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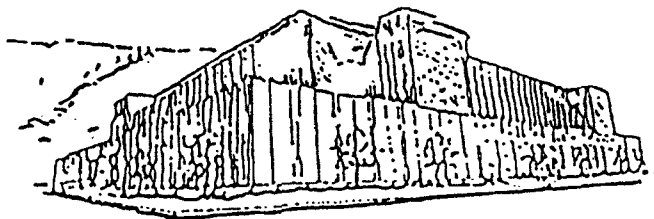
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# Computer Mediated Interpersonal Relationships

By

Benjamin P. Doan

B.A., University of Montana, 1994

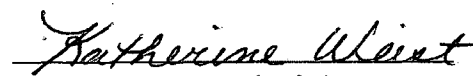
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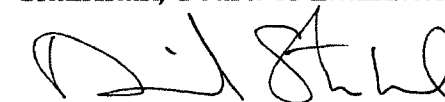
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Director: Katherine Weist *KMW*

This thesis attempts to explain how and why Americans use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships. The original hypothesis was that Americans used CMC to form romantic relationships which emphasize personality characteristics over physical and culturally valued, social markers.

Computer-mediated-communication (CMC) developed out of the geo-political pressures of the Cold War. What began as a military operating system evolved into a medium of communication for a segment of the American population.

Using an interpretive approach outlined by Clifford Geertz in The Interpretation of Cultures, I found that Americans do use CMC to develop romantic relationships. However, many Americans also use CMC to establish and maintain friendships.

Americans participate in CMC, in part, because they value relationships. Individualism and community are two cultural ideals that Americans acquire through socialization (Varenne 1977). As ideologies, individualism and community are binary opposites which conflict as worldviews. Americans cannot achieve the ideal of individualism and maintain society. A third cultural ideal, love, is used to mediate between individualism and community. Love can only be experienced in a community, and in order for an individual to be happy he/she must be in a relationship to experience love. Individualism, love, and community are themes in CMC. They are models of and models for behavior. CMC provides the social context for Americans to communicate and to act upon these ideals. Computers mediate personal relationships by filtering out social cues and by giving individuals the power to communicate and to construct their identities. Why Americans use computers to mediate interpersonal relationship is because computers allow Americans to develop and to maintain both romantic relationships and friendships without the constraints of geography and time.

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I cannot forget all my informants on ISCA who patiently answered my questions and shared their lives with me. Without them I would never have understood what CMC meant to them personally.

Last, I would thank my mother, Anh Doan, who spent twenty-five years of her life loving and supporting me. There are no words for her devotion; there is only an eternal gratitude.

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## Chapter I

### *Introduction*

“Communication has a ritual purpose in addition to its role in sending messages, that some communications is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs” James Carey, a communication historian (Lubar 1993: 5).

*Chat-groups* are rapidly becoming a popular medium for communication in American society. Almost everyone from every walk of life and age group is getting *on-line* to chat. But, what are chat-groups, and why are so many Americans attracted to them? I define a chat-group as a social network of individuals linked via computers in *cyberspace* for the purpose of communicating in synchronic discourse which may or may not be topic oriented. A chat-group is a process whereby people communicate interactively through their computers. This process is recognized and labeled by social researchers as *Computer-Mediated-Communication* or CMC (Mantovani 1996, Masterson 1996, Parks and Floyd 1996, Star 1995, Walther 1994, Walther 1996).

CMC represents both a technological system and a form of social organization. It is a technological system in that it is a network of computers linked by a telecommunication infrastructure and by computer *hardware* and *software*. CMC is a social organization in that it is a network of people who create and recreate daily the chat-group by participating in it and by

maintaining it. CMC is unique in that it allows individuals to communicate without the constraints of geography and time.

A great deal of literature is being generated around CMC because there are literally thousands of chat-groups in existence and millions of people who participate in them daily. In May of 1996, American On-line (AOL), a *computer service provider*, reported serving an estimated 6.2 million subscribers world wide (Goodell 1996: 60). Out of a recorded 26,377,881 hours of *connection time*, AOL subscribers spent 6,950,171 hours of connection time (26%) chatting (ibid). AOL represents only one service provider. Imagine how many millions of people are chatting on the Internet, CompuServe, Prodigy, Minitel, etc. This social fact sparked my interest in chat-groups.

Why would someone want to communicate via computer with complete strangers who are, in most cases, geographically distant? I hypothesize that in the American society computer-mediated-communication is a social strategy for initiating romantic relationships; participants of CMC will privilege the ideal of someone's personality over physical or social markers. To test my hypothesis, I must answer the following questions. Who is chatting? What are people chatting about? What are their explanations for chatting? What kinds of relationships are developed on-line?

Related to these questions are a second set of questions. What are chat-groups? How do they operate? What types of chat-groups exist? How is

chatting similar and different to other forms of communication which use telephones, ham radios, and postal mail? What patterns of social organization exist in chat-groups? What are the functions of chat-groups?

Before explicating how I will answer these questions, I provide an overview of the literature on CMC. In general, the literature on CMC falls into four categories: operation manuals, experiential narratives, news commentaries, and academic literature. Operation manuals explain hardware and software required to get on-line, how computer systems operate, what kinds of chat-group sites are available, and the contents of particular chat-groups. For example, The IRC Survival Guide (1995) by Stuart Harris is good source for learning the commands and addresses of *chat-room* sites on *Inter-Relay Chat* (IRC). The book explains how to get on IRC, the commands, and what rooms are available.

Another good book about learning the logistics of CMC is Using Computers: A Gateway to Information (1996) by Gary B. Shelly, Thomas J. Cashman, Gloria A. Waggoner, and William C. Waggoner. This is a very technical manual that explains how computers operate as a system and what hardware and software are needed in order to make CMC possible. It is also a very useful book for defining many of the technical terms associated with computers like teleprocessing, UNIX, Internet, etc.

Experiential narratives, on the other hand, are usually written by long-

term users of chat-groups who attempt to capture the essence of chatting, what it means and what its potentials are. Some books analyze whole *Bulletin Board Systems* (BBS). Other books investigate dimensions of chatting such as *netiquette*, *net-sex*, and so forth. However, most books tend to reflect how chatting relates historically to society and/or personally to the author. In Howard Rheingold's book entitled The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electric Frontier (1993), the author charts the technical and social evolution of CMC, specifically, that of the *WELL* (Whole Earth 'Lectric Link). He remembers with nostalgia the visions of creators of the *WELL* and what he believed CMC would bring. CMC was to give people a democratic voice by allowing everyone the opportunity to speak. It was to give people access to information otherwise unavailable and to form a collective memory and intelligence to work for the benefit of humankind. Rheingold's narrative reflects the values and beliefs of the original users during the early 1970s. However, these beliefs and values have not remained constant, because both the composition of the population who participate in CMC and the types of discourse promoted have shifted as computers became more accessible to the average American and easier to operate. The functions of CMC is shaped by its participants and that the discourse will reflect these functions.

Another experiential narrative is Nancy Tamosaitis' book, Net-Sex (1995), which analyzes a particular aspect of chatting, net-sex. She seeks to determine what functions net-sex fulfills. At the same time she gives a summary and

listing of available sex-oriented sites on the IRC. Tamosaitis believes that net-sex functions primarily as a means of gaining access to sexual information and a means for sexual exploration (Tamosaitis 1995). To test this hypothesis, she conducted an on-line survey, using the questions of the "Kinsey Institute's National Sex Knowledge Test," to determine whether or not users who participate in net-sex and adult chat-rooms are more or less informed about aspects of sex than the general public. Of the 4,000 surveys that she e-mailed, she received 739 completed responses. Her conclusions were that on-line users were positively skewed towards educated, economically upscale, young, single males and that participants in sex-oriented chat-rooms were more informed about sex issues. Tamosaitis' work offered the explanation that net-sex is a form of social experimentation by its users (i.e., pursuing sexual fantasies on-line as well as off-line) and a source of sexual information.

News commentaries are another form of opinion-based commentaries on chatting in relation to society. They are usually sensational events, or they report the growing economic trend and spread of computer technology. In the May 6, 1996 edition of U.S. News an article was entitled "Terminal Excess." This article was about an increased dismissal rate of students at Alfred University in New York. A school investigation of why these students were dismissed for poor grades showed that 43% of the dismissed students had been engaged in "abusive patterns" of computer-use spending long hours on-line and playing

games. This article suggested that computer usage can be excessive and that it can affect other social dimensions like education.

Another journal article called “Flamers: Cranks, Fetishist, and Monomaniacs” in the April 10, 1995 edition of The New Republic illustrates an ideological battle being fought to determine what CMC means to society. In the article the author, Gary Chapman, argues that CMC is not the medium of democracy and opportunity of social discourse that many had envisioned. Instead, on CMC *flaming* (i.e., verbal insults) is prolific and bigotry and misogyny are common (Chapman 1995). He argues that flaming breaks down discourse and that CMC has become a cheap means for neo-Nazi groups to spread their ideological values. This article reflects how ambivalent some Americans feel about CMC. CMC represents the American ideal of “freedom of expression” (i.e., the democratic opportunity to speak) but not all forms of expression is accepted by everyone on-line.

Academic literature focuses primarily on chatting as a mode of communication, and comparisons are made between face-to-face communication and computer-mediated-communication (Mantovani 1994, Masterson 1996, Parks and Floyd 1996, and Walther 1994). Generally, the research questions are “how do people communicate on computers and how does this affect interpersonal relationships?” In his thesis, John Masterson was interested in determining whether or not non-verbal communication existed in text-based,



interactive computer games known as *Multi-User Dimensions or Dungeons* (MUDs) (Masterson 1996). By comparing similarities and differences between on-line communication and off-line communication, Masterson concluded that some forms of nonverbal communication (i.e., *physical appearance, kinesics, occulesics, vocalics, proxemics, haptics, environmental features, olfactics, and chronemics*) existed in *virtual reality*. By using *narratives* participants of CMC could communicate nonverbal social cues. For example, someone may type in, "Nervously, I glance away as my ears turn red." This statement would express to some degree physical appearance and occulesics.

What is important to this thesis is that narratives of nonverbal behavior can express the ritual behavior of American courtship. An individual nervously glancing away or turning red can indicate an attraction and an expected behavior in a new relationship. However, because narratives are conscious descriptions, they represent interactive fictions (i.e., a virtual reality). They are never "real" in the sense that these narratives incompletely utilize social cues in comparison to *face-to-face* (FTF) contact, and what is described can be fabrications from the sender or purely imagined by the receiver. In addition, narratives can be complete fantasies as individuals *role-play* pretending to be a wizard, James Bond, or a cat. This does not mean all descriptions are false, but because computers mediate communication, the receiver can never truly determine how the sender physically appears or behaves if he/she was physically present. It

should be noted that social act of narrating is real phenomenon even though the narratives themselves might be fictional.

Masterson noted other factors that affected CMC. A person's user name (i.e., *file handle*) can affect who communicates with him/her on-line. For example, if a user's name was too long or difficult to spell, other users might be dissuaded from initiating a conversation with that person. Users may also engage in multiple conversations simultaneously. These conversations can be publicly posted or privately held. The fact that an individual can hold several dispersed conversations simultaneously or at different times opens up the possibility that he/she can offer many variations of a story or event. Deceptive communication may be more prolific on-line due to anonymity and the inability to verify previous conversations with disparate users.

What is lacking in part or in whole from this literature is a deeper analysis of chatting as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Authors tend to explain how one should chat, how one gets on-line, what one might expect to find in a chat-group, how people communicate on computers, and so forth, but they do not answer the fundamental questions, "Why would someone want to communicate remotely, via computer, with other people whom one has no concept of physically or socially?"

Since I am investigating primarily what chat-groups are, who is in them, and why, I will analyze chat-groups as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Chat-

groups are a social phenomenon in that user A talks to user B, C, and D.

However, it is not enough just to chart who talks to whom and to describe chatting as a linguistic phenomenon (i.e., paralanguage, syntax, channels, etc.). To make discourse meaningful, one must understand the “stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures (i.e., culture)” (Geertz 1973:7). Culture provides the context for what is said and not said, what is meaningful and not meaningful, what is valued and not valued, etc. Thus, in order to understand what is being communicated in American-based chat-groups, one must understand the shared sets of values, beliefs, and norms in the American culture.

This thesis will not attempt to generalize the entire American culture, but it will look specifically at how computers have become the medium by which individuals convey patterns of beliefs, values, norms, etc. reflective of the American culture. These patterns, which are internalized, descriptive and prescriptive models for behavior, are acquired in part through *socialization*. Although this is a fact, it does not explain why individuals choose computers to mediate interpersonal relationships. Only by describing how people interact in chat-groups and analyzing what they say and what they mean about what they say can an answer be found.

The semiotic approach advocated by Clifford Geertz known as *thick description* will provide the theoretical premise and method for analyzing CMC. A thick description is an interpretation of behavior based on how the

participants of a culture explicate their symbolic system through public actions and social discourses (Geertz 1973:10-28). Using this method I should be able to isolate descriptive models “of” and prescriptive models “for” behavior. Since these models are drawn from the American culture as a whole, they should also provide the reasons for why an individual would choose a computer to mediate interpersonal relationships. In Chapter II, a thick description will be described in greater detail.

Methodologically, I approached my fieldwork in three ways. First, I’ve conducted a literature review. I did an historical analysis of computer technology in order to explain why CMC became a popular medium of communication in ways that ham radios, telephone, and postal mail did not. Second, I engaged in participant-observation and collected samples of discourse from various chat-rooms. I analyzed the discourse of chat-groups to determine patterns of communication both as a social unit and as a belief system. Third, I conducted fifty interviews on-line using a list of questions (see Appendix I) which relate to both on-line and off-line thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The interviews were both structured and semi-structured. They were structured in that interviews were guided by a series of questions related to chatting and experiences of socialization. Many of these questions were open-ended which allowed me to ask additional questions based on interviewee’s response. The objective was to piece together reoccurring cultural patterns (i.e., descriptive

models of and prescriptive models for behavior) by comparing both data sets. I have compared what was said in public (i.e., in the chat-room) by individuals with what was said privately during interviews. I have looked for patterns of meaning or reoccurring themes relating to chatting (e.g., relationships).

I have defined my research population as the participants of the *ISCABBS* (Iowa State Computer Association Bulletin Board System) or ISCA for short, because it is an American-based Bulletin Board System (BBS). I chose not to use Inter Relay Chat (IRC) as my research population because of its feature of having an infinite number of chat-rooms (i.e., they can be constructed at will) and because it has a higher international population which would add cultural confusion to my understanding of what motivates Americans to participate CMC. I believed that the users on ISCA were a manageable population. It has over 170 topic-oriented chat-rooms, and it has over 400,000 users from 70 different countries. It also had a number of features that allowed me to record easily discussions that I had with individuals and discussions which were posted publicly. To minimize cultural variability, I participated in two chat-groups, Babble and Flirting, that consisted primarily of Americans.

In Chapter II, I will explain why a thick description instead of a *thin description* is needed to understand the behavior of participants in CMC. I will discuss my sampling methods, data collection, and mode of analysis. In Chapter III, I will then discuss in greater detail the history of Internet. The issue of why

CMC became a popular medium for interpersonal communication in ways that ham radios, telephones, and postal mail never were will be addressed. In Chapter IV, I will review in greater detail the literature surrounding CMC. This literature will then be compared to my research theory and method. In Chapter V, I will explain that ISCA is both as a technical system and a social institution. What is meant by a technical system is that ISCA requires a set of hardware, software, commands, and support system in order to operate. Functioning within this system is a social institution. A hierarchy of *system operators* (SYSOP), *moderators*, *guides*, and computer users exists. I will present data to support my hypothesis. I will compare chat-room discussions with the responses from my interviews. I will then interpret how chat-groups are socially organized and how they function. In Chapter VI, I will compare the chat-rooms, Babble and Flirting, and I will provide a thick description. In Chapter VII, I will summarize my conclusions of my thesis.

## Chapter II

### *Theory and Method*

Before going any further it is important to understand the theory and method of this thesis. I subscribe to a theoretical perspective which is critical for understanding individuals' motivations to participate in chat-groups. I use the interpretive approach expounded by Clifford Geertz known as "thick description." This approach seeks to interpret human behavior by placing it within a cultural context, i.e., a symbolic system. The cultural context provides the stage for people to act out and to communicate their beliefs, norms, and values, e.g., social roles, identities, world-view, etc. By analyzing how individuals within a particular culture perceive the world, we can better understand how these world-views guide individuals' behaviors. Therefore, I describe here the values, norms, and beliefs of Americans in order to understand why they use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships.

Clifford Geertz outlines and distinguishes a thick description from a thin description. His basic premise is that culture is like a text, "a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures" (Geertz 1973:7). Culture is also a publicly recognized symbolic system. It provides the context that makes human behavior, institutions, events, etc. intelligible.

An ethnographer can describe human behavior in two ways: either as a thin description or a thick description. A thin description is an interpretation

based on the surface features of behaviors, actions and events perceived by the ethnographer. For example, an ethnographer observing a chat-room may note that males tend to chat with females and vice versa, that role-playing is a common phenomenon, that sex is a frequent topic in a chat-group, and that individuals tend to ritually greet each other on-line. Although all these things did occur, the ethnographer did not explain why these things occur as they did. Why do males more frequently chat with females and vice versa? Why does role-playing occur? What is symbolically significant about the topic of sex that it occurs frequently? Why do individuals greet each other on-line? To understand these phenomena, the ethnographer must provide a thick description. A thick description is an interpretation of behavior based on how the participants of a culture explicate their symbolic system to other members through public actions and social discourses. The participants of chat-group share understandings about the meaning of chatting, how a chat-group should be organized, what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in a chat-group, and so forth.

