the above, there are other benefits to mediated communication.
Introspection and Interiority

Zhao (2005) also noted the level of introspection necessary to communicate online. He wrote, “Telling telecopresent others who we are therefore requires a level of introspection and reflectively that is not normally exercised in the realm of face-to-face interaction” (p. 397). Zhao explained that when we are within the actual physical presence of another person, we do not need to describe ourselves. He wrote, “they can see for themselves” and “they will come to know us over time” (p. 397). When it comes to mediated communication though, particularly text-based, the cues are so filtered that it is necessary to give self-descriptions. Zhao wrote, “in text-based online communications we are nothing until we type at the keyboard and others do not know us unless we tell them something” (p. 397). In addition to increased self-awareness through text-based communication, Briggle also noted another important element—deliberateness. He wrote, “Writing occurs at a slower pace than speaking, which fosters the attentiveness and discipline to discover deeper truths about one’s nature” (p. 77). He added that “It also affords greater opportunities to formulate precise langue to describe one’s character to articulate one’s reactions to the words of a friend” (p. 77). He continued “This deliberateness can thus act as an anchor to submerge the friendship to great depths” (p. 77). He did note that different types of media encourage different types of levels regarding this, e.g. email versus text.

particularly, related to the cues-filtered out approaches that argue that our friendship possibilities are limited via virtual environments due to the loss of cues, there is no guarantee that the richer cues in the face-to-face context enrich relationships. Briggle wrote, “In offline contexts, we may encounter richer cues, but we may also often be constrained from working with them to do the important interpretive effort for the of building close friendships” (p. 75). He showed that “mutual acts of reading and writing” actually helped cultivate friendships (p. 76).
Finally, one more instance in which absence can allow for deeper understanding is related to the judgments and stereotypes that prevent dialogue related to one’s appearance in face to face settings that can disappear via mediated settings. Walther (1996) said:

Although interpersonal impressions do accrue in CMC, the social information on which they are based in conveyed primarily through language. And verbal behavior is commonly assumed to be more subject to our editing and control than are nonverbal behaviors. Thus first impressions are highly manageable in CMC, and such social valuations as one is able to garner are not impeded by messy hair, lack of makeup, or normal imperfections, much less more pronounced physical distractors or disabilities. (p. 20)

Mediated communication does distance the individual creating meaning from the words which are used to convey that meaning. It fragments and digitizes communication and removes speakers from dialogue. When this happens, there is an objectification of the self. We see in our mediated world a great amount of concern with how one’s words appear, or one’s image appears via words. Drawing from Buber, Friedman wrote that “The essential problematic of the sphere of the between, writes Buber, is the duality of being and seeming. The man dominated by being gives himself to the other spontaneously without thinking about the image of himself awakened I the beholder” (p. 27). He then explained, “The ‘seeming man’, in contrast, is primarily concerned with what the other thinks of him, and produces a look calculated to make himself appear ‘spontaneous’, ‘sincere’, or whatever he thinks will win the other’s approval. This ‘seeming’ destroys the authentic of the life between man and man and thus the authenticity of human existence in general” (pp. 27-28). But, important to note here is that Buber wrote this long before mediated communication, in the electronic setting existed, and this distancing is
endemic to all human communication in general. In this above work, Buber argued that all human relation requires a distancing.

**Phenomenological Distance and Depersonalization through Text**

Ong wrote, “A text certainly does separate an utterance from its author, who, once he or she has written down the text, may as well be dead” (p. 29). In this context “A text,” is a broader work than the average Tweet or phone message. That being said, when one imagines small fragments of type from individual “authors,” they tend to consider them “utterances.” They are, without a doubt, not spoken. They could be rehearsed, or perhaps not. These short snippets of words, though, vary depending on the immediacy of response. Take a ten-word sentence typed out for a Tweet, versus a ten-word sentence typed into a text message. Here, due to the setting, both are text and both may say the same thing, but the anticipated response where we imagine others is quite different. It seems that the degree to which various media feel separate relates to anonymity and intimacy. Ong addressed this. He wrote, “writing creates anonymous discourse, as has often been pointed out” (p. 45). He continued, “But removing an utterance from its author is not removing it from discourse” (p. 45). He explicitly then stated that “No utterance can exist outside discourse, outside a transactional setting” (p. 45). He further clarified “Putting an utterance into script, then, can only interrupt discourse, string it out indefinitely in time and space” (p. 45). He continued later that “Text, however, functions fully as a text (and thus in actuality raises consciousness) only when it reenters discourse” (p. 46). He added, “Text can be made to reenter discourse, to function as utterance only by something nontextual, that is, by a code in a living person’s mind for converting the visual into the auditory, the code that we learn in order to read” (p. 30). All language is hermeneutic and requires interpretation.
In *Language as Hermeneutic*, Ong actually tied language learning and interpretation to intersubjectivity itself. He called intersubjectivity “mysterious” and argued that it “marks human consciousness” (p. 88), and he argued that it what underlies all language. He wrote, “In learning to speak a language, the child has to learn to interpret intersubjectively” (p. 88). He further added that “For a sound to function as a word, the speaker has to intend that the sound he or she makes so functions—that is, that the sound is not *just* a sound but has some specially intended purpose of its own” (p. 88). Furthermore, “the speaker has to know that the hearer knows that he or she so intends” (p. 88). He continued, “And all this network has to be set up initially without being explained in words, for it lies beneath the use of words as words” (p. 88). Instead, he noted, “It lies in our intersubjectivity, in our being able to be aware and, in a way, to participate in and interpret the subjective consciousness of other human beings” (p. 88). He argued, “Hermeneutic or interpretive activity, like intentionality, precedes as well as accompanies naming as such” (p. 88). To clarify this point, Ong explained that “from the start, language learning is not essentially an exercise in affixing names and structuring them in relation to one another but is a complex hermeneutic or interpretive process...involving intersubjectivity” (p. 88). Whether inserting text into an ongoing discourse or engaging in face to face conversation, all language is hermeneutic. Hermeneutics is concerned with showing us what is concealed. Ong wrote, “Interpretation or hermeneutics makes up for such missing elements, the absences with which all texts present us” (p. 39). All text creates an absence of meaning outside the words themselves and the meaning the interpreter ascribes to those words.

All language requires interpretation, however, the more removed from the paradigmatic setting, the more the individual interpreter must draw from his or her conjectures to interpret the other. As communication technology has evolved, we have been more and more able to uncover
more cues about others in their absence. Soukup wrote that “Handwritten texts more urgently than face-to-face communication required interpretation because here people first experienced the absence of the author, the absence of the kind of dialogue to which that had been accustomed” (2012, p. 40). Despite this, face to face communication is still paradigmatic for all other forms of communication. Ong argued that in the interpretive process of the face-to-face, it begins before the utterance of any words. Meaning, he explains, is always negotiated and this is a natural part of the ‘discursive process” (p. 40). He wrote:

In fact, in oral utterance the negotiation begins even before the oral utterance itself. The first speaker needs to anticipate some conjectural feedback from an interlocutor before he or she can devise something to say or even to think. Only if we are to some degree in the mind of another can we formulate our own thought, for what I say (and articulately think) depends on my conjectures, before I begin to speak, about your state of mind and about the possible range of your response. (2017, p. 40).

The paradigmatic form of interacting with others is the face-to-face situation.

All meaning is embodied, even the meaning of the being of the other. Ong explained that words themselves represent. He noted that “The re- in ‘represent’ suggests some kind of sense of presence antecedent to verbalization” (p. 23). Ong asked us to understand the “the word for chair and the thought for chair are neither the same sort of thing as the sensorily present chair” (p. 23). Zlatic (2017) wrote that for Ong, “[a]ll language use is hermeneutic because being is not equivalent with idea; every statement must be interpreted in light of contexts, purposes, attitudes, and so on” (p. 371). Textual communication is not even possible without face-to-face communication we all encounter naturally in our world. Soukup (2012) wrote that written communication is entirely dependent on face to face communication. Soukup adds that
even to read a text is to liken the text as sound, in a sense when we “decode” it. This process, however, requires a system to decode it, which is grounded again in the primacy of the paradigmatic form of communication. All text arises from speech and all text is read and belongs to a greater discourse, Ong has explained.

While all language is hermeneutic, textual language, Ong argued, requires more interpretation. He explained that “A basic reason why text can call urgently for interpretation or hermeneutics is that text always comes always out of the past. Spoken words come into being always in the real, existent, holistic present. Writing does not” (p. 36). We must fill in the gaps based on our stock of knowledge at hand.

When it comes to the difficulty of interpreting outside of the face to face situation, Ong, like the research done by Walther and Parks, argued that there are cues that are filtered out. He wrote:

Spoken words are in great part further given meaning, further explained, interpreted as they are being uttered, not merely verbally but often in other ways such as subtle personal interaction with the other party or parties to the discourse as well as by nonverbal elements in the fuller context or situation in which they are spoken—who is speaking to whom, on what occasion, with what sort of force, in what sort of social structure, with what unarticulated presuppositions involved I the situation or its background, with what facial expressions, gestures, and so on. Such nonverbal elements are missing in a text and need somehow to be made up for. Interpretation or hermeneutics makes up for such missing elements, the absences with which all text present us, and deconstructionists have liked to insist. (2017, p. 37)
The purpose of this chapter has been to show that due to the nature of interpretation in the
dialogic process, dialogue is possible in mediated settings but it imposes several specific
challenges in our relationships and communication with others. As a result, there are several
directions and implications that need to be explored further. First, despite the I-Thou, I-It
transition that is part and parcel of all communication, like textual communication, mediated
communication is especially conducive to objectification. Ong wrote, “Taken up by different
readers at different times, always after its creation, the text constantly emerges in always new
context” (2017, p. 36). Text is visual, “lying there passively, able to be operated on as spoken
words are not” (p. 37). He also noted the “think-like quality” of texts (p. 37). This “thing-like
quality” creates a separation as we interpret that is different than the interpretation of spoken
words. Ong explained, “Spoken words are in great part further given meaning, further explained,
interpreted as they are being uttered, not merely verbally but often in other ways such as subtle
personal interaction with the other party or parties to the discourse as well as by nonverbal
elements I the fuller context or situation in which they are spoken” (p. 39). In some settings, the
immediacy of continuous interpretation is delayed. Because of this, we need to be cautious
about the interpretations we make about our asynchronous encounters.

For example, if a friend sent a text that said, “I am mad at you” without context, I could
interpret that text in several different ways. Should the friend go to work and be unable to text
for the next eight hours, I would be unable to clarify in any way exactly what they meant.
Perhaps I choose to get angry. Perhaps I get nervous, wondering how I upset them. I could
imagine that they are joking about something I did. No matter how I proceed, I am drawn into
the text without the ability to further clarify until much later.
Anonymity and Receiver

In some instances, we are uncertain even WHO will be the recipient in our communicative exchanges via solely text. Ong wrote, “a distinctive feature of textual utterance as against oral utterance is that its author cannot absolutely predict or often even discover who all will continue the discourse he or she has engaged in by inscribing the text” (p. 46). Malcolm Gladwell (2019) surveyed multiple current events to understand how we interpret the behavior of those we do not know. From judges and police officers, to medical workers and instructors, we cannot escape the nature of human thought and interpretation. Gladwell argued that we default to truth when interpreting others. He blames this and the “illusion of transparency” for our difficulty in recognizing the “stranger as an individual” (p. 458). He advocated for a consistent confrontation of self when confronting the stranger, in which one “ask[s] yourself where and when you’re confronting the stranger---because those two things powerfully influence your interpretation of who the stranger is” (p. 467). This is interesting because it is true that speaking to someone face to face is confirmed again that the who behind the discussion is there. However, orality alone in today’s world does not ensure this. Instead, this is a feature of face-to-face or even face to screen to screen to face. Yet, there is much more uncertainty there in the textual case as we are never 100% sure who is reading our messages. At the same time, we are also never sure who is hearing our conversation with someone in which we are face to face. Because of this, we need to again be cautious and aware of this new possibility of our age.

Ong was attentive to the various forms of media, particularly of mass media versus mediated interpersonal communication. He noted that “it is not always true that person-to-person contact is nonexistent in today’s mass media, particularly in those using the spoken word” (p. 291). He added, “The telephone has certainly helped maintain many close personal
relationships at a pitch otherwise impossible” (p. 291). Ong explained, “To be present to himself, man must find the presence of another or others. Man’s life-world is not the opposite of solipsism: it is a world not of presence but of presences” (p. 295). He then wrote, “In presences we mature. Each individual I finds himself by dealing with a thou, and another thou, and another. The presence of other persons fills man’s consciousness, as objects cannot” (p. 295). Then, if we go back to Aristotle, if human flourishing cannot occur in a vacuum, we need others to be our best selves, then all friendships that promote mutual human flourishing, regardless of where the communication takes place, are true friendships. Continuing, Ong wrote, “Situated among objects, a person may indeed find them interesting, but he responds only to other persons, other presences, who are not objects. In a whole universe filled with countless objects and occupied by only one other man alone, it would be to the man alone that I could present myself, establish a relationship of presence” (p. 295). Ong then explains that presence today is different, though. He writes, “The kind of presence which early man was able to establish in the universe was vastly different from the presence enjoyed by technological man today. Despite what personalizing effects may have been realized in his immediate environment, for early man the globe was not truly peopled” (p. 296). He adds, “The presence of man to himself over the face of the globe is basically a presence of the word. It is not a peripatetic presence. Individual men do not all journey to the ends of the earth and back to encounter each other. The presence is realized within human communications media” (p. 298). He notes that it makes the past present—which is something Schutz discusses in his work on intersubjectivity—the world of our predecessors and Ong adds to that part here. Also, we are exposed to everyone else in a way that has never been possible in the past and this is important.
Our technology has expanded to create enriched cues to compensate for the lack of cues. Because of this, we also now require more specialized interpretive training. For example, emojis and their meaning can vary. In Japan, the emoji for steam coming out its nose is used to signify triumph, while here in the United States, it is often used to signify anger. All language is hermeneutic, Ong explains. But it seems that as we reduce the cues more and more, we create a more desperate need for interpretation if we alter his earlier quote. Ong noted, “With special skills and great effort the reader may be able to reconstruct conjectured responses of the absent writer which will fit the text somehow into the milieu in which the reading is being done” (p. 47). And this does happen. But, arguably there is also a between space created when two people converse via cyberspace, in which the milieu itself is the between that is generated between the two individuals. Ong later wrote that text creates a “laborious, self-conscious, one-sided” level of work (p. 47).