Geertz also argues that culture provides models “of” and models “for” behavior (pp. 93-94). Human behavior becomes intelligible once it is placed within its cultural context. What motivates individuals to behave in a particular way at a particular time depends on how individuals interpret the ongoing social experience in relation to individually held *cultural models*. For example, chat-rooms have different social formats and rules for behavior. People



interacting within these chat-rooms will behave differently depending on their perception of what is being socially expected by other participants in the chat-room. A male might assume a more masculine role if he is attracted to female on-line, or he might change how and what he communicates once he discovers that she is a college student. The rules of a chat-room provide the basic guidelines for behavior, but how an individual actually behaves depends on how his thoughts, feelings, and interpretation of the particular the social context. An individual is not an independent actor in a social relation; he/she relies on the social cues of the other participants present. Therefore, other factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and class of the participants may affect how individuals interact with one another and what is communicated.

Culture is not something that disappears when Americans turn on their computers. Instead, the computer becomes a tool for Americans to express cultural values, beliefs, norms, etc. and to mediate interpersonal relationships based on these cultural models. CMC is a social context. It is a way of communicating, and this way of communicating affects how and what Americans communicate. Why some Americans choose to use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships becomes intelligible only when one comprehends the cultural belief systems of these Americans in relation to how computers function. This being the case, the emphasis of this thesis is to provide a thick description of Americans participating in CMC.

A thick description of Americans participating in CMC will provide the basic understanding of what is being communicated within a particular chat-group. Because Americans draw upon their cultural belief systems when communicating, it is expected that patterns of communication will reoccur in CMC. For example, Americans have a cultural ideal known as "love." Love is an internalized cultural construct which is valued highly in American society. As a consequence, most Americans talk about, pursue, desire, and argue over love. Love is both a descriptive model of and prescriptive model for behavior. It has the potential to guide behavior in any social context: at work, at home, at school, at the bar, or on the computer. To some degree, love is a shared set of values.

There exists cultural rules for these behaviors, and people are expected to conform to the rules. Conformity is reinforced through sanctions. Absolute conformity is never established within any culture, because members of a society can resist, reject, or establish their own cultural rules. What cultural rules can reveal are patterns of how people interact. For example, flirting couples are expected to exchange compliments. At the same time no one else is expected or permitted to intrude on the flirting couple. If another man begins flirting with the woman, this behavior might culminate into a fight between the two men.

In summary, computers are a tool which Americans use to mediate interpersonal relationships. A thick description can elucidate cultural themes or

patterns of communication in CMC. These patterns can then be used to interpret the behavior of Americans participating in CMC, because they are the “meaningful structures” that guide behaviors. As a final note, it should be mentioned that love is not the only cultural model that exist for Americans. Concepts of work, family, self, etc. play a role in what, why, and how Americans communicate in CMC. At the same time Americans assume social roles and identities on-line as well as off-line.

### *The Sample Population and Data Collection*

Applying an interpretive approach to the study of chat-rooms required that I obtain a manageable population. I chose an American-based bulletin board system known as ISCABBS for several reasons. Although the BBS has over 400,000 users on the system, only slightly over a 1,000 people can be logged onto the system at any one time. This population consists primarily of Americans. This fact reduces cross-cultural differences that would create difficulty in understanding motivation based on cultural models. Recording data was easy because private messages and chat-room dialogues are stored by the server computers, and at any time during the log-in sessions, these messages and dialogue can be printed out.

Informants were chosen on a random basis, usually, by contacting the first name that appeared on the “who list” (i.e., a computer generated list of people

on ISCA). However, many informants chose to contact me once they learned about my research. I tried to get an equal samples of male and female informants for a comparison. Fifty interviews were held on-line by communicating privately in *express mode*. The interview questions focused on chatting itself and the self-perceptions of individuals (see Appendix I).

Chat-room dialogues were collected primarily from two chat-rooms: Babble and Flirting. The distinction between these two chat-rooms will be discussed in Chapter VI. For now it is important to know that these chat-rooms were chosen because they were usually the most active chat-rooms on the system and because I wanted to be familiar with a well-defined sub-population

Thirty-six chat-room dialogues were collected from Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, 1996 to Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>, from Nov. 2 to Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>, from Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> to Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>, from Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> to Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, on Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, from Dec. 2 to Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>, on Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, from Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> to Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, and from Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> to Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>. The times that these dialogues were collected varied: three dialogues were collected from 11 AM to 12 PM, three from 12 PM to 1 PM, two from 1 PM to 2 PM, three from 2 PM to 3 PM, two from 3 PM to 4 PM, one from 4 PM to 5 PM, one from 5 PM to 6 PM, three from 6 PM to 7 PM, three from 7 PM to 8 PM, one from 8 PM to 9 PM, three from 10 PM to 11 PM, and one from 11 PM to 12 AM. In general, each dialogue consisted of fifteen minutes of discourse. Over 100 hours have been spent conducting interviews on-line and engaging in participant-observation from late September to mid-

December.

Both interview questions and dialogues were analyzed for reoccurring cultural themes. Responses to the same interview questions were compared for similarities and differences. The objective was not only to indicate dominant response patterns but also indicate variability within the subject matter. For example, the questions, "Do you ever attempt romantic relationships through chatting? Why or why not?" require a "yes" or "no" answer as well as explanation for the answer. When analyzing my dialogue I first clustered all the dialogue into threads of conversations. When an individual made a comment or asked a question that other people responded to, I organized the conversation sequentially. I then labeled this fragment of dialogue based on its subject matter (e.g., sex, weather, relationship, role-playing, etc.). Fragments of conversations fitted together in tree diagram. Some conversations branched in another direction; some conversations ended; and some comments never received a response. Within each fragment of conversation were statements made by individuals. I examined each statement independently to understand what the individual was trying to communicate, and I examined each statement in the context of what was being discussed. Once again, I was looking for dominant patterns of discourse to answer, "What are people chatting about?" At the same time I was looking for patterns of variation between the responses of individuals. I assumed that what something means is subject to various

interpretations within any given culture, and just because a dominant pattern can be recognized, it does not mean that it is representative for everyone within social unit. I also paid close attention to who talked to who and about what and even how people talked with each other (e.g., greetings and flaming). The purpose was to determine kinds of relationships that were developing (e.g., romantic or friendly relationship).

In summary, I have analyzed my data using an interpretive method known as a thick description. Applying a thick description will make on-line discourse meaningful by placing it within the American cultural context. Data was collected from interviews and through participant-observations. Samples of chat-room discourse were compared with interview questions in order to distinguish reoccurring cultural themes and patterns.

In the next chapter I will discuss to certain extent how and why the Internet developed. I will then explain why computers became a popular medium for communication when other similar forms of communication already existed such as telephones, ham radios, and postal mail.

## Chapter III

### *A Brief History of the Internet*

In 1969, the Defense Department's Advance Research Projects Agency (ARPA) funded the first nationwide computer *network* called ARPANET. The University of California Los Angeles, the University of California Santa Barbara, Stanford Research Institute, and the University of Utah were the first institutions to be linked together by this network. ARPANET was designed to increase communication among researchers (Kantrowitz and Rogers 1994). The assumption was that if researchers had better communication capabilities, they could share information, resources, tools, and ideas instead of each researcher independently developing them (Lubar 1993). ARPANET allowed users to remotely access other computers on the network, transfer files, send *electronic mail* (e-mail), and share information through *news groups*. Computer networking quickly spread to other institutions, and the term, the "Internet," was coined as these networks became publicly known.

In 1971, the first computer conferencing system was developed. During the Richard Nixon's administration, a wage and price freeze was enacted. To coordinate the private business sector, labor groups, and government policy makers, the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) commissioned Murray Turoff to develop a computer conferencing system similar to teleconferencing. In 1971, Turoff built EMISARI (Emergency Management Information and

Reference System). This program was menu-driven system that linked together forty OEP offices, the Internal Revenue Service, the State Department, and the Treasury Department. This network allowed these offices to update policies, share information, and ask and respond to questions without the constraints of geography and time.

EMISARI sparked generations of conferencing systems. From 1970 to 1990, EIES (Electronic Information Exchange System), NLS (oN-Line System), Forum, Augment, Confer, Politec, Legitec, PLANET (PLAnning NETwork), Picospan, Caucus, CBBS (Computer Bulletin Board System), Usenet, FIDO Net, Notepad, Partipate, COM Portacom, Com, CoSy, Super-COM, and Magpie emerged (For more detail on each system read Computer Mediated Communications [1991] by Mathew Rapaport.). The significance of these systems is how rapidly they developed. Electronic communication had the advantage of being able to disperse information to a large audience or an individual without the constraints of time and geography. This information could then be used to coordinate group activities, make decisions, distribute policies, engage in discussions, solve problems and so forth. One of the reasons for this rapid rise of CMC was that the U.S. government funded heavily many of the computer advancement projects of universities. This funding was sparked by the geopolitical pressures of the Cold War, and it was to prepare for the post-apocalypse of a nuclear holocaust (Diamond, Bates, and Horowitz 1995). A



second reason for the rise of CMC was that many universities and early programmers shared their innovations, particularly software.

During this same time period, BBS's began to spread across the country and the world. One of the first system was CommuniTree #1 which began operating out of San Francisco in 1978. CommuniTree #1 was intended to be a social experiment. Because the personal computer reconfigured how people communicated spatially and temporally, it was the medium that was expected to transform how people interacted socially (Star 1995). Posting in CommuniTree #1 was considered analogous to presenting a public letter, and users were encouraged to engage in discourse that would bring about positive social transformations. Users were given great freedom to discuss the issues that were on their minds. However, the word quickly spread about the existence of CommuniTree #1, and computer *hackers* technologically destroyed the system. Hackers would find loop-holes in the programming and crash the system, or they would *spam* consuming all the memory space available. As a consequence, later BBS's established a control system and employed system operators to remove trouble-makers.

Probably the most globally recognized BBS is Inter Relay Chat. In 1988, Jarkko Oikarinen from the University of Oulu in Finland wrote the program for IRC to replace a BBS program known as "talk." Unexpectedly, IRC quickly became a popular medium to chat. It spread to southern Finland then to sixty

countries around the world. IRC was unique in that it allowed users to chat synchronously. Messages would scroll across the screen as fast as they were generated. New chat-rooms could be generated at will, and old chat-rooms would disappear when not in use.

### *A Comparative Analysis of Communication Forms*

Knowing the history of CMC explains only how and when it arose and to some extent why. However, it does not explain why computers became a popular medium for communication when other similar forms of communication already existed such as telephones, ham radios, and postal mail (i.e., pen-pals).

CMC relies on the telecommunication infrastructure of telephones to function. Without telephone lines, operating services, etc., CMC would not be possible. If the telecommunication infrastructure already existed, why didn't chat-groups develop around the telephones instead of computers? The answer lies in the history of the telephone and the different capabilities of computers and telephones.

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. By 1920, almost every home and business in the United States had one. Telephones had replaced the telegraph for a number of reasons. They could be placed in the home; they didn't require a special skill to operate (i.e., knowing Morse Code); consumers

were not charged by the word; and the direct connection was considered “more personal” (Lubar 1993:130). As the telephone became an integrated part of American society, it also acquired an associated set of beliefs, norms, and values. Certain types of conversations were considered appropriate or inappropriate. Who an individual called depended on his/her relation to the other person. Telephones were used to call friends and family or to conduct business transactions. To call a complete stranger was unheard of. It did not fit into the norm. Telephones were used for a purpose, usually, to facilitate relationships that were already established or to establish a relationship with someone living nearby. There was no reason for someone living in Chicago to acquire a phone number out the New York phonebook for the sole purpose of talking about whatever came to mind. The expense of a few long distance calls would deter that behavior very quickly.

Computers differ from telephones in several ways. Historically, computers were designed to exchange information. Through information exchanges people came into contact with one another, and communication between strangers became common. From the late 1960s on, communication software was created specifically to promote communication between government agencies, university officials and faculty members, college students, and so forth. CMC was socially recognized as a medium for communication between individuals who shared a common interest or goal. In the present,

CMC differs from telephones in that it is more affordable than making a long distance telephone call even though it uses the same telecommunication infrastructure. Computers also have the advantage of communicating visually (i.e., using text and pictures) rather than aurally like telephones. Text-based communication allows individuals to skim through messages and to filter out messages that are unrelated to him or her. Messages can be sent in private or in public on computers.

Like the telephones, ham radio communication is an audio-based form of communication. Historically, wireless telegraphy developed with a disadvantage. In 1896, Guglielmo Marconi patented the wireless telegraph. By 1900, the wireless telegraph was competing with the wired telegraph, which was in almost every town in America, and with the telephone (ibid). The wired telegraph was cheap and reliable. As a consequence, the wireless telegraph found limited use. Hobbyists, usually young men, built their own equipment and communicated in Morse Code. Some shipping companies installed wireless telegraphs on their ships to maintain communication with them. In 1909, the passengers of the *Republic* were saved by a wireless operator who called for help (Lubar 1993). After this incident a law was passed making it mandatory that all large ships be equipped with a wireless telegraph. However, the sinking of the *Titanic* generated a public outcry when the distress call was unanswered. In 1912, Congress passed a law to license broadcasters. In 1927, the Federal Radio

Commission (FRC) was organized. A law was passed to allocate radio frequencies and to license operators, because the Navy, which relied on radio communication, made it known that amateur broadcasters interfered with naval radio transmissions and that they were the source of pranks. In addition, broadcasters and manufacturers lobbied for the law. As a consequence, ham radios never acquired wide-spread popularity.

In comparison to someone who uses a computer to communicate, ham radio operators are required to have specialized equipment, operational knowledge, and a license in order to communicate. Usually, ham radio operators must purchase their own equipment. In contrast, almost everyone can have access to a computer through a school, a library, work, or even a friend. Both ham radios and computers make it necessary to have operational knowledge of the system. Ham radios are less user friendly than computers. Computer software has simplified the task of communicating by clicking on an icon, typing in messaging, and clicking on an icon to send it. In addition, people communicating on computers do not need to obtain a license.

The last form of communication to be compared with CMC is postal mail (i.e., pen-pals). The most obvious difference between CMC and communicating through postal mail is that computers can transmit messages at the speed of light; whereas, mail takes at least a day to be sent and delivered. This is why postal mail has been dubbed "*snail-mail*" by computer users. People who

communicate with computers can compose, send, read, and respond in the same way someone sends a letter. Some people consider a handwritten letter more personal than an e-mail, but it should be noted that people who participate in CMC also send letters and call one another.

In summary, CMC became a popular form of communication, because historically, it was developed to foster communication between groups of people in order to share ideas and to solve problems. Also, CMC's popularity over other forms of communication can be attributed to the fact that it is more affordable than making long-distance telephone call; it is simple to operate; and messages can be transmitted electronically at the convenience of the computer user.

In the next chapter, I will provide synopsis of the range of literature on CMC. I will answer the basic questions: Who participates in CMC and what does CMC offer Americans?

## Chapter IV

### *The Literature on CMC*

CMC has only been around little over twenty-five years; yet, it has attracted the attention of millions people. People are getting on-line to tell stories, to share experiences, to fall in love, to build self-esteem, to make friends, to release frustration, to seek advice, and to find information. For many people computers offer new opportunities to communicate, to develop relationships, and to express oneself. The very nature of how computers operate has altered how people interact with one another and how they think about each other. In turn, the researchers and philosophers of human behavior are publishing article after article and book after book to explain what CMC is. In this chapter, some of the basic questions and conclusions surrounding CMC will be answered.

One of the most basic question is "Who is on-line?" An estimated 30 to 40 million people are connected by the Internet, and there are over 5,000 chat-groups on the Internet (Parks and Floyd 1996). It has been estimated that 18 to 29 year olds represent 31% of the adult population on the Internet; 30 to 49 year olds make up 53%, and 50 year olds and older make up 13% (Miller 1996: 48-49). People who were 30 years old or younger spend 36% of their time on the Internet chatting and sending e-mails for social purposes; whereas, 31 year olds and older used e-mail primarily for work related purposes (ibid). Chatting is also increasing among the elderly who are retired, divorced, widowed, etc.

(Flynn 1996).

There is no simple answer for what attracts people to get on-line. However, what can be answered is “what does computer-mediated-communication offer Americans?” As mentioned before, CMC allows people to communicate with other people who are geographically distant and at all times of the day. By getting on-line individuals increase their chances of meeting someone whom they would never have had an opportunity to meet. For example, an individual might chat with someone from another country or a distant state, or an individual might talk to someone with a different or a similar set of beliefs and values.

“Anonymity,” is another feature of CMC. An anonymous environment allows people to ask questions about taboo subjects like sex (Goodell 1996, Tamosaits 1995), to act out fantasies (Time 1996), to role-play, to *gender-switch* (i.e., assume the opposite gender role), and to confess. Ideally, it allows an individual to “know” a person before actually meeting him or her. This way people can screen out people with many undesirable traits and behaviors, or people can search for others with desirable traits and behaviors. However, the problem is that *social cues* are never fully projected in CMC. As a consequence, participants of CMC have a greater chance to assume and misinterpret social cues. CMC can also create confusion and miscommunication through *feedback delay* (Masterson 1996, Parks and Floyd 1996).