He noted, “Diminishing the temporal distance of the printed word decreased the impersonal distance between reader and writer” (p. 504). He then went on to predict, “Eventually other forms of mediated communication will provide great, more direct interaction beyond the immediacy of the event and increase the interactive nature of the discourse in ways that artificially simulate (not nonetheless approach) direct verbal communication” (p. 505). The next chapter will explore these new instances in which communication has been spread across time and space.

Zhao argues that in comparison with shared space, instead, telecopresence requires more communication. He wrote, grounded in Habermas:

In the realm of consociates, mutual knowledge is constructed based on the sharing of lived-through life experiences; in telecopresence, however, it is constituted through
communicative action. Communicative action is a form of ‘speech acts’ by which ‘two subjects come to an understanding with one another.’ (p. 118)

Even more importantly, those who are together virtually are unable to make as many assumptions and do more communicative work, Zhao argued.

Like the previous chapter, communicative work has been the focus of this chapter. In the next chapter, we will explore how shared space, shared thought, and shared language come together. Social systems have changed, and the next chapter will review how they have changed related to time and space. Perceptions and experiences of time and space of changed, although there are enduring elements of friendship in time. The next chapter also examines the notion of intimacy and its relation to space and time.
Time and Space: Altered Dimensions of Friendship

Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance; they make the latitudes and longitudes.

---Henry David Thoreau

For most of human history, social relationships were limited by pace and time. Friendships were created and maintained within specific physical locations. Adams (1998) wrote, “even maintaining already established relationships across distances was difficult because contact was infrequent, expensive, or unsatisfying” (p. 157). Today, it has been said that friendships exist independent of time and space (Dreher, 2009, p. 407) Time and space as social dimensions of relationships that have often failed to be addressed outside of phenomenological works. Giddens (1979) has influenced multiple scholars relating to time and space in human relationships. He specifically argued that “neither time nor space of been incorporated into the center of social theory” (p. 202). Giddens argued that “The extensions of social systems in space and time is an evident feature of the overall development of human society” (pp. 203-4). This chapter will explore the altered dimensions of time and space and the associated effects on friendships.

As communication technologies evolved, our perceptions of and experience in time and space have changed. Schutz argued in his works that “I experience a fellow-man directly if and when he shares with me a common sector of time and space” (1976, p. 24). It was a central element of his phenomenology. For Schutz, sharing time is what is central to “a genuine simultaneity of our two streams of consciousness” (p. 24). Sharing space, Schutz explained, is what is central for “my fellow-man [to appear] to me in person as he himself and none other” (p. 24). Bakardjieva (2005) argued “that media are implicated in a recharting of the zones of
anonymity of the experienced social world” (p. 43) She added, “Technological mediation, and particularly information and communication technologies, similarly rearranges the structures of anonymity stretching from the most intimate we-relations to the most distant they-relations” (p. 64). Proximal distance and phenomenological distance related to anonymity and intimacy then seem to be affected.

**Time and Space as Social Dimensions**

Parks and Floyd (1996) noted that traditional relationship development characteristics are: “physical proximity, frequent interaction, information about physical appearance, cues about group members, and information about the broader social context” (p. 84). Often, online relationships are considered to be impersonal. Despite this view, even when examined by way of models of traditional relationships, Parks and Floyd argued that relationships do occur online. The evidence suggests then, that proximity has nothing to do with friendship. While there appears to be a shift in proximal limitations, new research related to social media networks shows that there appears to be a limit on the number of “friends” one can maintain at one time. Emmeche (2019) pointed out that limits are not just due to physical space, and instead showed that there are actual cognitive limits.

**Friendship Transcends Time and Space**

There are several relationships between time and friendship. Friendship, as noted before, seems to transcend space and time, while still being bound by time. Friends must share the same historical moment. Friendship itself requires a duration through time. Also, an absence of communication over long periods does not end a friendship. Much of the literature on friendship notes the amazing ability for friends to meet again after decades and pick up as if they
had never been apart. Dreher (2009) wrote that “friends can live great distances apart” and that friendship “can be reactivated after a tremendously long time” (p. 407). While friendship does seem to transcend time, it is also bound by time. Dreher pointed out that “friendship can only be constructed in concrete historical worlds” (p. 408). It would be impossible, for example, for me to be friends with my great-great-grandmother’s friend, despite the possibility of me finding a journal and knowing her innermost thoughts. And, while friendship can extend through shared biographical time and space, it cannot extend over non-shared time, because dialogue is reciprocal.

**Friendship as Duration**

Another significant way that friendship is related to time is the notion of friendship as duration. Stocker (1981) wrote, “friendship must have a significant temporal duration: that it must last more than one minute, or one hour” (p. 752). Our encounters with our friends are discrete units of extensions of time. We do not spend all of our time with them, nor would we want or be able to. That being said, while our interactions with them are discrete, our actual friendship is experienced as duration. Schutz (1970b) drew from Bergson in his discussion of *duree*. He began “What we, in fact, experience in duration is not a being that is discrete and well-defined but a constant transition from a now-thus to a new now-thus” (p. 60). Our experience of the Other’s presence in the actual experiencing moment is duration. We experience friendship as a constant transition. Schutz argued that discrete experience and pure duration is a “difference between two levels of consciousness” (p. 61). Schutz asked us to imagine our immersion in our streams of consciousness. He wrote, “in my duration, I do not find any clearly differentiated experiences at all” (p. 62). He continued, “At one moment an experience waxes, then it wanes” (p. 62). He wrote, “For I experience my duration as a
unidirectional, irreversible stream and find that between a moment ago and just now I have grown older. But I cannot become aware of this” (p. 62). Should we turn our awareness towards the stream, what Schutz calls reflection, we are then turning against the stream and we cease to be immersed during our reflection. The Now that has become a thus is only understood through remembrance. Ultimately, Schutz’ point here was that “The simple experience of living is the flow of duration” (p. 62). All meaningful experience is ultimately discrete as it requires, for the nature of being meaningful, a reflective turn. And so, then, as a meaning-making relationship, our experiences with friends are discrete moments that are filed into a protracted sense of duration with them. Schutz wrote:

Because the concept of meaningful experience always presupposes that the experience of which meaning is predicated is a discrete one, it now becomes quite clear that only past experience can be called meaningful, that is, one that is present to the retrospective glance as already finished and done with. (p. 63)

Meaning, particularly, he wrote, is “merely an operation of intentionality” (p. 63). Our stream of consciousness is our duree. Schutz noted that:

In and by our bodily movements we perform the transition from our duree to the spatial or cosmic time and our working actions partake of both. In simultaneity we experience the working action as a series of events in outer and in inner time, unifying both dimensions into a single flex which shall be called the vivid present. The vivid present originates, therefore, in an intersection of duree and cosmic time. (p. 70)

Our communicative acts are what draw our inner duree out to the manifestation of duration in friendship and all human relationships. Specifically related to time, as biographies intersect,
Dreher (2009) argued that the particular uniqueness of the relationship must be shared “as well as experience of an existential nature” (p. 413). That is to say, that within each of the individual’s biographical identities, life narratives, they must find the friendship to be a friendship as well as be orientated reciprocally toward each other as friend.

Schutz addressed issues associated with the separation of two people by both space and time. He made several related points. First, he argued “that apprehension does not necessarily presuppose actual perception, but that the appresenting member of the appresentational pair may also be a recollection or even a phantasm” (1970, p. 201). Second, he added “that the result or product of another activity refers to the action from which it resulted and, thus, can function as a sign of his cogitations” (p. 201). Finally, he notes “that the principle of the relative irrelevance of the vehicle is applicable (the printed lecture refers to the talk of the lecturer)” (p. 201). So we still perform analogic apperception, independent of actual existence.

Bakardjieva (2005) argued that there are three critical aspects of “temporality of the lifeworld in the Schutzian framework” (p. 41). One, the “fixed course of temporality,” she wrote, it is derived “from the intersection of subjective time (stream of consciousness), biological time (the rhythm of the body), world time (the seasons) and social time (the calendar)” (p. 41). Technology, she noted, helps bring biological, world, and social time “into closer conformity with my subjective time” (p. 63). She added, “In a sense, this can be interpreted and experienced by the actor as an increase in personal freedom, spontaneity, and control, or in other words as empowerment and disalienation” (p. 63). Technology can help us overcome challenges related to time.
Cultural Transformations in Time and Space

Ancient Humanity

Many scholars have traced the changing nature of our consciousness of time throughout human history. Eliade, in *Myth of the Eternal Return* (1954), explored archaic ontologies using recordings of various myths, narratives, and rituals. Without the ability to record knowledge or information, the world available to these early groups of people was the world as it could exist only in the spoken word. Sound exists only in time, it has no spatial dimensions. Sound is completely bound by time, by the moment one sound comes into existence, the sound that comes before is already gone (Ong, 2000). What could be remembered, stored, and passed then was limited to the capability of the human mind and verbal language. Early human beings experienced being in the eternal present. Natural events, by all appearances, seemed to be cyclical. Over time, the moon waxed and waned. The sun seemed to return to its position on the horizon. The heavens, too, seemed to adhere to a cyclical pattern, always returning to a point of beginning. Eliade explains that collective knowledge endured through repetition (1954, p. 20). This is not just in language, meaning metrical phrases, songs, and stories. This included actual repetition of acts and rituals which help transport the individual into the perceived time of the original creation of the act itself. What we have here are human beings who are limited to a knowledge of the eternal present and knowledge of a sense of being as it is in the beginning. Eliade writes, “Through repetition of the cosmogonic act, concrete time, in which the construction takes place, is projected into mythical time, *in illo tempore* when the foundation of the world occurred” (p. 20). All acts had archetypes, the main archetype being creation.

Time spent repeating archetypical acts was time spent *in illo tempore*, or sacred time. Time without any mythical meaning, without an archetype or an exemplary myth, simply was
not time. Eliade writes, “an object or an act becomes real only insofar as it imitates or repeats an archetype.” (p. 34). Sacred time was not experienced as time, however, as we might understand ourselves in time in today’s world, either. Instead, to be in the act of ritual was to create an “abolition of time through the imitation of archetypes and the repetition of paradigmatic gestures” (p. 35). Profane time “is without meaning: in the state of ‘becoming’” (p. 35), he explained. As communicative technologies changed, though, so did our experience of time.

**Chirographic Culture**

As human beings relied more and more on scripts to record, the mind began to explore and reflect on being in the world and being in time. Eliade points out that in the development of monotheistic cultures of the ancient world, we begin to see narratives in which there appears to be a shift toward a somewhat historical or even linear understanding of time—that it has a beginning and an end. For most cultures, time was still cyclical. Havelock (1986) wrote, “The substitutions for the ‘timeless present’ turning into the ‘logical present’ in place of the ‘immediate present’ or the past or future, became a pre-occupation of the pre-Platonic philosophers, particularly Parmenides.” (p. 106). We can see in the work of many ancient Greek philosophers an explosion in abstract thinking and by 100 B.C.E., Eliade says that knowledge of the human as a historical being was commonplace.

**Middle Ages**

By the middle ages, a sense of measured time infiltrated human consciousness, changed by and changing how humans interacted with the world, each other, and themselves. To say that language alone changed consciousness is to reduce the complexity of the vast changes that occurred over this period. First, in this period, written and then printed word created an
orientation toward the visual field of sensory experience and jolted language somewhat out of the sound world in which it had been since the beginning. Second, written word also made it possible for knowledge to be stored outside the human, and in such, thought could now be abstract. The new orientation toward the visual, then, and the ability to know think abstractly led to a new orientation toward the linear, mechanistic, quantified experience of time.

Mumford argued that the mechanistic, linear, sequential time stemmed from the monastery of the middle ages. (2010). He wrote,

Benedict added a seventh period to the devotions of the day, and in seventh century, by a bull of Pope Sabinianus, it was decreed that the bells of the monastery be rung seven times in the twenty-four hours. These punctuation marks in the day were known as the canonical hours, and some means of keeping count of them and ensuring their regular repetition became necessary. (p. 13)

Jacques Le Goff, a medieval historian, has studied the rise of both Christian time and secular time in his works Medieval Imagination (1992) and Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages (1980). The 11th century marks the beginnings of change. Le Goff explained that “For the Bible, and primitive Christianity, time is primarily theological time. It ‘begins with God’ and is ‘dominated by him’” (1980, p. 30) and continued, “Their eternity was merely the extension of time into infinity…” (p. 31). An orientation toward the quantitative was developing, though. Time “spent” in church and time spent praying now had a direct effect on time spent in purgatory in the afterlife. In this quantitative orientation, time was the means to God. Time carried the Christian in one direction, linearly, to God. By no means was time quantitative and linear in today’s sense of time, however.
Spiritual fissures began to arise in the 12th and 13th centuries, which Le Goff investigated specifically by tracing artifacts of the medieval merchants (1980). Le Goff explained that merchants were subject to natural time, or “the dominion of meteorological time, to the cycle of season and the unpredictability of storms and natural cataclysms” (1980 p. 345). As the flow of communication and records increased, so too did commercial networks, networks in which time was now an object of measurements. Le Goff noted the commonality of letters of exchange in 12th and 13th century Champagne. In the 14th century, escapement devices began to be used in towered mechanical clocks, ensuring mechanical accuracy (Le Goff, 1992). Consciousness was now altered as the sound of the bells signaled a measured, punctuated time that was independent of religious life. At this same time, the vanishing point now began to be used in painting, murals now depicted cycles, and portraits became more realistic, capturing the subject in time (Le Goff, 1980).

**Modernity**

The post-modern era experiences time differently than modernity. We are in a society so fragmented in the individual experience that in the present world, trying to reflect on any collective experience might be impossible. If the consciousness of time is intertwined with the medium of the word, whether it be oral, written, or print, electronic or digital, then the present world is an age in which the preference for the method of delivery of the word, although computerized, varies greatly between individuals. Despite these limitations, from a rhetorical standpoint, there are generalizations and even implications that arise from study.

Born in 1912, by the time Ong published *In the Human Grain* (1967), a collection of essays in which he explored the consciousness of human time, he had experienced two world wars and the atomic era. In the decades before Ong’s birth, the industrial era brought the
Western world into a new era of mechanistic time. In the 1850s, the railroad system standardized time across North America. Sun time varies every eight miles from east to west, but the railroad system of time now grouped time into four locations, spatial locations (Mumford, 2010). The standardization solidified a linear experience of time across space. The railroad in one sense, then, built a collective spatial time structure. In another, it annihilated time and space, transporting people with speeds thought never possible. Boorstin wrote, “As there comes to be less and less difference between the time it takes to reach one place rather than another, time itself dissolves as a measure of space” (1987, p. 115).

The railroad was only one means through which space/time structure changed in that era. Vehicles of transportation evolved to transport goods and people faster and faster, and communication technologies, such as the telegraph, telephone, radio, and television now made it possible the transport interior through space in record time and these electronic technologies drew the word toward an oral/aural orientation. In Ong’s world of the electronic age, voice now was becoming alive, and printed word was melding with sound. This post-typographical era, the electronic era, established man in a radically new relationship to time” (2000, p. 98). Ong wrote, in Knowledge in Time (1968), that knowledge is now accessible to the human being: knowledge of the physical universe, knowledge of man and his life world, and knowledge of man in time. He noted, “Until quite recent years, man had no very effective idea of the real time scales applying to the universe of which he was a part” (1968, p.13). We know ourselves on a macro scale, meaning of our place in the evolving physical universe, and on a micro-scale, meaning as part of an evolving unique person. He wrote, “Today we know the world as something with which we are in publicly and circumstantially verifiable contact, and as affecting the real present
in ways that are matter for scientific, cosmological, and historical study” (1968, p. 14). This has had an effect on our experience of others in time and space and as a result, our friendships.

**Media-Saturated Culture**

In both oral culture and electronic culture, there is a strong sense of simultaneity and presence between individuals, but Ong pointed out that simultaneity in the electronic world is “supercharged” (2000, p. 91). He explained that “The computer is actually the most quantified and most highly sequential or linear of all instruments; it creates a sense of simultaneity only because its inhuman speedup of sequences makes it appear to annihilate them” (p. 91). This speedup has still drawn us inward, but at the same time outward. It has created a paradox and draws us toward both interiorization and exteriorization (1967, 1968). As time and space have been “annihilated,” it has led to a heightened sense of presence yet at the same time, electronic technologies draw people inward, into themselves and have offered a possibility of reflection of the self in a historical way not possible in the oral world (2000, p. 312).

The process of digitization in our age refers to the process of converting everything into binary code, or quantification. Mumford wrote of the mechanical age (early electronic) that “Irrespective of strain or fatigue, despite reluctance or apathy, the household rises close to its set hour” (2010, p. 269) and it is no stretch to say that most individuals still are servants to time. Time consciousness as it “..arbitrarily rule[s] over human functions is to reduce existence itself to mere time-serving and to spread the shades of the prison-house over too large an area of human conduct” (Mumford, 2010, p. 271). Boorstin believed that experience was being homogenized. He writes, “Moving only through time, measuring our distances in homogenous ticks of the clock we are at a loss to explain ourselves, what we are doing, where, or even whether we are going” (1987, p. 115). Rushkoff agreed that in the present age, we have found
ourselves lost in general and lost in time (2013) and numerous philosophers find the electronic and present era marked by a lack of moral unity, coherence, and narrative.

It becomes difficult to think of any aspect of human life that has not been quantified. Even childbirth now occurs on a schedule as more and more mothers and their obstetricians plan dates for cesarean sections, not just for medical necessity but for mere convenience. Marshall McCluhan writes that “…time is separated from the rhythms of human experience” (2003, p. 199). Despite being a scholar of the electronic age, he recognized that “Time measured by abstract uniform units gradually pervades all sense of life” (2003, p. 199). In his era, he recognized that “Not only work, but also eating and sleeping, came to accommodate themselves to the clock rather than organic needs.” (2003, p. 199). Rushkoff in his book Present Shock discusses chronobiology (2013). Researchers have discovered that the human body seems to operate on a 24-hour cycle, known as a circadian rhythm, independent of any time cue. Melatonin production, the hormone that makes us feel tired, has been shown to decrease with exposure to sunlight and increase with exposure to darkness, and melatonin production even is interfered with when an individual is exposed to blue-light rays—the rays emitted from smartphones, computer, and television screens. Body temperatures fluctuate with exposure to daylight. Rushkoff argues that today’s age is marked with the “…false digital premise that all time is equivalent and interchangeable.” (2003, p. 94). This has definitive effects on our experience of others and our friendships. Studies in the millennial generation suggest that there appears to be what are being called “micro-generational gaps.” Preferences for technology greatly varies. The choice of medium affects experience, and these choices appear to be highly individualized and fragmented.
Breaking the Barriers of Intimacy

One major way that time and space are connected to our experience of others in social relationships is intimacy. While intimacy has traditionally been associated with time and space, as our mediums have changed, a new view of intimacy has become necessary. Intimacy is communicative and developed through communicative work and as such, transcends time and space. One way in which time is connected to intimacy is due to rate. Rate implies immediacy, which can build intimacy, although, paradoxically, friends can go long amounts of time with no communication at all and still be close friends. Time also matters because friends have to exist in the same historical moment and share biographical time. Friends also do need to dedicate a specific amount of time to the other in the friendship.

Intimacy Defined—A Review

Intimacy is a very well-studied term in interpersonal relations research and suffers the same fate as definitions of friendship—there are multiple (Bennett, 2000; Goleman & Cherniss, 2001; Hatfield, 1982; Sexton & Sexton 1982; Perlman & Fehr, 1987). Solomon and Theiss (2012) identify five components of intimacy; closeness, openness, trust, affection, and mutuality. The pair define intimacy as “connection between two people that includes psychological, emotional, and behavioral bonds” (p. 266). Sinclair and Dowdy (2005) in the development of the emotional intimacy scale differentiated emotional intimacy from other types of intimacy like physical. They define it as involving “a perception of closeness to another that allows sharing of personal feelings, accompanied by expectations of understanding, affirmation, and demonstrations of caring” (p. 194). Derlega (2013) agreed that belonging and closeness were important aspects of intimacy, as well as affection. She also noted though that knowledge and
experience are essential to the intimacy building process. Drawing from Buber, she drew to the forefront the role of dialogue in this process.

Intimacy is recognized to be a main feature in all relations, including friendship, familial, and romantic partnerships. Jurkane-Hobein (2015) argued that relationships required “intimacy work” as part of normal relational maintenance (p. 224). Along with Mjöberg (2009) and Leslie and Morgan (2011), she argues that it is a relationship quality that is dynamic and requires ongoing work. In their study *Marriage and the Construction of Reality*, Berger and Kellner (1964) drew from Schutz to discuss conversation, biography, and their associated roles in building closeness in marriages. Again, these relationship are ever evolving and co-construct meaning, and as such intimacy is a form of communicative work.

Family relationship research is another well-investigated area of intimacy study. Leslie and Morgan (2011) highlighted three types of intimacy: embodied, emotional, and then they add particular knowledge about the other. Jurkane-Hobein (2015) compared emotional intimacy in Leslie and Morgan’s work to Jamieson’s (1998) emphasis on disclosure. She wrote that “Intimate knowledge relates to everyday routines and emerges from the former two, thus, providing the couple certain privileged knowledge about each other, such as sleeping patterns or personal preferences” (p. 225). This knowledge, she wrote, is not dependent on intimacy, though, so she added a time dimension and argued that it must be daily. She wrote that embodied, emotional, and intimate knowledge “are the result of a mutual process of caring, touching, interacting, and having conversation” (p. 225). Fehr (2004) pointed to the fact that friendships, like family and romantic relationships, are another source of intimacy in our everyday world. In Fehr’s work, it was shown that like romantic relationships, friendship
satisfaction was judged based on idealized notions about the nature of friendship, in large part related to intimacy expectations.

Across the spectrum of relationships, from family to friendship, reports of intimacy and qualitative measures often include the notion of a feeling of being close with another person. Aron and Aron (1986) argued that closeness is dependent on similarity of identity. Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto (2004) developed the Relational Closeness Scale. The three examined multiple factors on the feeling of closeness, but specifically important to this chapter were their conclusions that time spent alone together, doing things with each other, and communicating were related to feelings of closeness.

**Long-Distance Relationships—A Review**

Related to intimacy, another area of study in interpersonal relationship is long-distance relationships. Maguire and Kinney (2010) define long-distance relationships intimate relationships “between partners who are geographically separated from one another” (p. 26). Just like in studies in intimacy, there are studies on long-distance family, romantic, and friendship-type relationships, although friendship is the least studied. Cao, Sellen, Brushs, Berheim, Kirk, Edge, and Ding (2013) examined family relationships that spanned time zones. It was noted that family members preferred synchronous settings like phone calls and video chatting the most. Two major recognized themes associated with this preference were feeling more present and connected.

Cao, Sellen, Brushs, Berheim, Kirk, Edge, and Ding (2013) examined family relationships that spanned time zones. It was noted that family members preferred synchronous settings like phone calls and video chatting the most. Two major recognized themes associated with this preference were feeling more present and connected.
distance friendship research, Rohlfing (1990; 1991) concluded in her study that at that time, in the early 1990’s, that almost 90% of study participants reported a long-distance friendship. Rohlfing (1995) concluded that there are qualitative differences between proximal relationships and long-distance relationships. Johnson (2001) found no significant difference in relational satisfaction between proximal and long-distance relationships, however.

Jurkane-Hobein (2015), noted in the previous section, did a study exploring intimacy in long-distance relationships. She specifically wanted to examine practices that fostered intimacy. She concluded that an important element in long-distance relationships related to intimacy is imagination, and imagination guides “four dimensions of intimacy: embodied, emotional, daily, and imagined” (p. 226). She drew from Illouz and Sadeh (2007) to conceptualize the notion of imagination in the long-distance setting. She wrote, “Internet imagination is self-generated through textual and visual mediated communication” which is in contrast to self-generated imagination (p. 226). With regard to the four types of intimacy, there were a variety of practices examined by Jurkane-Hobein. Daily intimacy, she expressed, is developed through communicating about daily life events. Emotional intimacy, she added, is based on mutual disclosure. Embodied intimacy, she argued can be experienced in a long-distance relationship as the body has physiological responses to communication.

**Zones of Relevance**

Schutz worked to delineate different zones of relevance to my body in space. As I stand, my body in space, there are particular spatial zones. For example, there is the zone of actual reach. I can reach out and touch my computer. But there is also present reach. A world that was within my actual reach can move out of my present reach. But the world within our formerly actual reach is retained, flowing into our stock of knowledge. Though I might walk out of the
room, the computer, to me, is still on that table. Schutz and Luckmann wrote that this is “conscious activity in the form of remembrance and anticipation” (p. 45). Based on how things were, I then remember them and anticipate them. My computer might very well have been stolen.

Schutz and Luckmann wrote, “The world in actual reach has essential the temporal character of the present” (p. 51). They wrote:

The world in potential reach has a much more complicated temporal structure. The world in restorable reach is based upon the past, upon that which was previously in my reach and upon that which (as I assume on the grounds of the idealizations of the ‘and so forth’ and ‘I can always do it again) can once again be brought into my actual reach. (p. 51).

We have particular zones of objects in the world that we encounter and perceive. Schutz calls these our zones of relevance and highlights four zones. We have the world within reach. The world within reach “can be immediately observed by us and also at least partially dominated by us” Schutz explains (Schutz, On Phenomenology and Social Relations, 1970, p. 112). The second zone is associated with “fields not open to our domination but mediately connected with the zone of primary relevance” (p. 112). The final two are “relatively irrelevant” and “irrelevant” (p. 112). This is important because a small portion of our stock of knowledge is grounded within our interactions within these zones, and the action within these zones are affected by those recipes we have available to us. Our stock of knowledge molds particular typifications. A typification is an expectation, an idea type based on the knowledge we have accumulated either via direct experience or passed down from our world. As we encounter other objects, we reach into our stock of knowledge and apply these typifications. Schutz writes, “In other words, what has been experienced in the actual perception of one object is apperceptively
transferred to any other similar object, perceived merely as its type” (Schutz, On Phenomenology and Social Relations, 1970, p. 117). Although the process of analogic apperception is different when we are discussing human beings, this brings to mind questions related to friends. We have particular typifications of friends, and this is automatic and unreflective for our every day interactions. However, there is a moment in which we “name” that friend and enter into a reflective attentiveness. When we name something, for example “friend,” “we are related it by its typicality to pre-experienced things of similar typical structure, and we accept its open horizon to future experiences of the same type, which are therefore capable of being given the same name (p. 117).