Social cues are important because they communicate nonverbally providing cultural information such as status, attractiveness, wealth, and so forth. In CMC, people introduce social cues by using *narratives* and a paralanguage known as emoticons. Narratives are descriptive statements in CMC that express actions (e.g., running, swimming, kicking, etc.) or describe things (e.g., clothing, hair color, a chair, etc.) for the purpose of constructing a virtual reality. An example of this is DARK PHOENIX: “[crashes up thru the floorboards blazing like the sun. Grabs Renthias by the hem of his robes and flies him around the room].” Emoticons, on the other hand, are text-based icons used to express emotional states (see Appendix II). For example, the symbol, :-), is a smiley indicating that the sender is smiling or happy. In communication studies, the categories of social cues are physical appearance, kinesics, occulesics, vocalics, proxemics, haptics, environmental details, olfactics, and chronemics. Each category communicates differently. It is important to understand what social cues can communicate and compare how these phenomena are approximated in CMC. It is also important to recognize that social cues are culturally determined meaning that they are given their symbolic values by the members of a particular culture.

Physical appearance includes “all those attributes of image, such as attractiveness, race, height, weight, body shape, hairstyle, dress, and artifacts” (Masterson 1996:23-24). Without face-to-face (FTF) contact physical

appearance can be embellished by the sender (i.e., selective self-presentation) or assumed by the receiver (i.e., idealized perception) in CMC (Walther 1996). To create a sense of physical presence, some ISCA users tend to describe themselves physically within a chat-room setting such as a virtual bar. For example, Desaad wrote, "He takes off his leather jacket to show his white sweater with gray stripes and blue jeans with work boots, takes off his sunglasses and looks around at the people in the room." If one assumes that physical appearance is important to Americans, then one would expect physical appearance to be a reoccurring theme in CMC.

Kinesic refers to "all bodily movements except those which involve the touching of another person (i.e., body language)" (pg. 24). It includes postures, styles of movement, and gestures. Body language can convey feelings (e.g., the use of facial expressions to express emotions) or add emphasis to what is being communicated (e.g., waving one's hands in excitement). In most cases, body language is an unconscious action. To communicate body language in CMC is to consciously project that image in order to draw attention to it. For example, Skittery typed in, "[sighs] Oh, okay. [waves] See ya."

Gaze behavior around the facial area is what is meant by occulesics. Eye contact can intensify, mask, or neutralize expressions. By staring into each other's eyes, lovers communicate their love for one another. By widening one's eyes in an expression of excitement, one might hide his/her lack of excitement.

By glancing quickly at someone, an individual can neutralize a response. In CMC, gaze behavior is consciously narrated. For example, Yasaman wrote, “looks up at him and smiles seductively. “ The sender draws upon culturally shared meanings for gaze behavior in order to communicate at different levels with the receiver.

Vocalics are attributes of a speaker’s voice such as pitch, breathiness, volume, rate, and variety. These variations in speech pattern can indicate nervousness, affection, urgency, etc. In CMC, vocalics cannot be determined in a text-based medium. An approximation of this phenomenon is found in CMC. The rate that an individual sends messages can be seen as equivalent to the rate of speech. For example, if a person is excited about a topic he/she might type in several responses in a short time frame. However, this is not an absolute indicator, because individuals have various typing abilities and energy levels (e.g., the elderly or the physically disabled). Word choice can reflect dialect (e.g., buhbye y’all) and variety (e.g., kewl = cool). Pitch and volume can be indicated by typing in capital letters which is recognized as shouting or by narrating how one speaks (e.g., ForteTuba: “laughs quietly”).

Proxemics refer to the use of personal space. This includes public, social, personal, and intimate space. Spatial relations indicate the closeness between the speaker and the listener. In CMC, spatial relations are narrated. They are constructions based on culturally shared meanings and associations. Individuals

tend to follow cultural norms and expectations when describing the use of space. For example, DrRansom wrote, “Caresses her back as he dances slowly with her. Grins at being sooo close. Moves even closer,” and for example, KarebeaR wrote “[kicks Sol Cutter] I don’t like being mounted!”

Haptics are behaviors of touch, for example, kissing. In CMC, touching tends to follow cultural norms, values, beliefs, etc. An individual may ask, “Can I kiss you,” before actually narrating that he/she kisses the other person. However, because most people recognize that CMC is a virtual reality, individuals tend to be more bold in touching behavior (e.g., Wim Rumping: [Hugs Sister. Looks around] “Ah! No one is looking...” [gropes]).

Environmental details refers to contextual clues that the surrounding provides. These include spatial organization, arrangement and selection of objects, color, temperature, and so forth. In CMC, environmental details are the most difficult elements to express, because there are an infinite number of environmental factors that can be described and because individuals tend to create their own environments simultaneously. What occurs is that individuals describe particular environmental features, and if someone wants to be a part of the environment he/she compliments or adds to the narrative (see Appendix VII, Case 1).

Scents and odors are cues of olfactics. Examples are perfumes, colognes, and dental and bodily hygiene. In CMC, scents are generally not described, but

objects and actions with scents are usually indicated. For example, Yasaman typed in, "Presses her head to his chest and his masculine scent assault her senses," and for example, Nightwing wrote, "Farts."

Chronemic relates to the use and the perception of time. Being late, for example, can be considered as being rude. In CMC, time is recognized as time spent on-line as opposed to off-line. Both negative and positive values are associated with time usage. Spending a lot of time on ISCA, an individual tend to acquires status or at least a reputation from other regular ISCA users, and usually, he/she is no longer considered or treated like a "newbie." However, spending excessive amounts of time on-line is a double-edged sword in that some people consider this behavior as an addiction. Time generally comes into focus when compared to off-line activities (e.g., time to go to class, to lunch, to the bathroom, to the movies, etc.). For example, Ocean wrote, "Is gone, suddenly, on her way to a real bar for some real beer."

Social cues function in several ways. They provide information (e.g., status and internal states of individuals), regulate interaction (e.g., turn-taking), express intimacy, enact social control (e.g. touch and eye behaviors can express commands), present identities or images, reflect affect management (e.g., increasing gestures and smiling can be associated with excitement), and facilitate service and task goals (e.g., a hospital environment legitimizes a doctor touching a patient). Social cues that occur in face-to-face (FTF) communication do not

function the same way as social cues that occur in computer-mediated-communication (CMC). The most obvious difference is that in FTF communication social cues are real, whereas, in CMC they are approximations of real social cues. In FTF, wealth can be indicated materially by the jewelry a person wears. In CMC, an individual can say that he/she drives a Porsche, owns a mansion, and so forth, but it cannot be validated on-line. Because social cues cannot be determined as social facts, it would be risky for an individual to assume that they are real. Someone might say he/she is surprised, but how is the other person going to observe this surprised reaction? He/she can't, because the computer filters out most of the social cues found in FTF contact.

Although participants of CMC try to integrate social cues into their virtual reality, these social cues often lack substance (e.g., DC Todd: [Gazes back into her lovely eyes] "What color are they anyway?"), because they awkwardly rely on assumptions about the intended recipient of the symbolic message. For example, a male may assume that he is talking to a female and behave as if he was talking to female when actually he is talking to a male. Even when social cues are integrated into CMC, they are incomplete. Individuals do not narrate the entire spectrum of social cues that can be found in FTF contact. Social cues frequently overlap in CMC. Individuals frequently describe different environments simultaneously. Social cues that are communicated non-verbally in CMC are not accidents or involuntary; they are verbal presentation of the self

to create a positive impression.

When social cues are lacking in CMC, it can be difficult to determine if a person's statement is a serious comment or a jest. For example, someone can say, "I hate you." Not knowing if the sender is smiling, the receiver can interpret this comment as friendly bantering or a statement of fact. Because statements can be ambiguous, feedback delays might occur more in computer-mediated-communication than in FTF communication.

Feedback delays are delays in communication between a sender and a receiver. It is important to note that where social cues are lacking, the chances for *bypassing* will increase. Bypassing is when the speaker and the receiver miss what each other means (Tubbs and Carter 1985). This can occur when the same words are associated with different meanings (e.g., don't walk = stop walking or run) or when different words are given the same meaning (e.g., soda = pop). In CMC, feedback delays can be intentional and unintentional. Individuals may intentionally take their time to select the right words to say (e.g., Spaceball: "Because on-line I can chat better than real life. I can watch my words better."), or they may be caught up in multiple conversations and unintentionally forget to respond (e.g., Pacu Pati: "Besides, by the time you crank out a post, I've already forgotten what we're talking about.").

Another aspect of CMC is that it is guided by a set of unwritten rules known as netiquette. Netiquette is the etiquette associated with computer

networks. These rules vary from system to system. Some of the general rules are: don't shout (i.e., typing in capital letters "HELLO EVERYONE"), read the frequently asked questions (FAQ) before posting, don't flame, don't spam, don't post private messages in public, treat other users as you want to be treated, don't judge others, and be yourself (Maloni, Wice, and Greenman 1994; Shea 1994).

The fact that these rules exist doesn't mean that they are followed. What encourages people to comply with these rules are social sanctions.

Net-sex, flaming, and addiction are other issues surrounding CMC. Net-sex is the consensual act of explicating intimate details and sexual actions between two or more individuals on a computer network. It has been both criticized as perverted behavior and lauded as a medium for sexual exploration (Goodell 1996, Tamosaits 1995). Flaming is the act of verbally insulting another person on-line and the retaliating statements that ensue. Anonymity has been suggested as the cause for flaming because people can say what they want without being held physically and socially accountable (Chapman 1995).

Addiction is a term that is frequently used in popular journals like Time, U.S. News, and Newsweek to describe the compulsive behavior some participants of CMC display. People who spend an "excessive" amount of time on their computers chatting, playing games, or surfing the Internet are dubbed cyber-junkies. Their computer behavior appears compulsive. Because computer behavior can threaten other social institutions like the family, work, and



education, it is portrayed negatively (Chidley 1995, Hamilton and Kalb 1995, Piotrowski 1996, Quittner 1995, Stoll 1995, Tamosaits 1995, and U.S. News 1996).

In summary, 18 to 29 year olds represent 31% of the adult population on the Internet. They spend 36% of their time on-line for social purposes.

Anonymity allows Americans to control how they want to present themselves to one another. This gives Americans greater freedom to discuss taboo subjects, to act out fantasies, to confess, and so forth. Netiquette is the unwritten rules or etiquette of CMC. Net-sex, flaming, and computer addiction are features of CMC that are being debated between Americans for their value in relation to other cultural values such as family.

In the next chapter, I will explain what ISCA is as an institution and how ISCA operates as a technological system. I will state the functions of CMC. Knowing how CMC functions will answer partially why Americans participate in CMC. It will explain what benefits Americans receive from CMC.

## Chapter V

### ISCA

To understand how and what people communicate about on ISCA, it is important to recognize that ISCA is both a technological system and a social organization. As a technological system, ISCA is a network of computers consisting of several Apollo *servers* and 1,000 or more computers linked via modem. These servers are equipped with a particular BBS software that provides the basic commands and functions that members of ISCA use. However, a network is more than an interconnection of telephone wires, software, and hardware; it is a social organization that connects people to one another. *ISCA* is a both an institution and a common interest association.

In 1990, ISCA was an institution created by the University of Iowa “to promote and improve computing services at the University of Iowa” (quoted from the preamble of the Constitution of the Iowa Student Computer Association). The suggested function of ISCA was to increase *computer literacy* and information exchanges between members of the University of Iowa.

ISCA has its own political and economic structure that funds and maintains the BBS. However, it is the common interest of the system operators, forum moderators, guides, and ISCA users who create and re-create daily what ISCA was and is today as a social phenomenon. ISCA is many things to many people, but fundamentally, it is an institution where people can meet in

cyberspace to communicate identities, genders, values, norms, beliefs, experiences, feelings, information, and so forth. As in any institution ISCA has its own social hierarchy, division of power, rules, and sanctions. ISCA is not a thing but a process centered on communication. CMC is not an end in itself but a means to an end.

Both the technology and the social organization of ISCA creates and limits possibilities. In order to understand what these possibilities and limits are, it is necessary to understand how ISCA operates. As mentioned before, ISCA is a network of computers. The basic benefit of computer networks is that it allows people to communicate without the constraints of time and geography. Since ISCA's server computers operate 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, an individual is able to communicate with other people on ISCA any time of the day.

A *telnet* address ([whip.isca.uiowa.edu](http://whip.isca.uiowa.edu)) is used to get access to ISCA. There can be waiting process depending on how many users are on the system. ISCA is programmed to allow slightly over 1,000 users to be on it at the same time. To make sure other members have a chance to get on-line, everyone has a four-hour time limit on-line. Anyone exceeding that time is automatically ejected by the system. This allows people on the waiting list to log in. However, the ejected individual can immediately log in, but he/she will be placed at the end of the waiting list.

To join ISCA, a new member is required to give his/her name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. He/she then chooses a user name (i.e., file handle) and a password. After at least 24 hours a new member is given access to ISCA. At this point an individual can choose to chat in up to 170 different topic-oriented forums (see Appendix III), to communicate with other individuals in express mode, or to send mail.

When participating in forums individuals are engaged in a one-to-many mode of communication. This means that messages posted in a particular forum can be read by all the participants present in the forum. Each forum stores and updates the last 150 messages posted in it, allowing new forum members to follow previous and ongoing threads of conversations. All conversations are either synchronous or asynchronous. In a *synchronous conversation* posted messages displace previous messages producing a continuous flow of discourse. In an *asynchronous conversation* posted messages are generally stored in the server computer's memory. Individuals are expected to read these stored messages and to respond to them at their own convenience. The distinction between synchronous conversation and asynchronous conversation is that in the latter there tends to be large gaps of time between posted messages. However, depending upon how many participants are in a forum and how often they choose to post messages, an asynchronous conversation can quickly become a synchronous conversation and vice-versa.

The other form of communication on ISCA is known as express mode. It is a one-to-one mode of communication. Messages are sent directly and privately from the sender to the receiver. Three things can occur once an express message is sent. The sender will get a message that the receiver has “disabled” his/her express function meaning the message was not received; the receiver will not return a message; or the receiver will return a message. Using separate command functions, an ISCA user can send and receive private messages in express mode while reading and posting in one or more forums. This is known as *forum surfing* in which an individual is engaged in multiple conversations simultaneously. However, typing speed, people’s reactions, and familiarity with ISCA can limit how successful this task can be.

The last form of communication on ISCA is mail. Sending mail is equivalent to sending e-mail except that mail is restricted within the system. It is a one-to-one mode of communication. ISCA users usually send mail when the intended receiver is not on-line.

#### *Who Talks to Who(m)*

Once an individual logs onto ISCA, he/she can do four things: lurk in a forum, chat in a forum, send private express messages, or send mail. During any log-in session, an individual can do all four options. To lurk is to read the messages in a forum for a short time before posting. An individual lurks to get a

sense of who is in a forum and what is being communicated. The objective of lurking is not to spy on other people's conversations- although this is a possibility- but to know what is being communicated before participating in the discussion. Lurking can prevent an individual from committing the *faux pas* of making inappropriate statements, or it can increase an individual's worth as contributor to the flow of discourse. The term, "lurking," is sometimes expressed as an action within a chat-room (e.g., Clear: "Enters. Lurks under rug.") to draw people's attention (e.g., Alchemist: "Nods to Clear. Is standing on rug."). Individuals can lurk indefinitely and read messages or for a short time period. Lurking generally leads to chatting in a forum.

What forums an individual participates in depends upon his/her interests. Most ISCA users participate in several forums and contribute regularly to a select few. Every forum has a forum moderator (FM) and a set of rules created by the FM. The forum moderator is an individual who volunteers a certain amount of time each week to monitor a forum. Forum rules vary depending on the subject matter of the forum. For example, in the forum, "Flirting," there is an explicit rule that individuals must flirt and not flame. However, in the forum, "Rages," the explicit rule is to flame and not flirt. In all cases forum rules are devised to regulate what is acceptable and unacceptable communication. Forum moderators exist to enforce these rules, and they are given the power of censorship by the University of Iowa which maintains the

BBS economically and politically. They have access to a special set of computer commands that allow them to read and delete any message before it is posted in a forum. In addition, forum moderators have the power to bar any individual from a forum or the BBS (known as “twitting” on ISCA). As a consequence the power imbalance generates resentment between forum moderators and some ISCA users (see Appendix XII, Case 1).

Forums are a public sphere for communication; whereas, the express mode is a private sphere for communication. Express mode allows private, one-to-one conversations, and therefore, it is the preferred medium for communicating intimate and personal information. On ISCA, an individual selects who he/she wants to communicate with from three sources: a Friend’s List, the Who List, and a forum. A Friend’s List is a computer file stored on a client computer with the file handles of friends on ISCA. Only the computer user creates the Friend’s List which is exclusive. Activating the Friend’s List will display a list of friends that are currently logged on ISCA (see Appendix V, Case 2). The Who List is a general list of all the people currently logged on ISCA generated by the BBS program (see Appendix IV).

If someone is not currently on-line and an ISCA user wants to send that person a message, he/she can send mail. Mail is equivalent to e-mail, but it is restricted to the members on the BBS.

Who a person actually talks to depends on a number of factors: time of

day, day of the week, who is on-line, how a person feels, what a person wants to talk about, whether the other person is interesting, and so forth. There is no single reason for why one person chats with another person. An individual might find a friend on-line or an interesting name on the Who List. A conversation might spill over from a forum discussion to a private discussion. An individual might schedule a chatting session with another person. Who talks to who is relative to the personal thoughts and feelings of individuals and the social context.