For Schutz’ zones, they are discussed with regard to four different dimensions; space, time, and ability to change the environment, and social relationships. Bakardjieva (2005) explains:

With regard to action, these dimensions of the spatial arrangement of the lifeworld take the shape of differentiated ‘zones of operation’ (p. 41). Within the world of actual reach and as a subsection of it there exists a zone which the subject can influence through direct action – the zone of operation. Schutz draws a distinction between the ‘primary zone of operation,’ where action is tied to the physical body of the actor, and the ‘secondary zone of operation’ (and its corresponding ‘secondary reach’), in which action can be performed only with the help of various media. The province of mediated action meets its limits in the prevailing technological conditions of a society, and is being dramatically enlarged with the advance of technology and its penetration into the everyday lifeworld. Schutz clearly recognizes the broad variation of subjective secondary zones of operation among the members of a single society. Social structures and the position a subject
occupies within them determine differential access to what is technologically possible. (p. 40).

Bakardjieva (2005) also discussed the nature of Schutz zones based on social relationships. She wrote:

We-relations are established at different levels of nearness, depth, engagement, coordination, mutuality or, in sum, immediacy. Tracking further these different ‘gradations of immediacy’ (p. 69), Schutz moves into the zones of the social world populated by ‘contemporaries’. This term refers to ‘those other men with whom I do not actually have a werelation, but whose life falls in the same present span of world time as mine’ (p. 69). Our experience of contemporaries is qualitatively different from that of our fellow men. This difference lies in the dramatic decrease in the ‘abundance of symptoms through which the conscious life of the other is accessible to me’ (p. 69). Therefore, contemporaries are experienced as ‘types’ (p. 75) to which certain attributes, certain functions and behaviour are ascribed. These types display various degrees of anonymity on the basis of which the world of contemporaries is stratified into personal types, functionary types, and typifications of social collectivities. The anonymity of a typification is inversely proportional to its fullness of content, which is determined by the origin of the typification – was it inferred from immediate experience of an earlier fellow-man, or was it a learned generalization of social reality? (p. 42).

She continued:

Thus the immediate encounter with a fellow-man and the mediate experience of a highly anonymous social type represent two poles between which many intermediate forms can
be found. At this point, an isomorphism between the spatial and the social structures of the everyday lifeworld becomes obvious. The structures of attainability and restorability characterizing the spatial arrangement of the lifeworld can be recognized in the subjective experience of the social world as well. Based on the complex graduation of immediacy constituted by the various degrees of restorability and attainability of a once-existent or achievable we-relation, the structure of the social relationships between contemporaries emerges. Schutz’s structures of the social world present the key to understanding the unique character of communication technologies compared to all other technologies and artefacts. Communication technologies and devices mediate subjects’ perceptions of and actions onto the social world, while the effects of all other technologies are realized first and foremost in the physical world. It is clear from the outset that media are implicated in a recharting of the zones of anonymity of the experienced social world. Mass media, for example, enlarge the number of types of contemporaries of whose existence I know in general, that is, whose existence I can infer on (p. 44).

Finally, she wrote:

More and more, our zone of actual reach comes to resemble a control tower from where we can perceive distant objects and social entities by reading them off technical representations – I–(technology– world), which extends our zones of actual and potential reach. We can also exert action upon distant objects and people through technological levers – (I– technology)–world, which extends our secondary zone of operation and our province of possible operation. (p. 61)

Zhao (2006) has argued that technology has created a new zone, one that effects all four of the above noted dimensions. He wrote:
Specifically, the Internet has created a new spatiotemporal zone--the zone of the ‘there and now,’ a new mode of communication—the electronic text chat, and a new social gathering place—the online public domain. (p. 458)

Related to this topic, he wrote:

Conditions of social interaction refer to the totality of the environment in which interpersonal contacts take place. From the perspective of phenomenology, such an environment consists of not only the ‘contact situations’ that directly affect a given social encounter but also the ‘zones of operation’ that participation the lifeworld into different time-space segments. The advent of the Internet has brought about significant changes to this environment by creating (1) a new spatiotemporal zone—the zone of the ‘there and now,’ (2) a new mode of communication—the electronic text chat, and (3) a new social gathering place—the online public domain. (p. 459)

The foundation of intimacy in friendship is retention. The shift from out of reach to within reach seems continuous. We believe that our friend when they leave our physical presence, will return to that presence and be the same friend with the same qualities and traits in which there were originally in our presence. And, this is developed through a build-up over time. When we encounter someone in a face-to-face situation, as they continue to meet us in the present over and over again, we build up a stock of knowledge about who we believe them to be. Even when they cease to be within our actual reach, as in, within our physical presence, they are still present to us as a remembrance and as an anticipated person in the future, so that we can then build a pattern of our encounters with them. Schutz (1970a) addressed the idea of a human being walking out of our direct reach, and in doing so points to the notion of our experience of friendship that is built through our anticipations and memories. He explains:
Far from seeming obvious, it actually seems absurd that someone we are close to has somehow become ‘different’ now that he is out of sight, except in the trite sense that our experiences of him bear the mark of pastness. (p. 220)

The jump from attainable reach from a face-to-face setting to a virtual setting is not that difficult, providing that the verbally explicit there is created in such a way that our stock of knowledge provides us with enough information to adequately anticipate information, as the remembrance is irrelevant anyway based on Schutz’ observation that only a very small amount of information about our world comes from personal experience.

Drawing from Husserl, Schutz (1970a) examined “subjective time” to explain “the interconnectedness of the stream of thought” (p. 11). Schutz wrote that “The actual present, therefore, is not an instantaneity, but the persisting form for continuously changing contents” (p. 11). He continued, “Actual impression is nothing else than the limiting phase of a continuous series of retentions, or, in the other direction, of a continuous series of anticipations, both chains to be interpreted as continuous successions of intentional relationships” (p. 11). Furthermore, he writes, “Therefore, says Husserl, each actual experienced present carries along its horizon of the experienced past, which is necessarily always filled with content, and its horizon of the future, which is empty or filled merely with the content of the anticipated future present” (p. 11). And so, we can say then that with each encounter, the content of our friendship is filled more and more, both with past and future horizons.

In the previous chapter, the notion of absent cues was discussed and the inaccurate tendency to association absence with loss. This, too, has been done with immediacy. A lack of immediacy is not a lack of intimacy, but it can become problematic when we begin to inaccurately interpret the Other. Schutz wrote, “The first steps beyond the realm of immediacy
are marked by an increase in the number of perceptions I have of the other person and a
narrowing of the perspectives within which I view him” (1970a, p. 218).

Gumpert and Cathart (1986) pointed out that all human communication is a derivative of the
interpersonal communication process. They wrote, “An environment in which we talk to each
other and see each other while we are actually in the presence of the other is no longer necessary
to interpersonal communication” (p. 165). They added:

Interpersonal intimacy has traditionally entailed physical and psychological closeness.
We could be intimate only with those that we could be close to physically and
emotionally. As Edward T. Hall has pointed out in his works on nonverbal
communication, we actually divide personal space into intimate and social distance
depENDING on how close we allow others to come. (p. 165)

As communicative, intimacy transcends space and time and can account for the large distances
between friends both across time and space. Cocking and Kennett (1998) explored the
relationship of intimacy to friendship. They argued that intimacy is not even a requirement for
friendship in the first place, and even if it were, it is not tied to space. The pair wrote that
typically literature does tend to focus on “intimate friendships” and that these friendships entail
“reciprocal deep affection, well-wishing, and the desire for shared experiences” (p. 502). The
pair highlighted the nature of self-disclosure on intimacy. There is a huge dedication of
communication literature to self-disclosure and trust, and it is beyond the scope of this project;
however, this project does take the position that intimacy is an essential feature of friendship.
Cocking and Kennett wrote that self-disclosure “is thought to cement the bonds of trust and
intimacy that exist between close friends and has been understood to mark companion friendship
in two sorts of ways” (p. 503). Both of these are problematic for the pair. One version of self-
Disclosure paints intimacy in friendship as requiring a telling of secrets. Another version is the mirror-view which argues that intimacy requires a seeing of ourselves in the other. Cocking and Kennett argue that the mirror-view and secrets-view of friendship “fail to identify features that are in part constitutive of close or companion friendship” and “that they miss the mark quote” concerning understanding the self in the role of friendship.

They point out that sometimes friends lack similar interests, and sometimes similarity does not create friendship. Sometimes friends do not “herald increasing intimacy” and they explained, “I may like to discuss philosophy with you but have no wish to go the to a football game with you upon discovering that you, too, follow football” (p. 508). When it comes to self-disclosure, Cocking and Kennett mention that it is kind of absurd to imagine that we could share our most private moments, e.g. using the bathroom, without having the opposite effect of alienating others. They then responded to imaginary arguments to this idea—that the kind of information disclosed needs to be revelatory. Cocking and Kennett (1998) recognized that sharing secrets and concerns “can serve to deepen and nurture intimacy” (p. 508). However, they clarify that the nature of the privacy of the disclosure has nothing to do with intimacy, and instead it is “the value we assess to the hopes and concerns we share (whether we wish them to be kept private or not) and the fact that we choose to talk to each other about what matters to us that contributes to the growth of intimacy between us” (p. 508). Intimacy grows through communicative choice—the choice to communicate, communication with you, how to communicate and to call you my friend.

Bennett (2016) argued that technology obscures the “need for close physical space” (p. 254). For her, there is a loss associated with lack of physical space which is “rectified,” she argued, “when we are intentional about our daily choices of interaction” (p. 254). Her article
drew from Elull and *technique* and she cautioned against the “tendency to truncate the basic premise of human relations—presence—for the sake of a more efficient means of dealing with the other” (p. 255). She argued:

> While social media allow people to be co-preset (i.e. present to each other simultaneously in different time zones and locations), the absence of one’s physical presence leaves a friendship (or any relationship) in a precarious situation. The inability to act towards or touch another creates a situation that is emotionally sparse, certainly lacking in relationship richness. Connecting with others online, over time, creates a normalcy for absence. (p. 255)

Zhao, too, notes the issues associated with lack of touch. He wrote:

> In computer-mediated communication under corporeal telecopresence, one’s sense of copresence is dampened by the loss of the possibility of haptic engagement. However, the belief that one is in contact with a real human being, although remotely, sustains the social suspense and excitement that underlie face-to-face interaction. Such a belief is constantly being validated based on the behavioral cues (such as voice over the telephone and images on the screen) gleaned from the mediated communications. (p. 451)

Regarding intimacy, Chambers writes:

> technologies express deep-seated aspirations for intimate connections of choice based on trust, sharing and reciprocity. Paradoxically, while the concept of intimacy has been interrogated through the lens of friendship, friendship has come to be idealised and venerated. Thus, late modernity brings with it a new kind of intimate relationship and culture which draws on the ideal of friendship: a relationship no longer defined by or
confined to ties of duty but entered into voluntarily in a context of mutual benefit. Friendship signifies less formal, more casual companion-like bonds. The concept of friendship mirrors the ‘pure relationship’ by signifying the desire for equality and choice in all relationships. The variability and emphasis on choice involved in this kind of intimate relationship correspond well with social media by promoting a sense of choice, control and reciprocity at the same time. This corresponds with the idea of social network sites such as Facebook as more casual, immediate, informal modes of communication. These personal networks can involve self-disclosure, shared secrets and a sense of exclusiveness. Individuals can construct their own narratives of self through fluid, flexible ties. (p. 52)

Bennett did note that “For online social networking to work, people must be absent from each other. Distance is a necessity” (p. 250). But distance and remoteness are part and parcel of all human relationships because they are communicative phenomena. In Ong’s Contributions to Cultural Studies, Farrell (2015) asked, “How…does intimate sharing proceed? How, according to Ong, do persons commune with one another?” (p. 108).

Ong argued that “personal presence in a text is not the same as the presence of two persons to one another in spoken dialogue” (2002, p. 521). He adds, “And indeed in some texts—such as lists, certain perfunctory reports, and the like—the presence of the text’s author can be minimized. But, however remotely, it is there, although it lies in the background” (p. 521). This is essential because if we say that presence is a necessary component of friendship, then ultimately it still would be made manifest in communication that would be strictly textual between two people. Farrell wrote, “But person-to-person communicating, the communing of
spirits, is exemplified paradigmatically in live conversation, and perhaps in moments of silence together” (p. xix).

**Intimacy and Distance**

All relationships have an element of distance because of the nature of what it means to be a human being with consciousness and intimacy has its limits. In his interview with Altree, Ong said:

The same is true of all human beings. Even a husband and wife never find out what it feels like to be the other. They try, they get awfully close. But no matter what, each of us remains isolated in his or her own consciousness, each one in his own little prison. And yet such isolated beings are the only ones on earth who can communicate. This is what a mere animal can’t do. He can’t say “I” can’t enter into himself in isolation. So he has nothing to say. We can communicate, paradoxically, because we are completely different from one another. (p. 398)

Distancing is a natural part of our relationships with others, both in the physical realm and in cyberspace. Zhao pointed out that in the physical domain, we have ways of keeping others closed off from our spaces—He called these involvement shields and wrote, “Besides using walls and gates that physically keep others from getting within range, people also create ‘situational closures’ to symbolically close off a region into which they retreat. For example, a door curtain, even if transparent” (p. 576). Online, he noted, we do the same—we might “ignore, hide, block, or relegate” (p. 576). He added:
In either region, the establishment of compresence also depends on people’s willingness to engage and be engaged by others, as various involvement shields can be deployed to block access if people are not interested in participating. (p. 578)

Zhao explained that “electronic text chat” “combines the permanence of writing and the synchronicity of speaking” and that this is “an entirely new mode of human contact created by the internet” (p. 462). Zhao explained that “In the traditional society, intimacy is closely tied to physical proximity and others become progressively more anonymous as they are distanced from each other.