There are social patterns of who talks to who. Some ISCA users choose to go down their Friend's List first to see who is on-line. The purpose is to maintain on-line friendships (e.g., Free Spirit: "I have a lot of friends who care about my well being and I theirs."). Another option is to go down the Who List to find a user name that is personally interesting. If an ISCA user finds an interesting user name, he/she will usually *profile* that person to see if they share a common interest (e.g., a hobby) or to see if that person will provide a valued conversation (e.g., a humorous, serious, or intellectual conversation). By entering into discussions with strangers an individual creates opportunity for relationships to develop. On-line relationships can be friendly, romantic, or temporary. Through continual conversations individuals can become friends or romantically involved. They can be temporarily connected by a discussion, or they can become enemies (see Appendix VII, Case 2).

Some relationships pre-exist off-line, and ISCA is medium to maintain



these existing relationships. For example, Ginger Rogers uses ISCA to talk to her ex-boyfriend who attends another university, and Brueggie occasionally meets an old sorority friend on-line. CMC is an affordable and quick means to communicate.

### *The Risk of Romance*

What is interesting is that most ISCA users tend to chat with the opposite sex or with individuals with the same sexual orientation. From my interviews there was a four to one ratio between users who chatted with individuals of the opposite sex or the same sexual orientation and users who chatted with males and females equally. Why this phenomenon occurs relates gender roles. If the objective of getting on-line is to establish a romantic relationship, then it is socially appropriate that males should want to talk to females and vice versa or individuals of the same sexual orientation should want to talk to each other. For example, Gizzmo, a male, stated, "I'm single and sort of looking for Miss Right," and Green Rose, a gay male, said, "I talk only to gays or males who think I am a female."

However, some ISCA users just feel more comfortable talking to the opposite sex or dislike talking to individuals of the same sex. For example, Babin, a female, said, "I feel more comfortable talking with them (males)." Spaceball, a male, stated, "I'm more comfortable talking to females." Lady

Aberlin, a female, commented, " I just don't like other women in general. I think they're stupid and emotional and too sensitive and a bunch of other crap."

Some ISCA users feel that chatting is the only opportunity that they have to talk to the opposite sex or to discuss gender-specific issues. For example, The Defiler, a male, stated that he talked to females, "Because this is the only place they'll talk to me." Dillmunch, a male, felt that females discussed "serious topics such as emotions and relationships;" whereas, males never talk about those issues.

The fact that individuals tend to talk to the opposite sex or individuals of the same sexual orientation implicitly supports my hypothesis. Some ISCA users explicitly state that they are in an on-line relationship, looking for relationships, or hoping for a relationship to develop. Ansoff, an man living in London, talks about his Net-girlfriend living in Minnesota and about Net-marriages where individuals symbolically marry and share intimate details about their lives with one another. Brueggie mentions a relationship that "kinda happened." "We chatted a lot. He started calling. We talked more and more. He came to visit. It didn't work out." Cookie pursues on-line relationships, sending letters, exchanging photos, and desiring to meet the other person. Crazy Daisy reported having three marriage proposals on-line. Dillmunch met a girl on-line and dated her for eight months. Herbert The Elf met her on-line love in *Real Life* (RL) after she had met him on ISCA first. Lady Aberlin reported, "I almost had on-

line relationships a couple of times, but never actually stated bf/gf relationship.”

Slavegirl who is into bondage and domination meets her master on-line.

Spaceball commented, “I have met some females on-line that I keep in touch with, yes, but nothing has reciprocated into the real world, yet.” Teufel met her fiancé on ISCA. Jane [a pseudonym] was tempted to leave her husband for a man she met on-line, but she broke the relationship off. Tulleuchen raised money to travel 1,900 miles to meet the woman who will now be living with him. What should be obvious is that romantic relationships do occur on-line and that some people actively seek and desire them (see Appendix VIII). This does not mean that everyone wants to develop a relationship on-line.

The proclaimed benefit of CMC is that it allows people to communicate without the constraint of geography and time. However, geography and time impedes physical relationships from developing. Anonymity allows individuals to develop relationships that are hypothetically based a person’s personality and charisma, but it also opens up the door for deception, miscommunication, and assumptions of social details. There is an emotional risk to develop an on-line relationship, and for this reason many people choose not to attempt an on-line relationship. Many ISCA users voice this opinion. Ace O Spades stated, “No, I wouldn’t try to develop a romantic relationship... In RL, you always have some clue about a person, their stance or looks, for example, or what they are carrying. Here you don’t.” Ansoff’s Net-girlfriend broke off their relationship after she

developed a Real Life relationship where she was living. John [a pseudonym] is a gay male who decided to change his user name, because a heterosexual male fell in love with him assuming that he was a female. Bird Man commented, "No. I had a friend do that once, and it didn't turn out well." Brueggie became aware through her experience that a lot of information is not communicated on-line. "Differences just became more apparent. Little things you don't think about if you aren't in person, like I have a Franklin planner; he doesn't plan." Crazy Daisy rejected all three marriage proposals, because she could not completely trust her suitors. "I said, 'no,' because I can't believe what people say 100%. I could be speaking to a loony, and I wouldn't even know it." Jedi offered his opinion. "Do you realize how desperate you have to be to do that? How can you meet someone on a freaking computer and fall in love?" Wizzbyu commented that he had met a few women in Real Life to find out that they did not come close to how they described themselves.

What has been demonstrated is that some people do get on-line for the purpose of developing a romantic relationship. However, many people consciously avoid pursuing on-line relationships. What can be said is that CMC functions in one way as a social strategy for developing romantic relationships.

The fact that not everyone engages in romantic relationships on-line draws attention to a larger question, "In what other ways does CMC functions?" Based on interview responses and observations, I have determined that CMC

functions in several other ways, namely, to make or maintain friendships, to acquire and practice social skills, to solve problems, to share information, to express oneself, and to entertain or be entertained.

### *Friendship as a Measure of Trust*

When ISCA users were asked, "Why do you participate in chat-groups," the most common answer was to make and/or maintain friendships. Most users expressed that they wanted to meet "many," "new," and "various" people from "all over the world" and "country." Some users had friends who moved away. They use the BBS to maintain their friendships because it is an affordable means of communication. In many cases, chatting began purely out of curiosity; a friend introduces another friend how to get on-line. The more time an individual spends on-line, the greater the opportunity for him or her to develop on-line friendships. As a consequence, many ISCA users felt tied to their on-line friends through friendship and shared experiences. For example, Cookie Crumb commented, "There are a number of people on here that know me quite intimately. We have shared hopes, dreams, goals, etc."

Friendship is one of the most valued relationship on-line. Many ISCA users go to great lengths to select their friends and to maintain and demonstrate their friendships. To become someone's friend on-line, a person usually has to prove his/her worth. There is no absolute criteria for how someone selects

his/her friends. However, there are two reoccurring patterns of what people value in an on-line friendship: honesty and common interests.

Because many people feel socially protected in an anonymous environment, they are willing to express intimate details about their lives. For example, Cookie stated, "You can tell strangers anything, at least, I can. I've told things to people that my family doesn't know about." However, anonymity does not prevent an individual from disclosing acquired personal information about another person on-line. For this reason, many people on-line seek to establish trust through the exchange of personal information. Honesty is usually measured by how personal this information is. The assumption is that if a person is willing to divulge intimate details about his/her life, then he/she can be trusted to keep the personal information of other people private. Trust can be established by answering the simple question, "Are you male or female?" Refusing to answer can create suspicion, and lying will generate distrust. The problem with CMC is that there is no way of determining whether or not someone is telling the truth without extreme measures: physically meeting that person, calling him/her, or cross-referencing a person's statements on-line with other statements he/she made with other people.

Just because a person is honest does not make him/her a candidate for friendship. ISCA users like to meet people that interest them. What attracts one person to associate with another person cannot be determined because people's

interests vary widely. How an ISCA user limits his/her search for interesting people is by examining a person's profile and file handle. A profile is a stored computer file containing five lines of information created by the user of that particular account. A profile can include personal information about a user: real name, address, phone number, e-mail address, interests, hobbies, etc. Since many ISCA users updated their profiles with new information on a regular basis, profiling is a good way of getting to know a person. In fact, many users want to be known and draw attention to their profiles, especially, when new ones are created. If a profile is empty, an ISCA user might complain or request that the profile owner insert some information about himself/herself. Profiles function like a business card and an invitation card. They contain personal information about oneself, and sometimes they encourage the profile reader to send a private message.

The file handle, on the other hand, can implicitly convey information about an ISCA user. An individual usually chooses a file handle that is in some way meaningful to him/her. Most file handles refer to a nickname, a real name, or a particular interest, and they can signify gender, race, or ethnicity (e.g., Solar Man, Romanian Princess, Chocolate Brotha). For example, the file handle, "Jedi," was chosen by an individual who was a Star Wars fan. Someone seeing the user name, Jedi, for the first time can deduce that person is interested in the Star Wars movies and possibly science fiction, fantasy, role-playing games, etc.

A file handle can signify membership within a social group. For example, the word, "boy," included in a file handle sometimes indicates that the individual is gay.

The quantity and quality of friends a person has on-line are used as status symbols. Occasionally, ISCA users will post their Friend's List in a forum to demonstrate who exclusively are their friends. Other people complain about not being on the list (see Appendix V, Case 2). One of the reasons that an individual is not on a list is usually because he/she is a newbie. Newbies are people without established identities in CMC. They are generally disliked by people who have had ISCA accounts for a long period of time (i.e., oldbies), because they are not recognized by oldbies nor do they recognize the status and identities of oldbies (see Appendix XII). Newbies have a tendency to be unfamiliar with the BBS and to ask questions or to make statements that do not contribute to the flow of discourse. Although a newbie may potentially be an interesting person to chat with, he/she must establish his/her identity on-line by interacting frequently with other people. Over time an individual loses his/her status as a newbie because of some arbitrary marker such as a person's user number (a number that indicates when the account was generated) or because an individual may be frequently on-line and other people become familiar with him/her.

Both friendships and romantic relationships are displayed by ritually



greeting and saying good-bye to individuals on-line, by gift-giving, by establishing off-line forms of contacts, and by demonstrating support. The distinction between a friendship and a romantic relationship on-line is the degree of how one expresses his/her love for another person on-line. Friends like to communicate topics of similar interest. However, there is a social limit of what friends can communicate. For example, intimate expressions of love that involve physical details are generally reserved for romantic relationships.

When entering or leaving a forum some ISCA users like to announce their presence or departure. These announcements are cues for other people on-line to acknowledge an individual's presence or departure (see Appendix VI). By acknowledging another person on-line is to indicate that one is a friend or at least one respects that person. As soon as some ISCA users enter a forum they immediately greet other people on-line to display their friendship or respect. This action usually generates a reciprocal response. However, when someone does announce his/her presence or departure and does not receive a response, he/she tends to be offended by the lack of feedback and criticizes the group as a whole (see Appendix VI, Case 2).

Gift-giving occurs quite frequently on-line. Many individuals initiate friendly relationships by giving virtual presents: drinks, roses, magical items, and other miscellaneous items (e.g., Jander: "Here this is for you. [Hands her a baby blue rose]"). Human contact is also another form of gift-giving in virtual

reality. This may include virtual hugs, kisses, oral sex, intercourse, and so forth. The most tangible form of gift-giving, which may or may not be exclusive, is when someone gives out his/her real name, phone number, home address, e-mail address, web-page address, and so forth (see Appendix V, Case 5).

ISCA users demonstrate their friendship in other ways. They sometimes establish off-line forms of contact: calling, exchanging photographs, sending e-mail or postal mail, and arranging formal meetings. Friendship is also demonstrate on-line by showing support (see Appendix V, Case 3 and 6).

### *Acquiring, Practicing, and Maintaining Social Skills*

Many ISCA users consider themselves “shy,” and they use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships. Whether to make friends or to establish a romantic relationship, computers are a tool for acquiring, practicing, and maintaining social skills. Babin stated, “I like to meet new people, but sometimes it’s hard for me to do that in person, this works. They can’t see me and then I can’t get nervous.” Why a person is shy is usually a matter of self-perception. This may include how individuals think and feel about themselves physically and socially in relation to cultural ideals. For example, in the American culture someone is physically attractive if he/she is beautiful, muscular, thin, etc., or someone can have a great personality. An individual may not initiate a conversation in public with a stranger if he/she considers

himself/herself unattractive or lacking personality. In CMC, however, physical attributes and many other social cues are removed, thus, enabling a shy person to interact freely with people without being too concerned about how others might perceive him/her. In addition, CMC allows individuals to control the flow of information about themselves. Individuals can emphasize positively valued social traits (e.g., Spaceball: "I want to put the best impression forward.") or filter out what they consider as negative traits (e.g., John [pseudonym]: "Try being fat your entire life. Only fat person in your entire school.").

Sometimes individuals have a disability that inhibits them from interacting socially with other people. For example, Edell stated, "It (chatting) is even more meaningful to me now that I've finished college and don't have as much of a chance to meet such a diverse group of people. Also, being that I'm blind, it sometime is easier to talk to people on-line, rather than try to get transportation somewhere and not knowing who looks like they're interested in conversations with me. " Using special computer hardware and software, Edell is able to hear what is displayed on his monitor.

### *Problem Solving and Sharing Information*

Communication is not without purpose. Many ISCA users get on-line to solve problems. Academic, relationship, and family problems tend to be the

greatest concerns of most ISCA users. Anonymity makes communicating problems easier because individuals do not have to worry about being socially stigmatized. In addition, someone on-line might suggest a solution to a problem, relate to the problem, or at least listen to the problem (see Appendix VIII, Case 3, 4, and 6). Some ISCA user enjoy helping people with their problems.

Sharing information is another function of CMC. Many chat-rooms are divided based a proposed interest. ISCA users generally join forums that interest them, because they like to discuss a shared common interest (see Appendix XI). Anonymity makes discussing serious issues and taboo subjects such as sex, sexual transmitted diseases, rape, sexual orientation, racism, suicide, child abuse, drug addiction, alcoholism, and so forth easier for some individuals.

### *Self-expression, Role-playing, and Entertainment*

CMC also functions as a medium for self-expression. By controlling information individuals can reveal their identities when they feel it is appropriate (see Appendix X), or they can project personas to avoid stereotypes. For example, John (a pseudonym), a gay male, stated, "In the macro-culture it is hard. People see me and think I'm a man. I hate it when I'm called sir or dude. It never happens on-line." This does not mean that other people on-line assume

that person's statement about himself/herself is valid. On the contrary, most people on-line judge individuals with great skepticism. For example, Ginger Rogers commented, "I don't trust people here because I don't see their faces, if they are sincere or not."

This freedom for self-expression in CMC gives some people the impression that they can be anything they want without judgement or sanctions. For example, Bodicea stated, "There are no consequences for being a different person, socially speaking," or Cookies comment, "You can be yourself, and you can't be judged." However, this is a myth because individuals are constantly collecting information about other people on-line and judging them based on that information. The more time an individual spends on-line the greater the opportunity he/she will have to learn directly or indirectly about other people on-line and vice versa. Individuals directly communicate personal information about themselves by asking and answering questions, and information is indirectly communicated about individuals through gossiping. As a consequence, an individual's identity on-line is never solely his/her own. It is constructed interactively or sometimes even without a person's input. For example, Sjalfar Hvittr complained, "Some people just look at you and assume everything about you, and you're stuck. They'll out talk you on every occasion until everyone believes them and not you.").

For many ISCA users, constructing an on-line identity is a form of

entertainment. Role-playing is a common phenomenon in CMC. Role-playing is the act of pretending to be someone or something else. Through role-playing an individual becomes a character (e.g., a wizard, a knight, a sorceress, a superhero, etc.), and he/she behaves and communicates as if he/she is that character (e.g., Magestorm: "Conjures a drink for everyone."). Role-playing requires that an individual construct a virtual reality that will make sense of his/her character. Usually, this is done by narrating details about one's character and environment. Narrative details may include magical creatures (e.g., dragons), magical abilities (e.g., teleporting), superhuman abilities (e.g., flying), clothing, material items, a castle, and so forth. Not all role-playing is fantastic. It can be as simple as describing what one person is doing to another person in a virtual reality (e.g. Velocity Boy: "Slams his head into TreeBark's fist and thrusts his stomach into NightAngel's knee."). Role-playing can lead to an improvisational play with a cast of characters (see Appendix VII). Being unlike oneself can also be role-playing. Many ISCA users do and say things that they would not normally say and do off-line. For example, Catiana admitted that she enjoys saying outrageous things like "I carry my lunch in my vagina," and Jane [pseudonym] who considers herself conservative engages in net-sex.

Chatting offers entertainment when people are entertaining. Humor and wit are highly valued in CMC. Making someone laugh is usually praised and acknowledge. If comment or question is amusing, an ISCA user might

acknowledge it by typing in “LOL” (laughs out loud), “ROTFL” (rolling on the floor laughing), or “:-)” [a smile]. In fact, humorous or absurd comments and questions occur quite frequently, and they can generate a chain of discourse (see Appendix IX). The value of entertainment in CMC is also affirmed by the fact that the most common complaint in a chat-room is that it is “boring” (e.g., Spaceball: “This is booooring... [yawns profusely]”).

Simply interacting socially with other people is entertaining. People come on-line with different backgrounds, experiences, philosophies, and interests. Some ISCA users feel that they lack the ability or the opportunity to socialize off-line, and being on-line allows them to be social (e.g., Tix: “I feel like I belong, because there are people who I can actually converse with that like to hear what I have to say.”).

In summary, ISCA is both a technological system and a social organization. It is an institution, and the basic unit of social organization is a common interest association. ISCA functions primarily as a means to develop and to maintain romantic relationships and friendships. Its secondary functions are to acquire, practice, and maintain social skills; to problem solve and share information; and to express oneself, role-play, and provide entertainment.