Communicative technologies have altered our experience of space and time, and as a result, because of the connection between friendship and space and time, we find ourselves at the forefront of new possibilities for connection. Different technologies have different effects and are conducive to different forms of encounter and intimacy. Mok, Wellman, and Carrasco (2010) found that email, for example, had minimal effects on relationship maintenance. At the time of the study, the trio noted that face-to-face communication between friends and relatives remained unchanged from the 1970s to the time of the study. Phone contact did slightly increase. Yang, Brown, and Braun (2014) observed that specific channels that are more conducive to building and fostering intimacy than others. For example, they noted that cell phones are the most intimate and social networking sites the least.

Ong wrote the following concerning intimacy and electronic media:

Does Hopkins electrically implemented relationship with his subject establish any special relationship with his readers? It does establish a new kind of directness in the relationships, a new intimacy, a participatory intimacy. (2002, p. 501)
Chambers also noted a new intimacy. Chambers (2013) argued that “today’s technologically mediated relationships give rise to a new, mediated intimacy which incorporates friendship and reflects the fluid, diverse and informal nature of contemporary personal interactions” (p. 45). Adams (1998) pointed out that not only are we altering our friendships but that we are developing technology that suits the purpose of forming and maintaining friendships.

Zhao argued that we need to update Schutz’ divisions to incorporate a third realm, “consociated contemporaries” (p. 91). This group shares time but not space, he explains. There are new spaces for contact and it requires new understandings. The third realm, specifically, Zhao argued is one in which there is an interaction between face and device. In this realm, the mediated realm, there is a significant amount of trust that must occur in addition to the usual trust between two persons in dialogue. Zhao uses the example of a mailperson delivering a letter between two people. Each person trusts in their understanding of the system to deliver their message, for example. This notion of trust will be taken up in the next chapter.
Sunaisthesis: The Synechdotal Activity of Friendship Ethics

“I don’t need a friend who changes when I change and who nods when I nod; my shadow does that much better.”

– Plutarch

Plutarch made an important observation about friendship. Our friends are not those who mirror us. Our friends are those with whom our selves become visible to us, but in a way that generates and transforms meaning. Currently, there is a debate that is ongoing about the nature of friendship and ethical being in a media-saturated age. McFall (2012), for example, argued that character friendships cannot be created online. He added that hybridized character friendships are possible but cannot be sustained only through mediated communication. Valor (2012) reasoned that social media do support and strengthen friendships, but they must supplement and not substitute for face-to-face interactions. Bennett asked, “Just what does it mean to be a true friend? Is it the same in 2014 as it was twenty years ago? Is the online friend synonymous with or an adequate substitute for the friend who lives down the street?” (p. 251) and along these same lines, what does it mean to be a good friend?

Multiple scholars have attempted to understand the essential qualities of friendship, one of the earliest of which was Aristotle in the Nichomachean Ethics and Eduemonian Ethics. Aristotle argued that friendship was itself a virtue, and Cooper (1980) argued that Aristotelian virtues fail to even manifest in the absence of authentic friendship. There is no doubt about the importance of friendship in our lives, especially today. Suttles (1970) explained that “Friendships are especially valued in a population where social contracts have outgrown the bonds of kinship, neighborhood, age grades, workgroups, ethnicity and social classes” (p. 96).
Friendship is necessary for human flourishing, but technological changes have affected how we interact with others.

Von Heyking (2008) wrote that “Aristotle’s friendship teaching has been called the ‘peak’ of his moral teaching” (p. 179). However, diving deeper, Von Heyking wrote, “His understanding of sunaisthesis (joint perception/awareness) as the activity of virtue friendship has been called the ‘peak of the peak’” (p. 179). Von Heyking argued that “Friendship is built into the very way human beings think and act toward one another as moral agents, which shows its foundational role for political life” (p. 179). He continued, “Because sunaisthesis cannot be judged by a standard or rule outside of itself, the paper considers the emphasis Aristotle places on the practice of friendship” (p. 179). Friendship, he noted, is considered “to be the highest and ‘most divine’ human capacity” (p. 179). Sunaisthesis is essential for friendship and all human flourishing. Sunaisthesis is central to ethics, Liu explained, because it “refers to the way friends feel the life or existence of each as good, meaningful, and desirable” (p. 589). For Liu, sunaisthesis is “a way that friends grasp each other’s lives” (p. 590). As such, she explained “sunaisthesis is therefore a fundamental form of intimacy and an indispensable component of friendship” (p. 590). She added that “We are not really close to our friends unless we have a feeling for what gives their lives meaning or what moves them” (p. 590). She continued, “And as a way of appreciating the goodness in each other’s lives, sunaisthesis would also appear to be necessary for friendships” (p. 590). Sunaisthesis, Liu argued, is “one of the most important…activities of friendship” (p. 590). Because sunaisthesis is the activity of virtue friendship, it then will be the focus of this chapter. This chapter begins by overviewing the importance of sunaisthesis for Aristotle’s moral philosophy and friendship. It reviews the secondary literature to trace the etymology of the term, then approaches the notion of
sunaisthesis by examining it as the synthesis of human living together, perceiving together, and doing together within a communication framework. After, it concludes that as communicative, it can and does occur online.

**Aristotle on Friendship**

For Aristotle, there were types of friendship—utility, pleasure, and virtue. The most desirable friendship for the good life is virtue-friendship. McFall (2012), drawing from Aristotle, explained that character-friends “provide for each other, an opportunity for robust moral reflection” (p. 222). Friendship is a conduit for human flourishing, and arguably for Aristotle, the conduit for human flourishing. Multiple scholars recognize the importance of friendship for Aristotle’s entire project on ethics. Cooper (1980), as noted before, noted it was the central component of all of his work. Thomas (1993) explained, “It is clear that Aristotle took friendship to contribute in an enormous way to human flourishing” (p. 48). Kalliartta (2016) wrote, “Aristotle’s theory of the good life and in particular, his analysis of the role that friendships play in achieving human flourishing, has been one of the most influential and long-lasting theories on human connections and friendships” (p. 66). Von Heyking (2017) argued that “friendship is the quintessential human activity, where the soul and its constituent parts are fully activated in their intellectual and moral capacities” (p. 179). He added that for Aristotle, friendship was “an intellectual and moral activity” (p. 180). As an intellectual activity, friendship is related to the ecology of knowing. One reason why this issue is so pressing is that friendship is foundational to the creation of knowledge itself, and communicative practices within friendships are one way in which knowledge is produced. Maines (1989) even equated an “ecology of friendship” with “an ecology of knowing” (p. 198). Cooper (1980) noted that according to Aristotle, “Human flourishing, in short, does not consist merely in conformity to
natural principles but requires self-knowledge and conscious self-affirmation. Self-knowledge is thus an essential part of what it is to flourish” (p. 341). Von Heyking added, “Friendship is the expression of the human intellect whose nature it is to identify with the known” (p. 187). Also associated with knowing is situating ourselves within a world of narrative and virtue structures.

Rawlins (2009) wrote, “Friends also co-create deep understandings allowing for shared moral visions and rights unique to their friendship” (p. 1-2). Friendship is an epistemological and ontological space, deeply entwined with our virtue structures. He adds that “In close friendship we desire good things to happen to our friend because we care about this particular person” (p. 5). From an Aristotelian perspective, our well-wishing, Rawlins showed, is “mutual” (p. 5). He writes that this includes “reciprocated concern and actions to benefit each friend” (p. 5). These concerns and these actions, then, lead us to the realm of ethics, as there are significant choices involved in “connected, responsible, positive freedoms” (p. 9). Rawlins argued that “It requires unforced yet mutually contingent choices to respond to each other as friends” (p. 9). Up until this chapter, much of the discussion has revolved around several moments of choice within friendships—the choice to reach out, the choice to partake in dialogue, the choice of how to communicate.

For Rawlins, ethics specifically enter the arena of friendship when we make choices related to similarity and difference. He wrote, “All communicative contexts are reflexive achievements. When we share emerging moments of real time, we co-construct the ‘now’ in which we are living” (p. 21). In the construction of the now, we again employ choice. Rawlins wrote:
All interpersonal events composing a ‘set of alternatives’ simultaneously are partially performed and partially perceived. We construct choices as we select them and select among them as they are constructed. (p. 22)

Co-creating knowledge and sharing moral visions requires the agreement in choice, and Aristotle addressed how friends can make good choices together using the term *sunaisthesis*.

**Sunaisthesis**

**Living**

To understand *sunaisthesis*, it is important to overview two ethical components of the good in friendship. The first is desiring or doing good for others, the second with. Rawlins explained that “In close friendship we desire good things to happen to our friend because we care about this particular person. The activities compassing personal friendship occur for the most part in private settings out of public eyes and ears” (2009, p. 5). Stocker (1981) considers friendship from a teleological position and argues that teleology alone is not sufficient in understanding the good acts we do for our friends and that they do for us. He wrote, “To understand them we must recur to their source, or arche not simply their end, or telos” (p. 747). He then examined the arche of friendship. For Stocker, we first begin with the friendly act itself, “to identify it as a friendly act” that “only its purpose, goals, ends, desires, and the like are critical” (p. 748). He added that “Character and other elements we act out of are relevant if at all, only because and to the extent they are reducible to teleological elements” (p. 748). He noted that there is a difference between “friendly acts done for a friend” and “acts done out of general friendliness, amiability, or goodwill” (p. 75). The defining element here is that of particularity.
Doing Good for Others

Sokolowski (2002) argued that virtue friendships require shared virtues. He showed sharing virtues “involves calibration” and honing. He continued that “It demands that in the contingences and vicissitudes of life we possess the insight and the character to achieve truly the good of another” (p. 462). Not only then do we need to be moral agents, but we must meet our friend in the particular to know “precisely what he needs…and how he needs it” (p. 462). To be able to do this requires the ability to share perceptions of the good. Stocker considered this an “expansion” and an “‘intersubjectivizing’ of the good by me” (p. 459). This is sunaisthesis. It is the synecdochal activity that creates a “we” in the space of friendship.

Sunaisthesis is used in both the Eudemonian and Nicomachean Ethics. Flakne’s work (2005) demonstrated that sunaisthesis was “overlooked” and “misconstrued” in the majority of the literature, which was unfortunate because she considered it “central to Aristotle's philosophy of friendship” (p. 37). Kosman (2004) wrote that the literal translation of sunaisthesis is co-perception, although it was taken up by a later tradition to mean apperception. He wrote that the latter tradition used in in a way that meant:

- either the inward awareness that accompanies perception (what we often call simply consciousness) or the self-awareness or self-consciousness of ourselves as conscious.

But Aristotle here intends a more literal sense of sunaisthesis, a sense that can be heard in the etymology of the term: the shared or common perception that friends enjoy. (p. 150)

Von Heyking also breaks down the term specifically in Aristotle’s work. He argued that Aristotle “shows us how moral seeing (aisthesis) operates like ‘aesthetics’ seeing of the
beautiful. Acting rigorously or nobly cannot be reduced either to following a rule nor subjectivity” (p. 183). Continuing, he explained that:

> Adding the sun-prefix to form sunaisthesis was rare in antiquity. Plutarch uses it to describe the fellow-feeling Solon created in Athens with his legal reforms. However, its primary meaning in antiquity was self-consciousness without necessarily referring to another, and its meaning shifted to signify the interiorization of the self. (p. 183)

Flakne argued the term derives from *suzen*, that is, the social life, and *aisthesis*, or perception.

**Doing Good with Others**

Liu (2010) wrote that “human living (to *zen*) is living together (to *suzen*)” (p. 580). Her argument is part of a broader claim of Aristotle’s that we are social creatures by nature. She and Kosman (2004) both showed that Aristotle considers living together to consist of more than co-location. Liu wrote, “Aristotle equates living together with simply spending days (to *sunemereuein*) in each other’s company, an activity whose significance shows up most conspicuously in contrast to the lives of grazing animals” (p. 594). She pointed out in Aristotle that although sheep graze together, they do not *live* together that human beings live together.

Kosman addressed the misconception that a happy life requires self-sufficiency. He warned that the notion “might lead us to view friends as an unnecessary addition to such a life” (p. 135). He wrote:

> It is peculiar to think of a happy person living in isolation, and more than just peculiar to think that such a person might choose to live his life apart from the company of others like himself, other persons, whom he might love and be loved by. (p. 135)

To live is to live with others, and a significant component of human living is perceiving.
Perceiving

Liu explained that “Perceiving is part of to *zen*” (p. 583). Co-perceiving is part of to *suzen*. Liu considered friends to be “second selves” because they, too, exist and feel pleasure from living. She wrote “we need to jointly perceive (to *sunaisthesithai*) friends, and this requires us to live together (to *suzen*) with them” (p. 583). Kosman asked, “What is a human life in the fullest sense of actively living, that is, as the end toward which the structures and powers of a human being are directed?” (p. 136)? For Aristotle, Kosman argued, “that it consists in the active exercises of perceiving and knowing” (p. 136). He added that “therefore life in common with others must also consist of perceiving and knowing in common with them” (p. 136).