In the next chapter, I will present an ethnographic study of Americans by Harve Varenne. I will incorporate Varenne’s concepts of individualism, community, and love into my interpretation of why Americans participate in

CMC. This will be done by comparing two chat-rooms, Babble and Flirting. I will examine their social contexts, social organization, and the content and meaning of what is being communicated. I will demonstrate how love, trust, and sex are cultural symbols that reflect the ideological relationship between individualism and community.



## Chapter VI

### *Interpretation*

Why do Americans use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships?

They value friendship and romantic relationships. For Americans, computer-mediated-communication is another way of expanding or maintaining all social relationships. It is an extension of other forms of communication, i.e., sending postal mail or making a telephone call. Socially, these other modes of communication function in the same way: to establish or maintain social relationships. CMC differs from these other modes of communication in how messages are sent across space and time. CMC removes social cues and the constraints of geography and time and, thus, affects how Americans interact socially.

The value of social relationships for Americans is explicated in Herve Varenne's ethnographic study of a midwestern town. Varenne argues in Americans Together (1977) that the social structure of Americans institutionalizes the cultural ideals of individualism and community. Individualism is the idealization of the individual. For Americans, to be an individual is to be physically and socially independent. However, the problem is that Americans cannot achieve the ideal of individualism and maintain the American society. "Where there is individualism, there cannot be community; and where community triumphs, individualism is destroyed" (Varenne

1977:206). As a consequence, individuals must enter into social relationships in order to create society. A community then is a conglomeration of individuals joined by a common interest, goals, desires, etc. Individuals join a community because they benefit in some way from the community. For example, joining the Farm Bureau allows individuals to pool material resources, knowledge, political power, and so forth. This cooperative will promote the interests of farmers, and farmers will benefit as individuals.

As ideologies individualism and community are binary opposites. They are opposite worldviews that are conflicting. The dilemma for Americans is how one can be an individual and be also a part of a social group. This dilemma is resolved by the mediation of a third cultural ideal, love. "Love is the total giving away of oneself to somebody else who must answer in kind and equally, and thereby 'save' himself and the originator" (pg. 204). Through love individuals become part of a community (e.g., a family, a romantic relationship, or a friendship), and only by becoming a part of a community can individuals express their love for one another. For Americans, "love is a context for happiness and vice versa" (pg. 189). Therefore, in order for Americans to be happy, they must be in a relationship that allows them to express and to receive love.

With Varenne's analysis as a starting point, I explore the cultural themes of individualism, community, and love in CMC. I compare the two chat-rooms

known as Babble and Flirting, their similarities and differences in social context, social organization, and the content and meanings of what is communicated.

### *Social Context*

Babble is a chat-room dedicated to “light conversation, inane chatting, socializing, unstructured role-playing, and just about everything else” (Introduction to Babble). The participants of Babble do not share a fixed conceptual space such as “room,” but they do construct temporary environments to role-play such as castle with a moat. Because there is no fixed virtual environment, the participants interact primarily through discussions. More attention is paid to what an individual says than how a person is suppose to appear in a virtual environment.

Social cues such as physical appearance or the virtual environment become a factor when role-playing occurs. Role-playing shifts the interests of participants to a sub-context which is equivalent to an improvisational play. Within this sub-context, a scenario is developed, and individuals tend to behave according to what is expected in that scenario (see Appendix VII, Case 1). Communication within this sub-context is influenced not only by the projected social context, but also by previous comments made by other participants within the scenario.

The freedom to chat idly or to role-play in Babble allows participants to

express themselves as individuals. Because there is no focused subject matter as in other topic-oriented chat-groups, individuals must draw attention to themselves in order to engage in conversations. Conversations that promise an entertainment value tend to attract the most attention. Most conversations revolve around individual experiences, interests, and humor.

Flirting is a chat-room centered around “flirting.” (It does not have a statement of purpose because the title was assumed to be self-explanatory.) This chat-room is spatially unique in that it is conceptualized as a bar. This bar does not have a name, employees, or a manager. Instead, the participants operate the bar as if it was fully stocked and left vacant. They go behind the bar, make drinks, put money in the jukebox, and so forth. The bar provides a symbolic and a social context for flirting.

Since flirting is the objective of the participants, greater emphasis is placed on constructing the virtual reality. Greater detail is given to what one is wearing, how one appears, and what one is doing in the bar. The purpose is to project social cues in a virtual environment which are meaningful to Americans. Because the chat-room is structured as a bar, it forces the participants to role-play in order to function socially within the virtual environment.

### *Social Organization*

In Babble, an individual is recognized as either a “newbie” or an

“oldbie.” These terms express differences in rank. A newbie is an individual who does not know the written and the unwritten rules of the BBS or the chat-room, and an oldbie is someone who does know the rules. A newbie is also an individual who is not a regular member of the chat-room; therefore, he/she is not expected to know who the regular members are, or what conversations were held previously.

The way the term, newbie, is used expresses a second distinction. A newbie is an “individual” who is not socially accepted by the regular participants of a “chat-group.” A newbie is not recognized as a contributor to the group, and what he/she does contributes is not considered worthwhile (see Appendix XII, Case 3). Therefore, a newbie is a non-member, an individual who has not established an identity that is acceptable for a group of regular members.

Regular participants of Babble form friendships. Friendships are developed through the shared experience of chatting. Through chatting individuals communicate their interests, values, beliefs, and so forth. Individuals tend to ally themselves to other people who share similar interests, experiences, values, and so forth. What occurs in Babble is that clusters of friendships develop and that individuals must find niche, or be isolated from the other participants (see Appendix V, Case 4).

Friendships also occur in Flirting. However, friendship is recognized as a step towards establishing a romantic relationship. Participants are less

concerned whether an individual is a newbie or not. They are interested in whether an individual is a male or female for obvious reasons. When the gender of individuals is determined, individuals usually form couples.

### *Communication: Content and Meanings*

Since the social context of Babble is to participate in idle discussions and the basic social organization is formations of friendships, discussions are directed towards establishing and maintaining these friendships. Several patterns of communication reoccur in Babble, namely: greetings and good-byes, exchanging personal information, joking and role-playing, support networking, and flaming. All of these patterns either foster the development of friendships, or reestablish the boundaries of friendships.

The ritual act of greeting someone or saying, "good-bye" is a common phenomenon on Babble. It is through this process that friendships are formally acknowledged or initiated. Greetings can be as simple as saying, "hi," or they can be accompanied by a question that expresses concern for the other individual. An individual who introduces a physical action (e.g., a hug or a kiss) in his/her greeting expresses a degree of intimacy. The same type of things occur when an individual leaves; however, the departing individual will usually offer an explanation for leaving so as not to be impolite (i.e., leaving one's friends without a reason).

Most of the discussions in Babble are exchanges of personal information. Individuals discuss their beliefs, interests, past experiences, current events in their lives, problems that they are having, accomplishments, goals, and so forth. The objective of the individual is to communicate publicly who he/she is. Chatting in this context serves a dual purpose to express oneself as a unique individual and to allow other people to ally themselves to that person based on common interests, beliefs, values, etc. Thus, by exchanging personal information an individual establishes his/her individuality and opens up the opportunity for friendships to develop based on shared interests, beliefs, etc.

Joking and role-playing are two ways that friends maintain their social relation. In Babble, joking is when individuals tease a friend. This process reaffirms a friendship because most jokes are inside jokes and can only be understood by an intimate friend. Joking occurs in other context such as when individuals flame. In flaming, jokes are used to defend boundaries of friendship. They are used to attack a person who insulted a friend (see Appendix V, Case III). Conversely, a joke can be used to signify an enemy relationship. In Babble, someone who is capable of making a lot of jokes can acquire friends quickly because humor is valued. Making someone laugh is valued, and some individuals want to be around people who make them laugh.

Role-playing is another way friends maintain their relationship. It is an interactive game. One person initiates the role-playing scenario, and friends add

to it. They build a story together. It should be noted that anyone in the chat-room can add to the role-playing scenario, but only friends maintain a social dialogue that builds the scenario the way that they want it. Friends negotiate what is present or absent (see Appendix VII, Case 1).

Support networking is when friends demonstrate their solidarity when a crisis or a problem arises or when friends encourage each other through compliments. Individuals communicate a problem on-line in order to attract the attention of their friends (see Appendix V, Case 6). Depending on the type of problem and the degree of closeness, friends will offer what support they can, or feel obligated to give. The most frequent support is listening to the problem, suggesting solutions, and offering condolences. Material support such as providing an individual a place to stay or sending him/her money is seldom discussed. This suggests that virtual friendships differ qualitatively from face-to-face friendships. Another way friends support each other is by complimenting achievements.

Flaming occurs frequently in Babble. It takes two forms: a joke or an assault. Friends know when a flame is a joke, and they play along with retaliating comments. These types of flames tend to be individual-oriented. However, when a flame is directed towards the chat-room as a whole or when it obviously contains malicious content, flaming is recognized as an assault. When flames are directed towards the chat-room, an individual is usually expressing



his/her exclusion from the community. It is a way the individual separates himself/herself from the community. When flames are directed towards a person, it also a way to express separation. The person who is being flamed is not a friend, but an enemy.

What is most interesting in Babble is that friendship is not expressed through a reoccurring pattern of symbols that are equated with friendship but through reoccurring patterns of actions that signify friendship. In Babble, friendship is established and reestablished through patterns of symbolic acts: posting the Friend's List in the chat-room, giving virtual gifts, greeting and saying, "good-bye," exchanging personal information, joking, role-playing, and reaffirming the support network. Functionally, Babble differs from Flirting in that individuals pursue friendships in Babble and romantic relationships in Flirting. This difference in objectives qualitatively alters the social context and social organization of the chat-room. Earlier, it was mentioned that a virtual bar provided the social context for Flirting and that the social organization was centered around couples.

An individual enters Flirting with the foreknowledge that a romantic relationship is the ideal outcome from flirting. The dilemma that the participants face is how does one appear attractive and what does one say to attract another person. The first part of the problem is addressed through narratives. In Flirting, individuals narrate non-verbal social cues which are

culturally shared expressions of love and romance.

An individual's entrance into Flirting is a symbolic act. It is usually where an individual summarizes his/her non-verbal social cues. These social cues will then be used by other participants as points of reference in future interactions. Individuals pay close attention to physical appearance, kinesics, proxemics, and environmental details.

When describing physical appearances, individuals emphasize primarily articles of clothing and other artifacts. They seldom make references to the body (i.e., height, weight, body shape, hair color, hairstyle, eye color, etc.) other than an individual's sex through the use of pronouns. The absence of the body might relate to how an individual negatively perceives his/her body. The body is symbolized in American society as being either attractive or unattractive. As a consequence, an individual would not want to draw attention to it in a virtual environment. An individual could exaggerate his/her physical characteristics to make himself/herself appear attractive; but this action would violate the social rule of trust on-line. If one person cannot trust what another person is saying on-line, then why get involved in a relationship? To avoid the recognized negative stigma associated with the body (e.g., being over-weight), an individual avoids describing his/her physical body unless asked.

Mood can be conveyed by kinesics (i.e. bodily movements) and proxemics (i.e., use of space). The speed and how one moves through the chat-

room can express how one feels (e.g., happiness, sadness, etc.). What a person says usually complements the bodily movement and reinforces the mood that is being communicated. Mood is also expressed by how close or distant individuals place themselves from other participants or the virtual bar. Being at the bar or sitting next to someone indicates that an individual is happy enough to socialize. Standing by the virtual window, sitting in a dark corner, looking down from the balcony, or even standing outside the bar communicates loneliness and sadness.

Environmental details are used to embellish an individual as a character. Pets are used to project certain image (e.g., a cowboy and his dog, a wizard and his dragon, etc.). Little attention is paid to other environmental details unless a social occasion arises (e.g., creating a symphony in order to waltz, enlarging the bar so the dragon can fit, etc.).

Role-playing is distinctly different in Flirting than in Babble. In Babble, role-playing is a game, and individuals focus on what they are doing in the scenario without much concern what other people are doing except to add to the story-line. Thus, role-playing is self-centered in this context. In Flirting, role-playing is a courtship between two people. Individuals act out the appropriate ritual of courting following stages of appropriate behavior. They talk, hold hands, dance, kiss, exchange gifts, and so forth. Advancing to a higher level in the relationship requires that a certain degree of flirting or courting must be

accomplished (see Appendix VII, Case 2). An individual is concerned with pleasing the other person. Thus, role-playing in this context is other-centered. In Flirting, role-playing is romanticized. Individuals portray themselves as masculine or feminine ideals. Male characters are cowboys, warriors, or a gentleman; whereas, female characters are ladies, a damsel in distress, or a seductress.

In Flirting, role-playing is a social act, a play. Individuals are characters, and their language is script for courting. Individuals exchange compliments, and they ask and answer questions that are appropriate to the stage of the courtship. By this process individuals gain personal knowledge of the other person, and thereby, they are able to make a decision whether or not to move on to the next stage. It is interesting to note that individuals turn-take in Flirting, whereas, in Babble, everybody is chatting at once and the dialogue is often incongruent.

Gift-giving is also a part of the courtship. Males initiate a relationship by giving females a material items: a drink, a rose, etc., and females confirm the relationship with an affectionate gift: a hug, a kiss, etc. At a certain stage of the courtship both males and females exchange meaningful virtual gifts. Individuals lavishly describe these gifts which are exotic, personal, and invaluable (e.g., keys to the sorceress's tower, a wizard's medallion that summons him in times of need, etc.).

### *Overlap*

Although Babble and Flirting are separate chat-rooms, the behavior and language inherent in them are not isolated to their particular contexts.

Overlapping occurs frequently. Individuals babble in Flirting, and they flirt in Babble. Friendship and romance are possible in both context. What this suggests is that there a range of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors within any chat-room or chat-group. Chat-rooms are designed with a set of goals or functions in mind; however, it is the participants who determine the social context of the chat-room. The participants are the ones who are chatting with each other. They discuss what they feel or think is important. They make the chat-room what it is by daily creating and recreating the chat-room. Thus, chat-rooms should be recognized as flexible entities or concepts not fixed rooms made of concrete and wood.

### *Love, Trust, Sex*

Harve Varenne argued that Americans are socialized to be individuals (Varenne 1977). Individualism, however, isolates Americans bringing loneliness and unhappiness. Only through "love" can an individual experience happiness by being part of a community. If this argument is true, then I should have found symbols that expressed love, individualism, and community in chat-groups.

The term, "love," was rarely expressed on-line. It was only used in three

contexts: a subject for debate, a joke, or an intimate expression. ISCA users talked about love as an ideal when they discussed relationships. Love is found in a relationship, and it is lost when the relationship ends. ISCA users who were not in some sort of relationship on-line usually felt alone and unhappy (see Appendix V, Case 4). Their happiness depended on who was around them. ISCA users go down their Friend's List, first, to see who is on-line. When in a chat-room they greeted their friends. When no one was around they attempted to make new friends by initiating a conversation, or they complained that there were only newbies (i.e., no friends) in the chat-room. Love was not verbally expressed. ISCA users knew that friends cared for them and that true love could only be found in a romantic relationship.

Love was such serious topic that ISCA users often joked about it. ISCA users would frequently imitate the Bud Light commercial where the actor says, "I love you, man," for the sole purpose of getting someone else's beer. The joke was that love was suppose to be an unselfish state of being but the actor was using the word, "love," for selfish purposes.

From time to time individuals would verbally express their love in a chat-room (see Appendix VIII, Case 1). The fact the term, "love," is rarely mentioned in public suggests that either it is taboo to express one's love in public or that love relationships are communicated in private (i.e., express mode).

Why do Americans participate in chat-groups? They want to form

relationships. However, relationship forming in CMC is risky business.

Anonymity obfuscates social cues. Distance and time separate many Americans physically. How can friendships and romantic relationships develop in such an uncertain environment as cyberspace? Individuals must trust each other.

It has already mentioned that individuals establish trust in CMC through the exchange of personal and intimate knowledge. However, trust is based on honesty, and truth is validated over time. Information exchanges are constantly occurring on-line. Participants remember what has happened and what has been said, and over time a *collective memory* develops (see Appendix XIII). A collective memory is an accumulation of memory that is shared by a group of individuals. It prevents individuals from maintaining a deception if they spend any length of time chatting in a particular BBS (see Appendix XIII, Case 3). People might be deceived temporarily, but inconsistencies in events and stories usually reveal lies. However, in CMC individuals do lie, tell half-truth, or just avoid telling the truth allowing the other person to assume the details of the truth. It becomes a major problem for those who seek honest relationships on-line. For some Americans, developing a relationship outweighs the risk of getting emotionally hurt.

What does a relationship mean for Americans? It means love, happiness, and an end to being alone. The most common reoccurring symbol of a relationship on ISCA was "sex." Sex was recognized as the physical union

between sexual partners, and it was used as a metaphor for happiness and an intimacy. Sex as a symbol expressed both physical and emotional pleasure as well as a private, closed relationship. However, how the term, “sex,” was used depended on the social context.

In Flirting, sex was never discussed. Instead, participants acted out sexual behavior: kissing, touching, revealing parts of the body, etc. The behavior itself was symbolic of the relationship. What is sexually permissible depended on how close the participants felt and thought they were. In Babble, asking a question about sex, relating a sexual experience, or even telling a sexual joke would attract most of the participants’ attention, because sex is a powerful symbol.

Sex means an end of the social state as an individual and the joining of individual into a community (i.e., couple) through love. In CMC, females control the power of sex. They usually make the final decision whether or not to engage in a romantic or sexual relationship (e.g., net-sex or physical sex). In CMC, females use their body or feminine qualities to reinforce their status as females (e.g., stripping, stating that one cooks in the nude, offering oral sex for assistance, etc.). By reaffirming their status as females, they attract males who sometimes offer their friendship as they attempt to develop a romantic relationship. Males court females through compliments, displaying qualities as an individual, offering moral support, being chivalrous in role-playing



scenarios, and so forth. Some males are more blunt, and they ask for sex, especially, net-sex. The objective is for immediate sexual gratification or as one female informant puts, "Net-sex is females helping males masturbate."

In summary, Americans use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships, because they value relationships and because CMC provides another means for expanding and maintaining relationships. Americans value relationships, because they have been internalized the cultural ideals of individualism, community, and love. These ideals represents models of and models for behavior. CMC allows Americans to communicate and to act upon these values.

In the next chapter, I will provide a final conclusion to my thesis. I will suggest other areas of research in future CMC studies, and I will explain the contribution of my thesis to the field of anthropology.

## Chapter VII

### *Conclusion*

Computer-mediated-communication began in 1969 with ARPANET. Its intended functions were to link researchers together and to provide a defense system during the Cold War. However, in a little over twenty-five years CMC has acquired a social function. Computers have become a tool for millions of Americans to mediate interpersonal relationships. Why this phenomenon developed can be attributed to several factors.

First, the United States government built and supported the infrastructure necessary for CMC. It initiated many projects such as EMISARI to promote communication for organizational purposes. Second, many universities recognized the value of CMC as an organizational tool and developed their own communication systems. In addition, many early computer programmers shared their knowledge, especially, software. As a consequence, CMC developed and spread rapidly.

It did not take computer users long to realize that what could be used for organizational and research purposes could also be used for social purposes. Bulletin Board Systems developed across the United States and internationally for the sole purpose of socializing.

CMC did not replace other forms of communication: postal mail, ham radios, and telephones. Instead, it complemented them by providing another

medium for communicating social wants. CMC removed the constraints of space and time allowing many Americans to pursue relationships with people whom they would never have had the opportunity to meet.

CMC's popularity can be attributed to several factors. First, CMC is an affordable means of communication. It is extremely less expensive than making a long distance telephone call. Second, it increases an individual's opportunity to meet diverse or similar people through a computer network. Third, anonymity filters out social cues allowing individuals to control information about themselves. Individuals can avoid stereotypes associated with physical or social markers, or they can use these markers to project personas which they consider culturally valuable. What should be obvious is that Americans use computers to acquire and to maintain relationships.

Why Americans use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships is because they value relationships. Americans are socialized to be individuals; however, individualism isolates the individual and destroys society. An individual cannot be happy, because he/she has no one to love nor does he/she have someone to love him/her. Only in a relationship can love be experienced, and only when an individual experiences love can he/she feel happy. Thus, Americans use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships because CMC bridges the gap between individualism and community.

Once an individual realizes that the American culture provides the

context for what is being communicated in CMC, conversations will become meaningful to him/her. Because Americans value individualism, love, and community, these cultural themes reoccur in the discourse on-line. They are models of behavior and models for behavior.

When individuals exchange personal information about themselves on-line, they are expressing their individualism. They are communicating who they are as individuals. However, this exchange is not without purpose. An individual wants the other person to know who he/she is, and he/she wants to know who the other person is. By exchanging information individuals can decide whether or not they want to develop a relationship.

Both friendships and romantic relationships occur on-line. Once again, discourse is used to express love and community. In CMC, greetings and saying, "good-bye," are ways that individuals initiate or reaffirm friendships and romantic relationships. Cultural norms affects how an individual actually greets or says, "good-bye," to another person. Greeting a lover requires a different set of behavior than greeting a friend.

Gift-giving is another way of establishing or reaffirming relationships on-line. The type of gift that one gives to another person demarcates the kind of relationship that an individual is engaged in or desires. Gift-giving also follow cultural norms. Giving an individual a rose signifies a romantic attraction; whereas, giving an individual a drink signifies a friendship.

In CMC, individuals demarcate community boundaries through flaming. Flaming can either be a joke between friends or a malicious attack against an enemy. The distinction can be made based on how one flames (i.e., the words that one chooses). Flames are either directed at an individual or a group. An individual may flame a group because he/she is not a part of the group. Flaming becomes a means to reject the group. Likewise, an individual may flame a person to reject that person as a friend, therefore, categorizing him/her as an enemy. When a group flames an individual, the group demonstrates its solidarity as a group and it rejects the individual as a member.

Depending the social context or chat-room, role-playing can either be a game or a courtship. The scenario that individuals depict sets the stage for how social actors should behave. As a game, role-playing is a story that is built by several individuals. It is a way that friends can play together on-line. Thus, role-playing reestablishes friendships on-line, and it creates opportunities for friendships to develop. When role-playing occurs between couples, it is usually a courtship. Both social actors take turns communicating their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in a courting ritual. The courtship tends to follow an American standard for what is to be said and how one should behave.

More research is needed to understand role-playing as a social phenomenon. Role-playing is a social context where individuals present themselves for public display. Erving Goffman argues in The Presentation of

Self in Everyday Life (1958) and Behavior in Public Places (1963) that behavior is managed to communicate an image or a social context that other members of a particular culture recognize and value. Future research should focus on how individuals present themselves in certain social contexts on-line. Once a researcher understands how individuals present themselves, he/she can begin speculating why particular images were presented in a particular context.

Understanding what love, trust, and sex means to Americans will provide a key for understanding why Americans participate in chat-groups. Love, trust, and sex are core symbols that are used to discuss relationships. They represent models of and models for behavior. If an individual loved someone, then he/she would do this. An individual can be trusted if he/she does this. Sex is a way of distinguishing how much an individual loves and trusts another person.

What is lacking in this thesis is a deeper analysis of what Americans mean by a friendship or a romantic relationship. It is obvious that Americans get on-line to develop friendships and romantic relationships, but it is not so obvious why they value these relationships. This thesis did demonstrate how Americans communicated friendships and romantic relationships and to some degree what they expected in these relationships. However, being a native, I took for granted what a friendship and a romantic relationship meant to other Americans. Further research is needed to understand what Americans mean by friendship or a romantic relationship. When a researcher understands what relationships

mean to Americans, he/she will understand why Americans use computers to mediate interpersonal relationships.

Paradoxically, Americans use CMC to expand their social relationships but CMC physically isolates many Americans. The more time an individual spends on-line results in less time he/she spends developing and maintaining off-line relationships. Although an individual increases his/her opportunity to develop virtual relationships, these relationships tend to seldom precipitate into off-line relationships.

Maybe some Americans are not concerned with the quantity of relationships but the quality of the relationship. CMC allows individuals to begin on the same social playing field. Anonymity hides physical and social markers, and what is communicated can be controlled. As a consequence, on-line relationships do not begin with what a person is (e.g., fat/skinny, ugly/beautiful, rich/poor, black/white, feminine/masculine, etc.) but who a person is (e.g., an individual with a particular identity, personality and interests). Through CMC, Americans can find out truly whether or not "beauty is only skin-deep."

The major contribution of this thesis to the field of anthropology was to place CMC within the American cultural context. By placing discourse within the American context, the discourse itself became meaningful. It became reflective of American values, beliefs, norms, and so forth. This thesis has

demonstrated that Americans value individualism, love, and community and that these values shape the way that Americans behave on-line.

The social act of role-playing on-line becomes meaningful once a researcher understands that role-playing is a way for Americans to initiate or to maintain friendships or romantic relationships. Likewise, flaming becomes a meaningful act once a researcher realizes that flaming demarcates the boundary between the individual and a community. The reoccurring themes of love, trust, and sex on-line are expressions of American values. The fact that Americans continually negotiate what a relationship means on-line stresses the importance that Americans place on relationships.

By providing a thick description of what occurs on-line, I have extended the theoretical boundaries of CMC studies. Flaming which had been considered an impersonal act can now be understood as a meaningful act. Role-playing is not only a figment of one's imagination; it is projection of oneself for social purposes. Even chatting about the weather is not simply a concern about the weather but it is recognized as a pretense in the process of initiating a relationship. Communication is not without purpose. Researchers must understand what is being communicated, and they must place discourse within its cultural context. Only by doing this will researchers begin to understand why Americans participate in CMC.



## Appendix I

### *Interview Questions*

1. How old are you?
2. What is your sex? M/F
3. Where are you from?
4. How many hours do you spend on your computer a week?
5. How were you introduced to chatting?
6. How long ago did you started chatting (months/years)?
7. Why do you participate in chat-groups?
8. How often do you participate in chat-groups?
9. How do you determine who to chat with?
10. Do you chat with males or females more often or both equally?
11. What do you chat about?
12. Do you participate in net-sex? Why or why not?
13. Do you ever gender-switch? Why or why not?
14. How does chatting affect your relationships with RL friends and family?
15. Does chatting affect your education or work performance?
16. Do you ever attempt romantic relationships through chatting? Why or why not?
17. Have you ever met someone in RL after developing a VR relationship or friendship? What occurred at this meeting?
18. What do you consider are the benefits of chatting?
19. What aspects do you consider not beneficial from chatting?
20. How many friends or enemies do you have on your friend/enemy list?
21. How does one become your friend or enemy?
22. What chat forums do you participate in?
23. Why do you participate in these forums?
24. Are you very open when chatting? Why or why not?
25. What does your user name mean?
26. How do you decided what to put in your profile?
27. What does your profile mean, or what do you want other people to get out of it?
28. Have you ever changed your user name? Why or why not?
29. Do you have your own web page?
30. Do you own your own computer? If "no," how do you get access to a computer?
31. What was your family life like while growing up?
32. How many brothers and/or sisters do you have? Are they younger or older?
33. What do you remember about grade school?

34. What do you remember about middle school?
35. What do you remember about high school?
36. Where did you grow up?
37. Was this a small or large town or a metropolis? What was the population?
38. Did you have a lot of friend growing up? Why or why not?
39. Are you in college? What year are you? What is your major/minor?
40. What is your current occupation?
41. Do you consider yourself from a poor, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class, or upper class family?
42. What does your father and mother do for a living?
43. Do you consider your family very open? Why or why not?
44. Do you have a lot of relatives who live nearby?
45. What are your hobbies?
46. How would you describe your personality?
47. How would you describe yourself physically?
48. What do you like about yourself?
49. What do you dislike about yourself?
50. What is your relationship like with your father?
51. What is your relationship like with your mother?
52. What is your relationship like with your brothers/sisters?
53. How would you describe your friendships?
54. How would you describe your romantic relationships?
55. How do you think your parents view you?
56. How do you think your peers view you?
57. What are your life ambitions?

## Appendix II

### *Emoticons*

1. :-) Smiley face
2. :( Sad face
3. :-P Sticking out one's tongue
4. ;-) Winking
5. 0:-) Innocent smile [halo]
6. :-0 Shocked or laughing
7. >:-} Mischievous grin
8. :-P~ Drooling
9. \*....\* Narratives on ISCABBS (e.g., \*runs naked into the room\*)

## Appendix III

### *ISCA Forums*

A note should be made that some forums are temporary. New forums are created by suggestions, and others are removed over time. The forums with asterisks beside them are "invite only" forums which means one must get permission before he/she can participate in them. They usually require that individual be part of a particular social group.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Babble                        | 33. New User Questions                 |
| 2. Classified Ads                | 34. Client Read Info before Posting    |
| 3. Humor                         | 35. Quotes                             |
| 4. Sports Data                   | 36. Major League Baseball Playoffs     |
| 5. Top Ten Lists                 | 37. Gripes with a Vengeance            |
| 6. Warm Fuzzies                  | 38. Spiritual Forum                    |
| 7. Bible and Christian Issues    | 39. Paganism and Religious Magic       |
| 8. Love Relationships            | 40. Gender Issues                      |
| 9. Les-bi-gay Issues             | 41. Philosophy                         |
| 10. Food and Beverages           | 42. Support                            |
| 11. Medicine                     | 43. Panda                              |
| 12. Art                          | 44. Literature                         |
| 13. Cinema                       | 45. Feminist Forum                     |
| 14. Video Games and Pinball      | 46. Mudding                            |
| 15. Programming                  | 47. SF, Fantasy, and Horror Literature |
| 16. Star Trek Universe           | 48. Role-playing Games                 |
| 17. E Sports PN three            | 49. INET, FTP, Telnet, IRC             |
| 18. UNIX                         | 50. Macintosh                          |
| 19. Intel, PCs, and Clones       | 51. SCA                                |
| 20. Iowa Student Computer Assoc. | 52. Amiga                              |
| 21. Physical Math                | 53. Locals                             |
| 22. Compliments and Apologies    | 54. Free Ass                           |
| 23. Animals                      | 55. XXL                                |
| 24. Forum Proposals              | 56. Science and Technology             |
| 25. Late Breaking News           | 57. Rages                              |
| 26. Names Hit I now              | 58. Workstations Next Apollo           |
| 27. Ecology and Life Sciences    | 59. Writing Workshop                   |
| 28. Comedy Central               | 60. Flirting                           |
| 29. VAX, Alpha, and Open VMS     | 61. Announcements                      |
| 30. Dreams Made Flesh            | 62. Serious Discussion Only            |
| 31. We Need an ISCA Help-file On | 63. ISCABBS Policy Discussions         |
| 32. Rock and Pop                 | 64. British and World TV               |

65. Non-RP games
66. Never Never Land
67. Jazz and Blues
68. Men's Studies
69. International Café
70. Education
71. Hardware
72. Cult, Cla, S si Cs
73. Cabine Francophonique
74. La Bodega
75. Downloading
76. West Side Players
77. Chemistry
78. Chess and Classic Games
79. Psychology and Sociology
80. Classical Music
81. Race Issues
82. Theatre and Dance
83. Nothing Painted Weird
84. World Wide Web
85. Thrifty and Consumer Issues
86. Business and Finance
87. Political Issues
88. Linguistics
89. Photography
90. Paraphenomena
91. Running Your Own BBS
92. Pharmacology
93. Handycraftspersons
94. Outdoor Life
95. Ciao Italiano
96. Over 30
97. Fitness and Nutrition
98. Camelot
99. Transvest, transsex, Transgender
100. Down Under
101. British Embassy
102. Eastern Thought
103. Musicians
104. Mexican and Latino Issues
105. American Indian issues
106. AIDS and HIV Information
107. Hair Cult and Body Art
108. Travel and Road-trips
109. Television
110. Wind, Bands, and Drum Corps
111. No Shame
112. Inside Politics
113. Antique Computers
114. College Life
115. Das Zimmer
116. Alternative Music
117. Mental Masturbation
118. Soaps
119. History
120. Homework Hotline
121. Media Issues
122. Puzzles R Us
123. Skandinavish Valhall
124. Trivia
125. Rap and Hip-hop
126. SCABBS Forum
127. Military
128. Atheism, Agnosticism, et al
129. Country Folk Bluegrass
130. Collectible and Hobbies
131. European Issues
132. Mythology
133. Law and Legal Issues
134. Political Theory and Ideology
135. Spoilers
136. Global Affairs
137. Asian Studies
138. Judaism
139. Hospital
140. River Valley Writers
141. Martial Arts
142. Disability Issues
143. Islam
144. Non Sequitur
145. Planes, Trains, Autos
146. Sex Education
147. Children and Family Issues
148. Stereo and Electronic Technology

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 149. Recreational Sports                       | 163. Teens Forum              |
| 150. Canada                                    | 164. Net Politics and Culture |
| 151. Exotic Tech                               | 165. Strategy Card Games      |
| 152. Theatrical and Extreme Sports             | 166. Advance Programming      |
| 153. Graphics and Design                       | 167. Affirmations             |
| 154. The Men's Room *                          | 168. Stonewall Café *         |
| 155. African American Issues *                 | 169. The Women's Room *       |
| 156. Kama Sutra *                              | 170. Queerspace *             |
| 157. The Mod Squad *                           |                               |
| 158. Sos of Survivors *                        |                               |
| 159. Punnyshment for the Humor Imp Aired       |                               |
| 160. Comic, Cartoons, Anime Type I Now         |                               |
| 161. FLIS, Fandom Icon, Gamicon, Gin, and Filk |                               |
| 162. Amazing Stories and Urban Legends         |                               |

## Appendix IV

### *Who List*

1. Symbols: \* (express messages disabled), % (systems operator)

*Rose Tattoo	*Bogus	Salaam	Cimmy
Andrew Wiggen	THRILLER	Keti	UNI TKE
Ferriss Beuler	Sports Brat	The Flash	Straight Edge
Wanna Have Fun	Black Insatia	O Two	Shoe
Jimjoe	%Cueholder	Slotter	GMatter
Storms	BDSM	Shreds	Phishie
Porcelain Doll	Capone	On Tap	Dennis Green
Dopppeganger	The Nord	NavySquid	Bubbles W
Petite Me	Taema	%Wendell Gee	MacGabhain
*Eccentrica	Kozzey	Darnell Autry	Ixbalanque
Caramel Beauty	Aquanuts	Duke Leto	Kevo
Satch Boogie	*Zhyme	Hot Damn	Pacino
Ralph Igor	Alisia	*Renthas	Lizard Queen
LUVY	Monkeyman	Rainwalker	XXX MAN
Firesign	Genny	Farkydoodles	Net God
*Guest	%Dj Jazzy Trevor	Agent Eighty Six	Omaha Slim
Fernando	Kabita	Master Psychic	Karl Marx
STRAIGHT NO CHASER	Chronos	Amani	Tennisgirl
Double Speed	Doctor Dave	Lil Enchantress	Princess Leia
*<New User>	Niki	Facegirl	MARMADUCK