Kosman struggled with a particular section in Aristotle in which Aristotle claims that perceiving and knowing is desirable. He wrote that there is a translation error that has been perpetuated. He draws our attention to a translation of Aristotle that claims that “to perceive and know oneself are what is most desirable for each person” (p. 137). Kosman wrote, “According to interpretation, you will recall, friends are desirable because they provide an avenue, imperfect but all we have, to the pleasure and moral betterment that derives from self-awareness” (p. 137). He continued:

If, in other words, we abstract consciousness in the sense of considering it without reference to the particular subject of consciousness, then there would be no difference between my desiring that I be conscious and my desiring that some other person be conscious. But that would be, Aristotle continues, like supposing that my desire to live might be satisfied by some other person living instead of me. (p. 138)

Kosman showed that this is a common way of reading Aristotle but it is incorrect. He added:
For me to wish to be is for me to wish for my being, which is, for Aristotle, to wish for awareness in the form of subjectivity; and this subjectivity is not another characteristic of mine. That the desire for life and thus for conscious is for each person a desire for his or her own consciousness does not then specify an additional element in the original desire, but a necessary part of the structure of that desire. One may desire that there be life or that there be consciousness without desiring that life or consciousness be one’s own. (p. 140)

Kosman differentiated between the “exercises of consciousness” and “the mere possession of the powers of consciousness” (p. 141). It is the exercise of consciousness that Aristotle believed we desire. This is because amid “the society of friends,” the “power of thought” is transformed “into the activity of thought” (p. 145). Kosman called this transformation the “power of consciousness” and that it “constitutes the end of human life” (p. 145). The end to which all human life aims is to be conscious, which is impossible without being conscious in the consciousness of others. Consciousness enacted with others is communication.

In her 2013 work, Danblon wrote that the translations that conflated sunaisthesis with conscience “reveals the epistemological gap between the Aristotelian conception of rationality and its modern version, especially as it is inherited by Descartes” (p. 501). She wrote:

What Aristotle called sunaisthesis is the human capacity to feel that one feels, to put together sensations and emotions, but also to interact with others by sharing (discursive) representations of this common feeling. In other words, as an ancient version of the modern conscience, sunaisthesis is the human capacity to experience the common sense. (p. 501).
Communicative Work

Being together or even perceiving together is not the ultimate good. It is *doing* together that is important. It requires shared “contemplation,” “praxis,” “cooperation,” and collaboration” (Kosman, 2004, p. 148). Eating in the same space is not a true “shared” activity. Shared activity involves an “enlargement of being,” Kosman argued. From this perspective, Kosman showed that co-living:

is understood in a new way, such that being conscious together does not indicate being conscious, as it were, side by side, but forming together a partnership of consciousness, a community characterized by the common perception that is *sunaisthesis*. (p. 148)

This living though moves beyond perception and requires “shared plans and projects, communal hopes and memories, cooperative theories and strategies” and “common ways of looking at and experiencing our common world” (p. 149).

Kosman added that the idea of “living together” “involves a corporate life properly called political, the life of comrades engaged in shard projects of language, thought, action, and culture” (p. 150). He wrote that “the partnership of good friends will above all” according to Aristotle “be concerned with the goods of our lives, and will thus involve thinking together and feasting together” (p. 151). His point was that “Reading *sunaisthesis* this way will enable us to parse correctly the passage I earlier cited as important to Aristotle’s argument: the perceiving of one’s friends is in a sense necessarily the perceiving of oneself and knowing oneself” (p. 151). Kosman then argued that the translation should be “for one’s friend to perceive is necessarily in some sense for oneself to perceive, and in some sense, for oneself to know” (p. 151). To justify this, he wrote:

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It is not that I see myself in my friend and therefore see myself in seeing my friend. It is rather that he and I, joining together in the partnership that friends constitute, become a conscious community, a single soul, as Diogenes recalls Aristotle to have said, dwelling in two bodies. (p. 151)

Aristotle insisted, Kosman argued, that *sunaisthesis* “be realized by common discourse” (p. 153). He added, “*Sunaisthesis* is not primarily what friendship provides, but part of an explanation of what is required if it is to be desirable” (p. 153). Creating communicative works together is the end of sunaisthesis.

Emmeche (2019) explained that “for some forms of friendships, the agents not merely attend to common interests; their perception is shared, mediated by the very relationship as an embodied activity of distributed cognition” (p. 47). He gave the example of art. He pointed out instances in which “friends or colleagues work close together to solve problems or develop new forms of creative expression” (p. 47). Emmeche explained that using Flakne’s perspective of *sunaisthesis*, it explains our limitations on the number of friends we can maintain. It requires ongoing communicative labor that requires a significant amount of cognitive energy.

**Synecdoche and Sunaisthesis**

In living, perceiving, and doing together, friends cease to exist as individual I’s and instead become a We. *Sunaisthesis* is the synecdochal activity in word, thought, a deed that creates the We. In 1964, Warren attempted to unravel the mystery of the term *sunaisthesis* in the work of Plotinus. He explained that “*Sunaisthesis* defies accurate translation, and the best I can do is it to enumerate the various shakes of its meaning” (p. 90). Warren wrote
it does not simply mean consciousness (the awareness of the duality of knower and known) or self-conscious (the awareness in which what is known is the knower). Even when the terms are sunaisthesis hautou, one can not simply translate, ‘self-consciousness.’ This phrase may mean a consciousness that one part of a mental whole has for another part, i.e. That we are thinking certain thoughts. (p. 90)

Warren wrote that sunaisthesis “is a relation of part to whole, whole to part, and part to part” (p. 91). He continued that “One might say that the particularly ‘sunaisthetizing’ agent is a kind of unity such that its consciousness or awareness is always of that unity itself” (p. 90). As for the agent which enacts sunaisthesis, Warren argued that it “may be a particular individual or even the universe” (p. 91). Warren wrote, “Sunaisthesis refers to a plurality in a unity and a consciousness or awareness in some way of that whole with itself (p. 91). Sunaisthesis is awareness of my awareness, awareness of the other’s awareness, awareness of the Other’s awareness of my awareness, and the Other’s awareness of my awareness of their awareness.

Flakne referred to sunaisthesis as “double intentionality” (p. 49). She wrote:

What is important here is that in the kind of aesthesis that is sun-aesthesis, I intend toward both what my friend intends toward, and to her being-in-intention. The sensible form that I ‘take on’ in sunaisthesis, then, is that of my friend’ determined human life, a life organized around ends which tie together past, present, and future capacities for determination. (p. 49)

She added:

Not only do I intend, in my aisthesis, my perception, to an object, but I also intend toward you, in your sensible form, which is nothing other than your Energeia, your life as a
determined perceiving and knowing, a perceiving and knowing organized around ends that
give you pleasure. (p. 51)

Drawing from Aristotle, Liu even argued that we cannot even perceive our own lives
independent of friends. She wrote, “we do not perceive either our own or each other’s lives
directly, but rather through synecdochic activities that reveal the structure of the whole” (p. 589).
For Liu, joint perception, sunaisthesis “requires an intimate acquaintance with each other’s lives”
(p. 595). She added, “This acquainting consists in knowledge of the character, history, and
trajectory of a life, as well as sympathetic understanding of how that life has been experienced”
(p. 594). It is communicative. It can only be achieved communicatively, not by being in one's
physical presence.

In *Eudemian Ethics*, Flakne argued that Aristotle differentiates between an abstract,
particular living and social knowing and perceiving. She wrote that “Sunaesthetic speech is a
special kind of speech, one that someone pertains to the ethical ideal of self-sufficiency” (p. 49).
She continued that “Sunaesthetic speech transforms perceiving selves into ethical selves” (p. 49).
The true good life requires being together and doing good together, and as such, is impossible
without sunaisthesis.

Bennett (2016) argued that “As we transfer more and more of our human exchange to
mediated environments such as Facebook, we inadvertently limit our ability to grow in
relationships” (p. 256). She insinuated that relationships that have been transferred to Facebook
are more likely to be “sparse, superficial and unsatisfying” and went on that we must convince
“ourselves that they are genuine” (p. 256). She then added that “Trust, loyalty, faithfulness all
are developed in an environment that is tangible, actual—a place where people are meeting face-
to-face, sharing life together through words and deeds” (p. 256). Like Bennett, McFall (2012),
too was skeptical of the ability of technologically-mediated communication. He argued that “technological communication” impedes our ability to morally reflect through friendship. He also added that proximity did not necessarily facilitate “moral betterment” (p. 223). McFall acknowledged that while mediated communication “can aid existing character-friendships,” he maintained that it cannot create or sustain them.

Bennett and McFall are only two among many who are not encouraged by the direction that modern technology seems to be taking our friendships. Many others are much more hopeful. If we consider the three components of sunaisthesis, living, perceiving, and doing, we can evaluate the role of technology. Vallor (2012) pointed out that the notion of the shared life is problematic when we interpret Aristotle in light of technology. He wrote, “deeper reflection on the meaning of the shared life (suzen) for Aristotle raises important and troubling questions about the capacity of online social media to support complete friendships of virtue in the contemporary world” (p. 185). He added that without co-location, “social media and other forms of online interaction seem antithetical to shared living” (p. 288). Human living is togetherness.

Togetherness is quite possible today in online environments, offline environments, or using a combination of the two in a hybridized style of relation. Mary Chayko (2012) considered the possibilities for relationships that exist as a result of our technology and explored the notion of the sociomental bond. She defined these bonds as existing “primarily in a mental realm, a space that is not created solely in the imagination of one individual but requires two or more minds” (p. 1). She argued that “they are no less real for being located in a mental realm. They are the manifestation of an absolutely genuine and often deeply felt sense that despite physical separation, a closeness” (p. 1). She added that “They represent an experience of communion.
with another person, one that does not depend on face-to-face meetings to be initiated or
maintained” (p. 2). Chayko pointed out that:

Even when the people involved in a sociomental connection do not know, have never
seen, and cannot accurately visualize one another, a kind of mental pathway exists
between them, along which information may be passed or people may otherwise
influence one another. It is as though a passageway to many potential forms of social
exchange and social relationship has been opened. The people involved may not be aware
of this passageway or “use” it in any but the most weakly realized fashion, but due to the
sociomental connection that exists, they have an increased opportunity to use it at some
point in the future. Thus many more outcomes to an interpersonal association (including
face-to-face relationships, friendships, and even love affairs are possible when a mental
pathway has first been opened between two people in the form of a sociomental
connection. (p. 73)

Elder (2014) argued that social media preserves the relevantly human and valuable portions of
life, especially reasoning, play, and exchange of ideas” (p. 287) and as such, can also lead to the
sharing of flourishing lives.

Elder (2010) highlighted that Aristotle associated shared living with conversation and
thought. He argued that “Any medium allowing friends to share conversations and thought
should thus be compatible with virtue friendship” (p. 288). More specifically, Elder wrote:

Our capacity to share our lives and thoughts via language and other symbolic
representation and artistic expression surely plays a role in the kind of sharing of ideas,
experiences, and perceptions that constitutes the realest sense of living together, and conversations are facilitated rather than discouraged by many social media. (p. 289)

Von Heyking (2017), in a response to critics of his work *The Form of Politics*, argued that to even be able to asynchronously share, across time and space, his response to his critics is an example of *sunaisthesis*. Their work is collaborative. Von Heyking even suggested that one partner can even be silent.

Munn (2012) argues that:

> Under my account of shared activity, friends engaged in such activity jointly pursue a goal when all of them not only desire a particular outcome, but also desire that the outcome be the product of the combined activity of the group, as it is composed. As friends, they may be willing to reduce the likelihood of achieving the desired outcome, in order to ensure that if it is achieved, the group which achieves it is composed of the friends. (p. 4)

Munn (2012) places the *sharing* solely within the *communicative praxis* realm. He writes, “I take communication to be the planning of activity, the sharing of ideas, the development of procedures and so on, while activity involves putting the things into praxis” (p. 4). The foundations of friendship related to *mutual caring* and *intimacy* can only arise through communicative praxis. He writes, “two components commonly held to be required for friendship, namely mutual caring and intimacy, predominantly arise through shared experience, rather than independently of it (p. 9). Friendship allows for a space of sharing moral visions. In the final chapter, we will now explore this space from a communication ethics framework.
Conclusion: Communication Ethics and Digitized Friendship

In Book VII of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argued that friendship “is either itself a virtue or connected with virtue” (1155a). In the beginning of this work, it was noted that one reason for an approach to friendship as communicative phenomenon is that it allows us to attend to the historic moment we are currently in and that it frames communication in a way that allows us to navigate friendship in an age of virtue contention. Whether friendship is a good, a faculty, or a virtue does not discount framing friendship as a communicative phenomenon. Arnett and Arneson define a communicative ethic as a “value-laden philosophy of communication that gives weight to issues and events” (p. 9). They likened it to an “evaluative” house. The foundation of the particular communication ethic in this chapter is to begin from the framework that friendship is a communicative phenomenon and expand.

Eberwein and Porlezza (2016) have argued that technology has led to a challenge of communication ethics in our age in two ways. First, they wrote that “digitization of the media creates new ethical problems that stimulate calls for a redefinitions of the norms and values of public communication” (p. 328). Second, they argued that “new instruments of web-based media observation introduce new possibilities for media (self-)regulation and accountability, thus complementing the initiatives of traditional institutions like press councils” (p. 328).