DoctorVandy	Ennui	Ashleigh	Rand Thor
%Wang Master	FixedPigs	Allison	*Guest
Achtung Baby	Penile Dementia	Savior	M Coyote
Spoken	Silent Hue	Tygress	Mr Jingles
Jaguara	Leomhann	Spade	Funny Bone
Constant Reader	Lilith	Lancelot	*TomCat
French Fry	*<New User>	Triville	SNOOPY
Vladimir I	Sridar	Carp	Mezzo Forte
Albert	Raver Girl	Kunoichi	Horn E Dick
The One Thing	TK	Jack	Mux
TravisK	RiotGrrrl	Princess Of Music	Lovebug
DIZZYD	Mr Sinister	OneKoolChic	STEEL
E Double	Milquetoastes Girl	Lithos	Raffetto
Ellen	Mansoor	Benno	Akil
Freaknik	Dark Knight	MsVodka	Phone Sexpert
Jbalderas	High Flyer	Gizmit	Chewtoy
*Mistress Nyte	RaVeN	Nut Ka Bob	%Spaceduck
Aislin	La Boheme	*Himself	*Spaceball
Dachande	I Am	Shitface	Nobleman
Wikket	GoZer	Scalar	Pantera
Doubt	Robertt	Thunder	Iron Woman
Styrofoam	Montgomery	Memnoch	Architech
Visual	K Lock	Silly Sarah	*Guest
Eggs	M Duck	Graeme	*Doctor
Oskar	Sir Willard	Chango	*Tag Youre It
Oh Hell	*Darkchylde	Stormchaser	CRISY
Ol Dirty	Hideaway	Stud Of Soccer	Moo Cows
June Bug Cam	Ms Lincoln	Chocolate Brotha	Mr B
Beno	Sugar Tribe	N C Lady	Soldier Of Fortune
Butterbar	Deathstar	Cry Baby	Grendel Prime
Shiva The Great	Cole	Belgium	Forskin
Philth	*Emaeth	Just Like Butta	Evil Creation
Dia	Eyeris	Lansing Queerboy	Pepa
Sea Slave	Cire	Ashkempt	*PiXy
Medhist	Clear	California Cuban	Mex
Zippy	LeBon Girl	Soup Nazi	%Tori
Tinuviel	Miss Scarlett	*Future Of Disney	Summer Sky
Sir Mike	Trigear	MILO	Canby
Super HYDLIDE	Fun	Spooney	Ozob
*Berek Halfhand	Solar Man	Trevian	*Indago Moon
Haywood Jablowme	Texas Twister	%Starfish	Spiral Fix
Pfirsich	Lil Brown Suga	Jago	Fischer

Adrenaline Rush	Moon	*Mistress Jade	A Lad
HOPELESS DREAMER	ALS PROTOCOL	*The Economist	Spatch
Lethal Weapon	Buddafish	Blackout	Devil Kiss
*Cookie Crumb	Adam Sandler	ATTITUDE	Matador
Sherekhan	% Robert Smith	Leonor	Inutil
GAY	*Recoil	Ms BrownSugar	Bounce
Alokesh	WEREWOLF	Oyyo	*A Lass
Piglette	Mundy	Gantheman	Darling Dear
Darling Dear	Highlander	Butchdude	Phenomenal Sex
Classical Guitar	Romanian Princess	CCSMOOTH	*Chanteuse
Ultraviolet	Ribbon In The Sky	Kreig	Kro
Ziale	LA	K Sordo	*Alecto
Vaak	Msu	Katanya	Hammerman

## Appendix V

### *Networking and On-line Friends*

#### Case 1: Networking

- 1) Houston: Cleveland. Who here lives in Cleveland?
- 2) Frocheese: I've BEEN to Cleveland.
- 3) Cassilde: \*waves Houston\* People live in Cleveland?
- 4) Houston: \*taps fingers\* I'll be in Cleveland. Who else lives there? Me thinks the Ohio boys are all elsewhere...
- 5) Olorin: Not me.
- 6) KarebeaR: I live in Ohio... Does that count?
- 7) Cassilde: Houston! (well, they oughtn't live there! Why will you be there?)
- 8) Houston: Hmmm... Personal business causes me to take a quick 2 day trip to Cleveland.
- 9) Cassilde: Oh, I see. :-)

#### Case 2: Friend's List

- 1) Renthass: [inserts] "Your friends online: White Silk, Belwah Brat, Sanity, Radish The Great, Sweetness, RitaLace, Babs, Renthass, Wim Rumping, Alice From Hell, Andy Rancid, Shades of Grey, Houston, Woolfenden" And none are in Babble. Feh.
- 2) Oren Gamo: Renthass> When are you going to break down and put me on your friends' list?
- 3) Renthass: I dunno. Sometime I guess.

### Case 3: Friends On-line

- 1) Houston: [inserts] Miss Democrat: “\*laughs\* Oh, you crack me up with your stupid sense of humor! At least I will be something unlike you, asshole!” Hello? Are you talking to me here?
- 2) Renthass: Someone called Houston an asshole??? \*boggles\*
- 3) Minty: Houston is not an asshole. \*is pissed off by this Miss D character\*
- 4) Metellen: Who called Houston asshole? \*smacks them\*
- 5) TreeBark: Houston, asshole.
- 6) Steve Austin: Miss D> Oh, did you say something? I didn’t notice.
- 7) Renthass: Note: Don’t call my bro an asshole.
- 8) Miss Democrat: NO, I called Steve the asshole.
- 9) Renthass: Or I’ll sick Nightwing on you.
- 10) Steve Austin: Miss D> like I fucking care.
- 11) Magestorm: Ms D> keep the asshole calling outta here, unless you are just having fun. The serious name calling belongs in Rages, you \*\$&^%#\$
- 12) Miss Democrat: Steve Austin> I wish to call a truce... Kiss me if you want or make me cry that is all up to you... not that I would cry over a computer conversation I had to say something.
- 13) Minty: Steve, maybe, Houston, no.
- 14) Rorschach: I love you, Miss Democrat.
- 15) TreeBark: No, I love her.
- 16) Carcass: Actually, I love her every other Friday with only a two-ply garbage bag between us.
- 17) Rorschach: I am unbelievably Studly, and I love Miss Democrat.
- 18) The Ecstasy: Can I love her too?
- 19) Steve Austin: I don’t love Miss Democrat. I’ll tongue her anus, but I won’t enjoy it.
- 20) Carcass: Steve, how could you NOT enjoy a good asslicking?
- 21) Minty: Steve may not be bright but he’s got the right end of Miss D.
- 22) Steve Austin: Carcass> My heart won’t be in it.
- 23) Miss Democrat: Steve Austin> that is okay. I would not enjoy the anus licking from an ugly guy like you. Later people I am leaving... I cannot stand to be in the same room with the JERK.
- 24) Steve Austin: Ugly? Fuck you. I’ll have you know Alice From Hell called me “not totally gross.” So fuck you...
- 25) Magestorm: Looks like snob left. \*throws 666 hellstorm fireballs after Miss D\*



#### Case 4: Lacking Recognition

- 1) Chiquita: Vrising> Why won't you answer me??? \*sits on couch for the ignored\*
- 2) M Crawford: \*goes and joins Chiquita\* No one talks to me either...
- 3) Calilove: \*tells M Crawford and Chiquita to join Calilove in Kingdom Ignored couch\*
- 4) Chiquita: Hi CRAWFORD... us ignored people are the best people there are in the world... :-)
- 5) Jason Garnar: I'm never ignored. I demand constant attention. And I get it.
- 6) Calilove: \*leaves kingdom to pursue friends in different forum\* \*allows Chiquita and M Crawford and their friends into kingdom\*
- 7) M Crawford: \*sticks tongue out at the rest of Babble\* That's right Chiquita... who cares about them...
- 8) Chiquita: \*HUGS CRAWFORD\* :-) wanna come up to my throne with me?
- 9) Ironique: Just wondering... if that Vrising don't want to answer you then forget him. Girls rule. Guys are stupid. But if I was you, I wouldn't say, "why won't," you answer me??? I'd say, "what the hell do you mean by not answering me," or something to that effect. Not all despirato... then the "men" think they have power and that's all wrong.

#### Case 5: Phone Number Exchange

- 1) Steve Austin: my phone number is 666-6969
- 2) Newt: my phone number is (704) 266-8134. I'm really bored. Someone call me.
- 3) Sir Mike: \*calls Newt\*
- 4) Jason Garnar: 0181-567-7663
- 5) Dazed: I've got Vamp's phone number. I just thought I'd tell everybody that.
- 6) Steve Austin; \*has Vamp's phone #, too\*
- 7) Dazed: Steve Austin> We're the lucky ones.
- 8) Sir Mike: I should call AFH (Alice From Hell) one of these days just to freak her out.
- 9) M Crawford: my phone number at home starts 666
- 10) Flying Wolf: (319) 895-5622
- 11) Sir Mike: If I post my number, people would flood the business line.
- 12) Sir Mike: I'd call Radish, but she's not home.
- 13) Nightwing: I wouldn't. My line is busy right now so I can't call anyone.
- 14) Newt: \*carries on inane chatting and light conversation with Sir Mike over the phone\*

- 15) Sir Mike: I can talk to four people on the phone and ISCA all at the same time.
- 16) Sir Mike: I would call you, Newt, but I'm pretty boring on the phone I think.
- 17) Sir Mike: \*calls Babs\*

### Case 6: Support Network

- 1) CornflakeGirl: I hate my life! \*bawls\*
- 2) Desufnoc: What's wrong with Corn? :-)
- 3) TreeBark: \*comforts Corn\*
- 4) TreeBark: Hey, my life sucks too. :-)
- 5) CornflakeGirl: Me and my bf are in a HUGE fight.
- 6) Jason Garnar: My life doesn't suck.
- 7) Desufnoc: Corn> just kick his ass and get on with life.
- 8) CornflakeGirl: Des> Not that easy. We live together.
- 9) Linxx: CFG> Ah jeez, that sucks!
- 10) Desufnoc: Corn> Kill him then.
- 11) CornflakeGirl: Des> Believe me, I am tempted.
- 12) Desufnoc: Corn> Go for it, call it self defense, 'cause if you didn't kill him, you'd have to live a shit-filled life.
- 13) Taylor: CFG> Hey, are you okay?
- 14) CornflakeGirl: Tay> yeah I'll be fine.

## Appendix VI

### *Greetings and Goodbyes*

#### Case 1: Greetings

- 1) Frocheese: \*mosies on in\* Hey.
- 2) TreeBark: Fro!
- 3) Milt Le Bon: Frocheese. Heya Karebear!
- 4) Frocheese: TreeBark!
- 5) Frocheese: Cassi. Hey.
- 6) Cassilde: Heya Fro!
- 7) Alice From Hell: FRO!!!
- 8) Frocheese: Alice, darling. -=smooch=-
- 9) Alice From Hell: \*is smooched\* \*smooches back\* How are you doing?
- 10) Frocheese: Well, Alice, I'm fine aside from a slight headache. :-) How are you?
- 11) Alice From Hell: Fro> I'm HYPER. \*bounce\*bounce\*bounce\*

- 12) Frocheese: Uh-oh. Hyper Alice. Look out! \*ducks\* \*quack\*
- 13) Frocheese: Notfluff.
- 14) Notfluffy: Fro-girl.
- 15) Frocheese: Blue Skye. Hi.
- 16) Milt Le Bon: Heya all.
- 17) Frocheese: Milt. Hey.
- 18) Milt Le Bon: Houston!
- 19) Milt Le Bon: Stumbeline! SELKO!!! \*tacklehugs\*
- 20) Stumbeline: \*gets real sick\* Don't hug me. I lead. I mean, I leak... yeah...
- 21) Alice From Hell: Hey Milt. :-)
- 22) Selko: \*is tackled\* Hello to you too. :-)
- 23) Stumbeline: Sol! Hi! I'm sick!
- 24) Sol Cutter: \*waves\* Stumbeline.

### Case 2: Lack of Recognition

- 1) On Tap: well everyone gotta go work out. Talk to you all later tonight.  
\*hugs and kisses\*
- 2) On Tap: I SAID GOOD-BYE!!!

### Case 3: Goodbyes

- 1) Newt: later folkses.
- 2) Metellen: See ya Newt.
- 3) Jumping Jack Flash: See ya later!!!
- 4) Peppers: Bye Newt \*hugs\*

## **Appendix VII**

### *Improvisational Narrative*

#### Case 1: Group Narrative

- 1) Cyranon: \*laughs\* \*motates\* \*throws jelly beans at Radish\*
- 2) Radish The Great: \*eats jelly beans\* \*cleans out moat\*
- 3) Cyranon: \*fills moat with dead newbie roasted bones cleaned from bbq's\*  
Heh.
- 4) Radish The Great: \*cleans moat\*
- 5) Faustus Socnius: \*prepares defenses, just in case\*
- 6) Cyranon: \*ponders\* damn, now I have to roast someone again. Could just  
throw them in the moat. \*throws ICEMAN in the moat throne and all\*
- 7) Radish The Great: Stay out of my moat. \*cleans\*
- 8) ICEMAN: \*looks at Cyr\* Now now...

- 9) M Crawford: \*relieves self in Radish's moat\*
- 10) Radish The Great: \*grrr\*
- 11) M Crawford: \*is scared for life due to rabid Radish\*
- 12) Cyranon: \*throws One Man Gang in the moat\* \*lights the moat\* \*cleans the moat for Radish after OMG fries to a crisp\* Heh, see I was clean this time.
- 13) Faustus Socnius: So what exactly is in the moat?
- 14) ICEMAN: Water?
- 15) Faustus Socnius: I hope not. We need more protection than that...
- 16) Steeple: Steeple was a Babblor, but now he is no more, cuz what he thought was H<sub>2</sub>O, was H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>.
- 17) Radish The Great: \*throws self into moat\*
- 18) M Crawford: Well, I don't think it's water since OMG just got fried to a crisp...
- 19) Faustus Socnius: That'll work.
- 20) Disad: \*skinny dips in moat\*
- 21) Cyranon: Faustus> some diseased muck that is flammable. Least that's what I'd put in mine.
- 22) Faustus Socnius: \*pulls Radish out\* Dammit, you're one of the good action figures...
- 23) Radish The Great: \*glares\* Let me die.
- 24) Talis Allblood: Radish's moat is quite possibly a volatile mixture of either water and gasoline or of gasoline and battery acid...
- 25) Faustus Socnius: I'm partial to 100% Idaho toxic waste.
- 26) M Crawford: \*throws life raft to Radish\*
- 27) Disad: \*tosses Radish out onto dry land\* \*swims nekkid\*
- 28) Disad: \*drowns\*

## Case 2: Couple's Narrative [Flirting]

- 1) DrRansom: \*smiles as her hands dance over his body\* \*caresses her back as he dances slowly with her\* \*grins at being sooo close\* \*moves even closer\*
- 2) Yasaman: \*her hands slowly caresses his hair\* \*looks up at him and smiles seductively\* \*her body molds with his\* Hmmm... \*enjoys the closeness of his body\* \*presses her head to his chest and his masculine smells assault her senses\*
- 3) DrRansom: \*smiles as she puts her head on his chest\* \*his hands move up her back and cradles the back of her head\* \*other hand encircles her waist and gently caresses her back\* \*smiles and feels warm inside at having a beautiful woman dance with him\*
- 4) Yasaman: Hmmm... You smell wonderful... \*bites him in the chest\* Good enough to eat... \*smiles\*

- 5) DrRansom: \*grins and looks at her\* I taste best in a nice wine sauce.  
\*smiles\* \*kisses her\* And you taste wonderful. \*smiles\*
- 6) Yasaman: \*kisses him savoring his lips\* \*leans her head a little back\* You're taste is intoxicating...
- 7) DrRansom: \*smiles\* You might want to be careful how much you have then.  
\*kisses her with a slow lingering kiss, allowing his lips to move slowly off hers\*
- 8) Yasaman: Then let me get drunk... \*her lips part lightly tasting him\* \*her right hand in the back of his head pushes it closer\* \*her left hand encircles his waist and moves him closer to her\*
- 9) DrRansom: \*his hands encircle her waist and holds her close\* \*his lips walk a trail over her lips and lightly kisses her ear and her neck\*
- 10) Yasaman: \*closes her eyes and enjoys the rippling sensation that his lips are creating in her skin\*
- 11) DrRansom: \*continues to lightly kiss her neck and lets his lips glide over her beautiful soft skin\* \*moves slowly back up to her mouth and kisses her deeply and lets himself put his whole body into the kiss\*
- 12) Yasaman: \*kisses back passionately while her hands caress his back and shoulders\* Hmmm... I'm so drunk... \*bites his upper lip\* \*returns to kiss him\*
- 13) DrRansom: \*grins as she bites him\* \*smiles at her drunken state and realizes that he is also intoxicated by her taste and presence\* \*his hands move over her back as he kisses her over her face and slowly nibbles her ear and kisses her lips again\*
- 14) Yasaman: \*a wave of sensations shot through her body as he kisses her and nibbles her ear\* \*with eyes semi-closed, whispers\* You gave a soda to alleviate my thirst, now you have me thirstier than before...
- 15) DrRansom: \*smiles\* Well, what would you like for that thirst? \*slowly kisses her neck\*
- 16) Yasaman: You...
- 17) DrRansom: \*smiles\* And you may have me then. \*smiles and kisses her\*
- 18) Yasaman: \*enjoys his lips moving over hers\* \*slightly separates\* \*breathing hard and with bruised lips, whispers\* You've made me pay a high price for a soda, m'lord...
- 19) DrRansom: \*bows\* And your debt has been filled, m'lady. From here it shall be what you like and I shall be in your debt, in fact, I am already, for the wonderful dance.
- 20) Yasaman: \*smiles a little shaky still a little dazed from his kisses\* That makes us even then...
- 21) DrRansom: \*smiles\* Yes, I believe it does. \*decides that walking would be difficult in his state\*
- 22) Yasaman: \*swallows\* Uh... \*looks around\* Shall we sit, m'lord?