Sociological literature recognizes several major social institutions, but generally friendship is not considered a major social institution across cultures. The historical evidence, though, suggests that it is. Friendship persists across time and place and is a central good that is protected and promoted in all cultures. One cannot have happiness in the absence of others. There are multiple benefits to having friends. Like discussed in the first chapter, pain tolerance increases as the size of one’s social network increases (Johnson & Dunbar, 2016). There are
cognitive benefits, such as slowing cognitive decline in older adults (James, Wilson, Barnes & Bennett, 2011). Also, social network size has been linked inversely to depression (Hill, Griffiths, & House, 2015). In childhood, friends help each other through the development process. Friends make us better people, and they also help us participate and create meaning in the polis.

**Virtue Ethics**

To exemplify how friends help us become better people and better citizens, Stocker (1981) explained that friends enlarge our mentality of the good. He wrote, “This expansion of my desire for the good, this ‘intersubjectivizing’ of the good by me, means that I have become more virtuous, more human, more perfect as an agent. (p. 459). Meilaender (1981) argued that envisioning an Aristotelian perspective on friendship can prove problematic in our time. This is because we fail to recognize the nature of friendship in the formation of virtue and moral excellence. To explain this, he wrote:

> In our society the private bond of friendship is usually regarded as far less important than the public bond of citizenship. And indeed, if the preferential character of friendship creates problems for Christian ethics, it is not difficult to see why the more universal bond of citizenship might have done to seem more deserving as a focus for our attention and activity. (p. 68)

He added:

> Friendship, as we understand it today—an intimate, personal, and private bond among a small group of people—is for Aristotle only a more perfect expression of the bond which unites the polis. (p. 70)
The relationship of friendship and the effects on character development and society at large uniquely calls for a virtue ethics approach. Even more specifically, as a communicative phenomenon, a communication ethics approach grounded in virtue ethics is pressing. Traditionally, empirical studies in mediated communication and their effects trend in deontological and utilitarian frameworks (Vallor, 2012). In an earlier work, Vallor (2010) argued that these frameworks have drastically narrowed our understanding of the effects of technology on human flourishing. From a deontological and utilitarian perspective, technologies’ roles and effects on friendship are defined and judged in measurable and quantifiable ways associated with the individual and fail to recognize friendship as between persons. To explain this problem, Vallor wrote:

Such studies can encourage a narrowly utilitarian calculus that draws conclusions about the impact of new social media on user’s well-being simply from measures of their enjoyment of psychosocial goods such as feelings of ‘life satisfaction’, ‘self-esteem’ or ‘social capital.’ (Vallor, 2012, p. 187).

These frameworks often tend to be narrowly focused on particular times, and the broader nature of technological impacts over the course of human history are left out. Vallor suggested as a solution a turn to virtue ethics. Virtue ethics, she explains, “has the ability to account for the long-term and cumulative impact of particular practices on our character” (p. 187). As friendship has been important in every era of human history, scholarship that is attentive to its nature in history and the practices which it encourages and also effects it is important.

Stocker (1981) also recognized problems with a teleological approach to understanding friendship. He used the example of courage to show us that we run the risk of reifying practices of true friendship when he wrote:
One can act in order to show that one is courageous. But to act for that end need not be
to act courageously, nor conversely. Rather to act courageously constitutive involves
acting from a certain appreciation of the situations danger, a suitable handling of fear, and
the like. And these features, among others, are not amenable to a teleological
understanding. Thus, there is no goal, properly so-called the seeking of which is, as such,
to act courageously. (p. 758)

Therapeutic culture finds value in teleological perspectives. According to the *New York Times*
sold over 30 million copies. One of his suggestions in his work was for people to be sincere.
But in telling someone to be sincere, it is impossible then for them to be sincere. Rather than be
sincere, their focus of attention is on the state of being so. When we tell someone what they
*ought* to do in a friendship, we ignore that friendships are communicative phenomenon that
develop between persons. Friends *ought* to meet in person more. Friends *must* spend more time
meeting face-to-face. These perspectives run the risk of treating the particular practices as
means to ends rather than allowing the practices to naturally evolve through discourse.

Scult (1989) argues that through discourse, friends “raise their relationship to the highest
moral level” (p. 206). Scult invoked *homonoia* to explain that friendship is not a “relationship
that exists for the sake of satisfying our yearning for companionship” (p. 208). He says that “It is
an idea to guide us in developing the moral dimension of already existing institutional and quasi-
institutional relationships” (p. 308). He then argued that the “instrumental function” of
friendship is to “bring out the communal sensibilities that exist between individuals in order for
them to engage in the sort of discourse that predicts their individual integrity and eventuates in
good judgment” (p. 208). Scult felt that virtue attraction was the cement of friendships. He wrote it was because friends are those with whom we engage in “moral pursuits” (p. 209). Sokolowski (2002) argued that “Friendship exceeds justice as a human perfection” (p. 452). He explained that “The virtues are embodiments of practical intelligence” and that:

> We ourselves are the works of doing. Virtues, therefore, are embodiments of practical reason, and the installation of reason into our inclinations takes place through the actions we perform and the choices we make. (p. 453)

**Communication Ethics**

Fritz (2014) in advancing the notion of professional civility as a communicative virtue, argued that it can provide a home for care of institutions. She explained that “Care for institutions involves thoughtful engagement of an organization’s horizon of possibilities and a thoughtful, deliberate phenomenological turning toward key facets of organizational experience” (p. 223). This work has been an exercise in the thoughtful engagement of friendship’s horizon of possibilities and has turned to the key facets of experience related to friendship, outlined in each chapter.

Fritz argued that MacIntyre considered institutions “necessary to reach the telos of human flourishing” (p. 224) and in the previous chapter and throughout this work, it has been a central tenet that from Aristotle and beyond, friendship has been considered instrumental in human flourishing. Fritz explained that with organizations, and similarly institutions, we are summed “to tend to them with the care that we extend to human Others” (p. 223). She continues that “Such care embraces a unity of contraries” (p. 223) and necessitates a reflection cares for institutions “that support the labor, work, and action of human persons in the gestalt of public
and private life” (p. 224). Fritz advocated for protected and promoting those specific practices which led to professional flourishing in the workplace.

Fritz incorporated a conceptual framework that centered on three components:

1) “the need to see beyond immediate presenting problems occurring in institutional contexts”

2) “the importance of taking a long-term view rather than a short-term view of organizational health”

3) “and a rejection of the equivalent, in organizational terms, of temporary comfort reflective of a therapeutic response in the interpersonal context”

In this conclusion, the goal is to adapt the above framework to attend to friendship as an institutional from a communications ethics approach, and to engage in the particular forms of communication work and associated practices of each highlighted throughout this work.

We have already shown that there is some substantial disagreement in our era about what constitutes friendship itself. Arnett, Fritz, and Bell (2009) argued that each communication ethic “carries or reflects two sorts of related goods” (p. 4). The first, the explained, is “a substantive good” and the second “is a set of communicative practices that ensures active protection and promotion of a given good” (p. 4). The trio suggested that the defining good of our postmodern age is “difference” (p. 5). Arnett (2010) has argued that a defining feature of philosophy of communication that helps situate it as unique from philosophy in general is its attention to the particulars. Regarding this attention, he drew from Arendt and wrote, “Philosophy of communication engages particulars contingent on a particular situation, a particular moment, and a particular public contribution to public opinion” (p. 58). As examples of theories that have
stood the test of time, he noted Aristotle’s virtue ethics and Buber’s dialogue, and said that they “offer examples of temporal conviction that remain significant as long as a given theory continues to pass a pragmatic test of public opinion in the public domain” (p. 58). The entry point of the particular is particularly relevant for friendship studies.

Elder (2010) noted that “The shared good life” needs to address the universal good of human happiness and “particular goods for particular” human beings (p. 288). Sokowlowski (2002) said that virtue friendships require shared virtues. He showed sharing virtues “involves calibration” and honing. He continued that “It demands that in the contingences and vicissitudes of life we possess the insight and the character to achieve truly the good of another” (p. 462). Not only then do we need to be moral agents, but we must meet our friend in the particular to know “precisely what he needs…and how he needs it” (p. 462). A philosophy of communication approach can help then meet the friendship in the way it needs met and avoid the pitfall of reification.

An Ethical Analysis

Looking back to earlier, Arnett, Fritz and Bell (2009) highlighted a twofold nature of goods. First, there is a substantive good, and secondary are a set of practices that protect and promote that good. On one level, we might say that human flourishing is the substantive good and friendship is one of a set of practices that protect and promote that good. We can also say that friendship is a substantive good, and investigate the particular practices that might protect and promote friendship. This work will do so, and it will examine the themes written about in each chapter as a practice. Finally, we also might say that each individual theme itself is a good and then examine the individual practices that protect and promote each. This work will also do that.
**Encounter**

To begin, it seems pertinent first to review the specific conceptualization of each theme from a communicative framework and highlight some of the major ideas from each. In Chapter Two, we began by discussing the nature of Alfred Schutz’ work on intersubjectivity and its importance to all social relationships. All human beings are by nature of being human embedded in an already social world that existed before their birth and will continue to exist after their death. Intersubjectivity is the state of only knowing the world in the between of persons, as all thought and knowledge are socially created. Schutz’s approach is Aristotelian, which we see later, although not explicitly called such.

In this natural state of every day existence, we take for granted our world, and because of that, we also take for granted the existence of other humans. We take for granted that they exist like we exist, and we are able to do so because of the *thesis of general reciprocity*. For most of human history, we encountered others in their *originary presence* first bodily. Their bodies were presented to us as objects, and much like we move through the apperceptive process to envision that they have a heart, and stomach and all other organs and physical feature we can imagine, we also do so with their consciousness. With their consciousness, it cannot be accessed from the outside in any type of tangible way. Instead, we must rely on their words to grasp their interiority. When we encounter the bodies of others in our world, they are given to us in their *originary presence*. When we enter a space in which it becomes possible to communicate one’s interior and make it exterior through language, we find ourselves in a communicative common environment. This led us to define encounters as *the communicative phenomenon in which persons enter into a communicative common environment*. 
The ways in which we encounter others, that is enter into communicative common environments, is not space-bound in today’s world. To illustrate this point, I will now examine some of the ways in which I encountered others yesterday. To begin my day, I encountered each member of my family in some way as the house became alive. Although my niece grumpily walked past me with no communication whatsoever, in that moment we shared a communicative common environment. When she closed the bathroom door, she used an “involvement shield.” As I drove the kids to school, each driver I encountered on the road had the potential for a shared communicative environment. Had I found myself sitting at the light too long, thinking about my dissertation, I surely would have heard at the minimum a honking horn.

When I dropped them off at school, kids and parents hustled and bustled to stay out of the way of other cars. I encountered rushed parents and students looking forward to the day—or not, some looked quite irritated. While I exchanged no words with any of them, some shared eye contact or a wave or nod. In each of these instances, we see a case of encounter. I arrived home and immediately checked my email. Again, I encountered others, in their textual presence, in a very asynchronous way. As I began working on my dissertation, I received an email from someone asking me to call. When I encountered her email, I then called. Throughout my day, whether mediated or not, I encountered many people in many different ways. I encountered some both in person and via text. The point is that in our peopled world, we encounter others regularly and in various different ways.

As a practice that helps achieve friendship, encounter is a necessary requirement, for we must share communicative common environments with someone to be their friend. I cannot be friends with a celebrity I see on television—there is no shared communicative environment. As a
good to promote and protect, there is much more to say. From an ethical perspective, I believe that we can look at the specific practices that promote and protect encounter from an individual and institutional perspective.

At the institutional and individual level, we can apply Fritz’ earlier mentioned framework. First, she suggested a commitment to long-term health, to seeing beyond just the present, and to be wary of therapeutic approaches. Literature has tended to imagine technology as having opening the door for everyone to contact everyone all the time, but Zhao and Elesh (2008) explain this is a faulty way of looking at the state of electronic media in our world. They explain, “It might be true that calling has led to more contact with friends and family members, but there is little sign that telephone calling opened up new social contacts” (p. 567). This is problematic because as we know, philosophy of communication encourages a commitment to learning through difference. Meeting difference, from this perspective, would mean encouraging the openness to encounter. It means promoting the development of media and all endeavors that allow for encountering difference and promoting it, and protecting the public spheres in which encounter is possible.

In practice this, requires a recognition of very real problems that prevent others from pursuing encounters in difference. First, would be comfort, of course. Learning in difference requires communicative work. Encounter requires communicative work, and cognitive and emotional energy. Another issue is stereotypes, prejudices, and bias. Difference needs to be met with courage, and possibilities and positivities related to encounter should be promoted. Protecting diversity is of utmost importance in the realm of encounter. Part of this is a secondary problem, and that is the digital divide. While the majority of people in the United States do have internet access, as discussed in the previous chapters, the small minority who do not still
represent millions of people who do not. And from a more global perspective, as of 2015 only about half of the world population even had access to the internet (https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2015.pdf). In the world’s least developed countries, under 10 percent had access to the internet. With the various possibilities that merge from encounter alone and the role of encounter in human flourishing from its connection to friendship alone, ensuring that all have equal access to the spaces in which humanity can access others should be priority.

Zhao and Elesh (2008) noted the digital divide as one among several issues related to misconceptions about our possibilities for encounter. In addition to the digital divide, they note that there are “normative factors that restrict social connectivity” (p. 568). Even within the same physical space, the pair note that “Being ‘within range’ is not the same as being available for contact” (p. 569). Indeed, our earlier comment about stereotypes and prejudices apply here. While some normative constraints are beneficial, others are harmful. Here then, a promotion and protection of an ongoing conversation about the nature of these restraints and their constant evaluation and reevaluation in the public sphere is necessary.

**Particularity**

In the third chapter, the phenomenon we investigated was particularity. There, we left off from the encounter chapter saying that mere encounter is not enough to spark a friendship. Instead, there is a tension that emerges. In each encounter there is the potential for a social relation, and in the communicative process one will arise through the tension between mere encounter and particularity. In the chapter, we identified that particularity is *the reciprocal recognition of the other’s unique consciousness (interiority) through voice within a context of belief*. *Voice*, in the context of this project, is *the expression of one’s interiority*. Interiority was
one’s unique consciousness that belongs to no other human being nor ever will. Ong, in several of his works including *In the Human Grain* (1967b), explained that the atoms in our bodies are millions of years old and for them all to come together to create the being that is us is no less than proof that God exists. If we go further, what a miracle that the atoms in two bodies build to give rise to two unique interiorities that they come together to do good things together!

Doing good things together means that we have an expression into the outer world of our consciousness—we communicate. Everyone does, but to move from an everyday encounter to a relation requires a recognition of one’s particularity. And that alone is not enough—it must be reciprocal and voluntary. Using Anton’s work, it is important to remember that this process cannot be forced or scripted. We dwell in the what is said, we dwell in our friend, and we dwell in the friendship without stopping to reflect on these things in themselves. In the moment’s that we do, then focus of our attention changes. Like encounter, as a practice particularity is naturally associated with human flourishing because it is a practice that leads to the good of friendship (and other important social relationships).

On one hand, one of the reasons that we should protect and promote particularity is because it, itself, is a good. Aristotle’s work on ethics discussed the nature of pleasure, pain, and our purpose in life. While not all things that are good bring pleasure, particularity DOES. Revisiting chapter three, remember that Nathaniel Branden highlighted that human beings experience actual joy when we experience being “visible” as unique individuals to others. Recall that he wrote:

> When we encounter a person who thinks as we do, who notices what we notice, who values the things we value, who tend to respond to different situations as we do, not only
do we experience a strong sense of affinity with such a person but also we can experience our self through our perception of that person. (p. 70)

The practices then that allow us to even express ourselves as particulars in our world, then, need to be protected and promoted. The protection of autonomy, and choice but managed and negotiated through the tension of similarity and difference embedded in difference is one of Rawlins major contributions to friendship.

To clarify the specific practices to promote and protect related to the overall good of particularity requires and deeper understanding of the role of particularity in creating the virtuous individual. The very recognition of the good is a co-created construct. To explain this process, Stocker (1981) writes the following:

I do not seek this larger good simply because it is useful for me. If I were to do so, my ‘perfect’ friendship would have slipped into being a friendship based on utility. Nor do I seek this larger good simply because it gives me a good feelings to do so, because it is pleasant to me. If I were to do so, my ‘perfect’ friendship would have deviated into being a friendship based on pleasure. Rather, I see this good for another because I have become someone who is capable of friendship, someone who can desire and accomplish the good of others as my own good. I want good things not only for myself but for others as well, and the others in question have the same disposition toward me. The friendship is reciprocal and mutually acknowledged. This reciprocal and enlarged well-wishing involved a categorical form. It is a highly sophisticated intellectual structure. It is a form of recognition or identification. The good of my friend is identified as my own good, and my good is identified as the good of my friend, and both of us rejoice in the identifications that we mutually accomplish. (p. 459-460)
Being able to have virtuous friendship requires intimate knowledge about the friend, understanding their particular being, because to be a good friend means to do good things for the other friend, which requires recognition. Stocker explains further:

Perfect friendship, friendship of the highest kind, requires that each of the friends wishes and performs the good of the other friend. He wills the good of his friend; that is, he takes the good of the friend as his own good. When I act with and for a friend, I act in such a way that what is good for the friend as such, is wished for and done as my own good. His good, as good for him, has become my good, and he acts in the same manner toward me. The good each of us seeks is not just our own individual good but the good in common and the good for the other. If my friend and I are accomplishing something as friends, I am not just trying to do something that benefits me; I am trying to do something that benefits him as well, and I do it precisely as benefiting him. Its being good for him has become good for me. I have enlarged my sense of what is good for me. I wish not only things that benefit me individually, but also things that benefit others (my friends), and I wish those things precisely as benefiting them.

In the third chapter and into the fourth, the role of dialogue is recognized as important for the development of particularity between persons. Therefore, particular practices that promote and protect authentic dialogue are those that need to be in focus. Media that help facilitate this need to be in the forefront of our discussions. While there is rhetoric about the negative effects of technology on our relationships, more emphasis needs to be placed on the positives of technology. Using one single app like Snapchat, users have at their fingertips voice, video, text, the option to engage in synchronous and asynchronous dialogue. They can use stickers or play
games with others. Platforms like Youtube allowed me to take videos of my world and life and share them with my friend in Monterrey as she and I shared a common goal of language learning.

From a philosophy of communication approach, using the Fritzian framework, again long-term views and the rejection of temporary comfort are important. In a future work, I intend on working on a pedagogy of interiority. The evolution of human consciousness relating to media is a concept that would benefit a general education curriculum. However, to be able to contextualize media consumption and the role of the self and self expression in general is important within the broad scales of human history, one that can engage in the promotion and protection of particularity, providing a “why.”

**Dialogue**

Dialogue was an important component in the process of drawing out the interiority of the other and allowing for the emergence of particularity. As noted previously, Ong was influenced greatly by Buber’s work. In the act of coming into relation with other people, we draw on a stock of knowledge that brings forth an interpretive process. Human thought in its nature is binary and “breaks” down what we see. This is paradigmatic of language, as language is equally digitizing and breaks down as well as brings up. For example, we are well aware that in the process of naming, the word given to the object of intention is not the object of intention itself. Words are arbitrary representations of the objects of intentionality. However, in entering discourse and dialogue, words give life and representation to some things that are very really and not tangible, like the inner consciousness of others. In addition to dialogue being necessary for particularity, it is also the only way in which a friendship can become such an “object” that it can be identified as such. Friends co-create meaning, including the meaning that their unique friendship has and that it is even a friendship in the first place.
Chapter Four identifies several challenges related to dialogue and the interpretive process, and this is an opening for direction for a discussion on ethics. Dialogue is clearly a practice that leads to human flourishing and friendship. But dialogue is a good that needs protected in and of itself. For this work, specifically, the goal is to stay as close to possible to an understanding of the communicative practices that promote and protect dialogue from the perspective of friendship and friendship ethics.

First, related to the co-creation of meaning, it is important to be mindful of the current conversation that is questioning the quality of online friendship or its authenticity or genuineness. Based on the philosophical underpinnings, friendship’s significance is co-created in the between of persons. As such, we employ evaluative deontological and utilitarian universals to relationships that are not particularly ours. For one, friendships vary and change over the course of lifespans and across time and place. Some friendships look much different than others. Some are considered to have “weak ties” or dismissed as not “true” but instead “friendly relations.” Rather than discussions of the nature of “true” friendship’s ability to occur online, from a philosophy of communication perspective the focus would be better centered on what practices in mediated settings can protect and promote the dialogic space that allows for the co-creation of friendship. What spaces encourage people to engage in dialogue? What can we do to protect these and encourage their use?

Throughout the chapter, the lack of cues was a main focus. The lack of cues does reduce the available information for interpreting the other. This causes, because of the nature of human thought and language, the interpreter to draw from their stock of knowledge from their protentions and retentions more so than the face-to-face setting. Text creates phenomenological distance, and in chapter six where we discussed intimacy, we saw this manifest as the feeling of
closeness. From a Fritzian framework and philosophy of communication perspective, though, a more situated and long-term perspective is needed.

Like noted in the chapter, it is important to resist lamenting the loss of cues. Loss of cues is not inherently negative, nor is distance. As we saw in the chapter, studies show that when cues are reduced there are actually several positives. The more reduced the cues and the more an individual must rely on words alone, the more introspective they must be. They tend to be much more deliberate in their messages. To exemplify this, I am going to explain a game that I play in my classes when we review verbal and nonverbal communication.

Almost all my students are familiar with charades, and I find great joy in bringing the game of Taboo into the classroom and telling them it is “reverse charades.” Rather than eliminating the verbal, it eliminates the nonverbal. Students must rely on their words to get their teammates to guess particular words that they have drawn on cards. At the end of the activity, I tell them the following. I ask them how many are good at painting. A few raise their hands, but never very many. When a student enters a class on painting, no matter they possess when they come in, they will learn particular skills, techniques and a strong knowledge base in order to leave better than when they come in. And so it is with communication. While it is natural to humans, doing it well or in the most effective way is not natural. Studies in communication—the how, the why—they are what provide, like the painting class, skills, techniques, and knowledge. When a student leaves a painting class, the teacher cannot supply them with something they will need to continue to grow and create—this is the paints, the materials. When I ask the students what the materials are of communication, they say words. Words, yes, are the materials and as nonverbal cues are reduced, a deliberateness and level of introspection is required more so than available to past generations. When I ask students where they get words, they always pause.
The answer is learning, from learning. From reading, from education, and from communicating with others. Philosophy of communication directs us to a commitment to always learning, particularly from difference, and this continues to be a focal point, even more so in an age where cues are reduced and our words often stand alone.

One final problem area to probe here at the end is relate to a small section of chapter four where I noted that in our technological age, sometimes we may not be certain at all who, if anyone, will be on the other end of our message. Not are we even unsure if anyone at all will read our messages, we now are in an era where “deep fakes” are a reality and a concern. Chesney and Citron (2019) wrote an extensive review covering the challenges and potential benefits that deep fakes have for culture. They wrote, “The ability to distort reality has taken an exponential leap forward with ‘deep fake technology” (p. 1753). The define deep fake technology as audio and visual technology that makes it possible to depict “real people” of “saying and doing things they never did or said” (p. 1753). For the reasons discussed in the chapter, mediated communication is already conducive to depersonalization.

Arnett and Arneson (2014) noted that Friedman suggested a “need for ‘existential trust’” in response to Buber’s claim that “existential mistrust has dominated” our time (p. 16). They continued that “With a loss of trust, we lose the ability to distinguish genuine problems from manufactured problems, the genuine friend from a disingenuous salesperson, and genuine hope from a loss cause” (p. 16). Instead, there is always an underlying hidden meaning that is sought. The inability to trust that the other is genuine, let alone actually real, is problematic. However, there is hope in Ong’s claim that all language conceals but also reveals. Arnett and Arneson advocated for a dialogic civility perspective. They wrote that, “A dialogic civility perspective on interpersonal discourse is grounded in historicity, not therapeutic discourse” (p. 30).
Specifically, they note the importance of listening to the demand of a particular moment, and this includes interpersonally listening to the particular moment and particularity of the friend. They wrote, “Dialogue suggests that “we” more than “me” must guide the discourse of self, other, and the historical moment” (p. 5) and therefore, from a philosophy of communication approach, we must lean in on the “we” to guide us.

**Intimacy**

In the chapter where we explored space and time, we examined the nature of intimacy and the tendency to imagine it as a space-bound phenomenon. Just like social systems have been extended, so, too, has intimacy into the noosphere. We can trace these changes historically. There are several themes related to intimacy that require a final glimpse in the arena of communication ethics. Chambers noted the rhetoric “that IM, texting and social network sites are somehow undermining human intimacy and sociality” (p. 14). Part of the issue, she argued, is that skeptics fail to recognize the importance of “weak ties.” She wrote in more detail:

Weak ties may offer us access to the kinds of resources and varied social groups and belief systems that close family and friends are unable to supply. Those with extensive weak ties will have access to information, new ideas and tastes from outlying parts of the social system. For example, it gives individuals an advantage in terms of the labour market where employment may depend on knowing of job openings (Granovetter 1973, 1983). (Chambers, p. 15)

Weak ties are not then necessarily problematic and as noted in the chapter, intimacy is not universally accepted as a standard feature of friendship. Her point at the end about social capital requires a secondary glance though.
In a previous section, we were cautioned against utilitarian frameworks that measure friendships and their quality like this. A more thorough of social capital and its ethical implications, possibly drawing from Bordieux, would be recommended as an area of future research. Information-sharing, too, is another arena for further study. In his article “Information and/or Communication” (2002), Ong cautioned us against conflating information and communication. He wrote that information “itself does not of itself involve meaning” (p. 505). He added that “It does not involve human consciousness, or consciousness of any kind” (p. 505). This is an important distinction as we have discussed the tendency for mediated communication to depersonalize. Depersonalization is further problematic in an age of information as income. Chambers did note that:

I suggest that we have entered an era in which ‘friendship’ becomes both a potent exemplar of individuality and personal choice and a global marketing tool to influence our personal tastes and patterns of consumption. (p. 162)

This requires special deliberate effort to avoid reducing what we share and how we perceive it.

In an explanation of how two individuals can build a We-relationship (stream consciousness together) in an online environment, Zhao (year) explained that the two individuals move through “mutual biographical disclosure” (p. 119). The pair will “reach back to their memories, unwind the reduced streams of inner consciousness and bare the contexts of their retrieved thoughts and emotions to others for examination and reflection” (p. 119). He added, “Such voluntary disclosure of the innermost part of one’s consciousness” is “common” in the online world (p. 119). He also added in another essay the following argument. He wrote that “In the online world mutual knowledge is derived from the biographic narrative people supply about themselves that describe who they are and what they have been through” (2007, p. 147). And
related to existential mistrust, he reminded us that we must take their word for it. He wrote, “Since observation of others in a shared living environment becomes impossible, we have no choice but to base our knowledge of others on what they tell us about themselves” (p. 148). In Buber’s and Ong’s terms, this requires faith, a leap of faith, and belief.
Works Cited


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