- 23) DrRansom: \*smiles\* Yes. \*leads her to a booth\*
- 24) Yasaman: \*sits and conjures a beautiful Indian fan\* \*still hot and starts fanning\* \*looks at him and smile remembering his kisses\* \*shakes her head\* You wouldn't happen to have another soda with you...
- 25) DrRansom: \*smiles and pulls another soda out of his satchel\* Here you go. Does that mean you owe me another? \*smiles\* This one is on the house.
- 26) Yasaman: \*looks into his mouth and remembers what his lips can do and thinks, "I won't mind owing you one as long as I get to pay the same way."\* \*shakes her head again trying to think clearly\* Oh thanks! \*looks into his eyes and smiles\* \*takes a good long sip\* \*a little drop of soda still remains in her lips\*
- 27) DrRansom: \*smiles and kisses the last drop off her lips\* Ok, they you will owe me one. \*grins\*
- 28) Yasaman: \*smiles mischievously\* Now, that's an interesting turn of events... \*winks\*
- 29) Yasaman: \*looks around and DrRansom is nowhere to be found\* \*shrugs\* Seems like he left... \*smiles mischievously\* Still he owes me one... \*ponders\* next time... \*stands by the windows and slowly fades\*
- 30) DrRansom: \*is back\* \*realizes she left\* \*bums\*

## Appendix VIII

### *On-line and Off-line Relationships*

#### Case 1: Public Display of Affection On-line

- 1) Black Magic: Everyone, I love Boogie Love!!!
- 2) Boogie Love: Hey BM, I Love You Too, Sweetheart. \*smooches\*

#### Case 2: On-line Relationship Conflict

- 1) Funkybuttloving: \*catches up\* Pacu> like I said Niki will be left alone from now on \*subject dropped\* So what's going on Pacu? :-)
- 2) Pacu Pati: FBL> I care to talk to you?
- 3) Funkybuttloving: Pacu> Well, then FUCK YOU THEN ASSHOLE AND I HOPE THAT YOU GET A SHARP OBJECT STUCK UP YOU ASS. DON'T FUCK WITH ME ASSHOLE. I CAN MAKE YOUR LIFE A LIVING HELL! Thank you, please drive through.
- 4) Amish: Is that a threat?
- 5) KarebeaR: \*huggles Funky\* Dearest, why waste your time with people like that?

- 6) Pacu Pati: Calm down Beavis.
- 7) Funkybuttloving: Nope FBL does not make threats that is against Babble policy and against FCC regulations... Thank you; come again.
- 8) Amish: Fuck off or something, asswiggler.
- 9) Pacu Pati: That's why valium should be mandatory for some people.

### Case 3: Off-line Relationships Discussed On-line

- 1) Arilyn: Now, I wonder if I have the heart to go up to work tomorrow and take the rest of my money out of the account. John might like HAVE to get a job then. Boohoo. \*thplt\*
- 2) Arilyn: I sure as hell won't have a problem taking back all the computer equipment I bought. Renthas will not have Net access if I take my modem back.
- 3) Arilyn: Plus, I DO believe it was I who bought the memory for this computer and the hard drive.

### Case 4: Discussion about Relationships

- 1) Samurai Cowboy: I flirt all the time... just a reaction that I have.
- 2) Tulleuchen: I used to say to myself I won't have anyone. Then once I decided I was going to have someone... I realized that people were actually smiling at me, flirting with me.
- 3) Julia: \*is a flirt sometimes\*
- 4) Samurai Cowboy: CONFIDENCE... I NEED NO STINKING CONFIDENCE!!!
- 5) Sir Mike: I never really go after. I have excellent "interest" radar. So if I think they're interested, I put myself in the right place at the right times.
- 6) Tulleuchen: [inserts] Sir Mike: "I never really..." Excellent. That's where I first broke outta the shell. I was looking at this girl who was friend of an acquaintancé. We were all playing cards. Then I realized, "shit I am looking at her." She is looking back. I realized, "I am flirting without knowing that I was. Then without words at the end of the night we are kissing and sleeping on this friend's floor overnight. How things take a course that you would never imagine.
- 7) Julia: Only once in a lifetime love rushes in changing you with the tide and dawn's ribbon of light bursts through the dark wakening you inside and I thought it was all untrue until there all at once I knew.
- 8) Wigmund: I think my chain smoking frightens women. Heh.
- 9) Marigolds: Course, the true solution is to give up, concentrate on school and career, become a geek in your field, get filthy rich, and then you don't need to flirt.

- 10) Tulleuchen: You don't want someone who met you because of your money.
- 11) Faustus Socnius: Oh yeah, and the simple utterance of "I'm thinking about law school" automatically raises your stock about 10 points. ;-)
- 12) Marigolds: Whereas, I'm thinking of going into research. Makes you turn invisible.
- 13) Spaceball: Maybe if a female talked to me it'd be different. I can't say "hi" at random people. I'm not that way. I can't just strike up a convo with a random female, either. Or a specific female for that matter.
- 14) Justin Case: Spaceball> Move to North Carolina. There everyone says "hi" to one another.
- 15) LANCELOT: Spaceball> so you're saying you can't start a conversation?
- 16) Tulleuchen: [inserts] Spaceball: "Maybe if a female talked..." Sure you can say, "hi." It takes no preparation. You may end up saying, "hiehieuyr," but some day it will get the jitters out of you if you practice.
- 17) Spaceball: Lance> yes. I can't even random X people.
- 18) Marigolds: Spaceball> Get raging drunk, then try it until it works. Then just get drunk and repeat. Then tipsy until it works. Until you can do it sober. :-)
- 19) LANCELOT: Spaceball> I've never random X'ed ppl.
- 20) Spaceball: I ain't getting myself drunk. No fucking way.
- 21) Marigolds: Ok. So get them drunk.
- 22) Faustus Socnuius: Concerning women: I find, Spaceball, that the less one thinks about it, the better one does.
- 23) Spaceball: \*ponders not thinking about it\* You're probably right, but it's tough to get out of the mind.
- 24) Tulleuchen: Spaceball> Bingo! Flirt with people through your page! Have it so that people approach you!
- 25) Spaceball: Oh, and did I say I don't get out much? I would get out if there was something to do in this hellhole.
- 26) Spaceball: The only people who have come on to me were over ISCA. And I know there's a 1 in 1,000,000 chance I'll ever get to meet them.
- 27) Tulleuchen: Spaceball> I raised money in order to go 1,900 miles, and now she is going to be living with me. If you really, really want something to happen, there's nothing that can stop you.
- 28) Spaceball: Laziness doesn't help.
- 29) Spaceball: Neither does procrastination.
- 30) Brian Pillman: Tully> I hope you're right.
- 31) Tulleuchen: Brian> About nothing stopping you? Well, I have to not think about certain stopping factors that are out of my control, other than that, I have no excuse for not trying.
- 32) Brian Pillman: Tully> I miss her.
- 33) Tulleuchen: I know Brian. I miss Blue as well.



- 34) Brian Pillman: Tully> Some day we gotta look back at this and laugh. ;-)
- 35) Tulleuchen: Brian>Indeed. We will have to hang out sometime.
- 36) Brian Pillman: dilybalaly 4 life! :-)
- 37) Tulleuchen: dilybalaly. You too Brian.
- 38) Cantinflas: \*has very few people come on to him\* Damn, I hope I am not that ugly.
- 39) Spaceball: No one... I mean NO ONE has come on to me IRL (in real life).
- 40) Alice From Hell: Again. [inserts] Spaceball: "No one... I mean..." Come to spring Nic (ISCA picnic).
- 41) Spaceball: AFH> can't. No transportation.
- 42) Tulleuchen: I am unapproachable in real life. I am in a cloud. Then one time I realized I was doing this. It was no one else. I did this to me, I made myself unapproachable.
- 43) Schneggle: \*comes on to Spaceball\* What the fuck?
- 44) Alice From Hell: Space> bus, train, plane. Hitchhike

#### Case 5: Flirting

- 1) NightAngel: Cantinflas is the cutest Hispanic man I have ever seen...
- 2) Cantinflas: NightAngel> Hee hee \*blushes\* You aren't so bad looking yourself. \*hugs\*
- 3) NightAngel: \*blushes\* Thanks, Can...
- 4) Cantinflas: NightAngel> Only you. Only you that know the way that I feel, the way that I laugh, and even the way that I cry.
- 5) NightAngel: \*smiles at Can\*

#### Case 6: Ex-relationships

- 1) Weirdo: Meaty> I am very much like you. I long for my ex to be there to hold me and comfort me and please me. It's over now and it's really hard to deal with. I work at the same place she does too but never at the same time so I don't have to deal with that. I'm trying to stay friends though and it's hard.
- 2) Meaty: Weirdo> Yeah... We work in the same office, and since she's been there longer, I have to ask her questions and shit... oh well... my problem is that now I'm startin' to have delusions it might still work out... fuck.
- 3) Linxx: \*shakes head\* Meaty> Yeah, but what about us who haven't experienced heartbreak? Every day I see people together and every day it bugs me a little bit more...
- 4) Weirdo: Meaty> She got me the job and even though I don't have to personally ask her ?'s, I have to write letters to her and other workers. It's

just too early for me to be able to tell how we'll work out because we only broke up Thursday.

- 5) Meaty: Linxx> Well... It's inevitable that it will happen to you, all I'm saying is that you've got to know that it's inevitable... that's the part that sux, you will fall in love over and over again, and get your heart broken over and over... you can't change it ... humans are too weak not to pursue pleasure, even if their common sense dictates otherwise.
- 6) Meaty: Weirdo> that sux... I've been working with her for 7 months. We broke up 2 months ago...

#### Case 7: Temporary Relationships On-line

- 1) NUWildcat: Carlita, did you once know a guy by the handle, Shades of Grey?
- 2) Carlita: \*faints\* yes, I did.
- 3) NUWildcat: Carlita, that would be me.
- 4) Carlita: Adam!!! What the HELL happened? You didn't even leave a forwarding address!!!
- 5) Carlita: And to think I profiled your old name today just to see what would happen.
- 6) Babs: No way. Shades of Grey?
- 7) NUWildcat: I had to leave school. Couldn't afford to finish yet. I'm logged in at work right now. Yes, I was at the nic.
- 8) NUWildcat: Yup. Shades of Grey. Once I figure out how to get set up from home. I'll try to get back on more often.
- 9) Carlita: NUW> Where do you work now? When you get validated, MAIL ME. I'm buying a scanner next week, so if you want a pic on my soon-to-be web page, send me one.
- 10) Carlita: Write me a letter!!! Ok, I better calm down now.
- 11) NUWildcat: I'm in Omaha right now. I work at West Interactive.
- 12) Carlita: I live all the way in PA now. :-( Might even buy a house out here in the next year or tow, though I want to return to IL.

### **Appendix IX**

#### *Humorous or Absurd Questions and Comments*

#### Case 1: Chicken

- 1) Big Wave: People taste like chicken.
- 2) Big Wave: Is there such a thing of incest cannibalism?
- 3) Boogie Love: Hee-hee, people don't taste like chicken... chickens taste like

chicken silly...

- 4) Spaceball: incest cannibalism? Eating your sister out? What?
- 5) Andy Rancid: Most people taste like tuna.
- 6) Spaceball: Tuna kicks ass.

### Case 2: Chocolate Nads

- 1) Nessus: Way to check if a girl likes you: dip your nads in chocolate and see if she licks them clean. :-)
- 2) Cobalt: \*dips nads in choco\* \*gets slapped by girlfriend\*
- 3) Sir Mike: Nessus is a nad-dipping crazy funky white boy.
- 4) Nessus: If my girlfriend ever slapped me 'cause I dipped my nads in chocolate, I'd dump her ass.
- 5) Cookie Crumb: [inserts] "If my girlfriend ever slapped me 'cause I dipped my nads in chocolate, I'd dump her ass." Why would she? tee hee
- 6) Nessus: \*is not really white\*
- 7) Bud II: Nessus> Did you ever dump your gf's nads in chocolate?
- 8) Nessus: CC (Cookie Crumb) would be turned on by the chocolate thing... that's good. :-)
- 9) Cookie Crumb: \*looks around\* Damn you people know me too well. Is it hot in here or is it me?

## Appendix X

### *Race, Gender, and Ethnicity*

#### Case 1: I Am...

- 1) Muslim Child: CHINESE FEMALE??? Where at?
- 2) TanyaD: I'm a part Chinese female. Does that count?
- 3) The Gifted One: \*looks at Muslim Child\* I was talking about you. :-)
- 4) Puffin: What do you mean you're part time Chinese female??? \*laffs\*
- 5) TanyaD: Well, I'm a quarter Chinese and I'm a female. What more do I need? ;-)
- 6) Muslim Child: The Gifted One> I thought there are other my fellows. :-)  
TanyaD :-)
- 7) The Gifted One: \*likes Chinese females... Has more interest in Muslim C and TanyaD\*
- 8) TanyaD: TGO> Glad to hear it. I'm many different races though. Filipino, Hawaiian, German, Dutch, Chinese, and Welsh.
- 9) The Gifted One: TanyaD> wow... You're awesome. :-)

- 10) Muslim Child: Puffin> It's a small world. :-)
- 11) TanyaD: TGO> Not awesome. Just multi-racial. What are you?
- 12) The Gifted One: TanyaD> Hispanic.
- 13) Puffin: MC> right... and I'm from Asia, too.
- 14) TanyaD: TGO> Do you speak Spanish?
- 15) The Gifted One: TanyaD> Only when I have to... Ex: when my grandparents come to visit.
- 16) TanyaD: TGO> I know what you mean. I'm only half Filipino, but I only know how to say, "hello, how are you," and how to count to ten.
- 17) The Gifted One: TanyaD> Oh well, better than nothing though.

## Appendix XI

### *Common Interests*

#### Case 1: Music

- 1) TanyaD: Hello Sergeant D. Do you listen to Throwing Muses?
- 2) Sergeant D: TanyD> I used to. Sold off a lot of my CD's when I was jobless, so I don't have 'em anymore. Kristen and Tanya rock though.
- 3) TanyaD: SD> I love Tanya! Can you guess from my name? She's solo touring now, but I haven't gotten to see her yet.
- 4) Sergeant D: TanyaD> I didn't know Belly broke up til I read your profile. Damn shame. I hope Tanya's stuff remains up to par. I wasn't too thrilled with Kristen Hersche's solo stuff, except the duo thing she did with Stipe.
- 5) TanyaD: SD> Yup, that was called "My Ghost" or "Your Ghost" right? Tanya has a new EP out called "Sliding and Diving." It's supposedly in stores already, but I haven't found it yet.
- 6) Pretzel: Hi Sergeant D... you're profile's kinda scary... :-)
- 7) Sergeant D: Pretzel> Just song lyrics.

#### Case 2: Weather

- 1) Brown Ranger: Is it snowing anywhere else... 'cause out my window I'm seeing little white flakes.
- 2) Vamp: nope, no snow here
- 3) Lxndr: no snow here
- 4) Genvieve: no snow. no snow.
- 5) Dan Da Man: No snow in Pittsburgh \*yet\* \*cries at thought of snow\*

### Case 3: Computers

- 1) Wim Rumping: Wim bled from his wallet today. Got a new modem 33k3 or 33k6, I dunno. All I know is that it works and that I don't need that stupid Internet provider again to be awake whenever my link goes down. Finally got a modem with decent leased line support.
- 2) Wim Rumping: Count> I just got a new modem. I'm broke now. Couldn't afford the modem as it was. At least, I shouldn't have. ;-)
- 3) Spaceball: I need a 14.4.
- 4) Count Chocula: Well, it happens. Sometimes you just gotta splurge.
- 5) Wim Rumping: I have a 14.4 left... I asked my provider to write a script so that I could use the 14k4 to dial in and reset the portmaster with to get my leased line modems back online if they are really dead... ;-)
- 6) Dan Da Man: I have a 14.4 USrobotics telepath II fax/modem I'll sell to you for 30 bucks. They're 40 in stores (for a USrobotics)
- 7) Spaceball: Dan> internal or external?
- 8) Dan Da Man: Space> internal.

### Case 4: Sex

- 1) Babs: I couldn't believe my parents told me they had anal sex. And my mom didn't like it, and they've never done it again. Mom's um... \*laughs\*
- 2) St Louis: Anal sex? Holy shit.
- 3) Babs: St Louis> Now THAT... I don't want. I'm sorry but no.
- 4) Blue Savannah: Yuck.
- 5) Tomera: \*gasps\* What would make them think you wanted to hear that? ;-)
- 6) St Louis: I really don't want to know what my parents do in their bedroom
- 7) Spaceball: \*would never go anal\* I don't want shit on my dick. \*shakes head\*
- 8) Tallboy: What's this about anal??? Hmmm, maybe I should head back to X-land.
- 9) Babs: Tomera> My parents are just... \*laughs\* open. My mother said to my friends one night over dinner, "It's true, girls. Sex is better after 40." Then she and my best friend proceeded to compare how many different positions each of them had done it. \*laughs\*
- 10) Mikie: St Louis> That's what I'm screaming... I would die if I knew that info.
- 11) Newt: I have such a butt fetish that I would consider anal sex.
- 12) FREEFALL: Anal sex? To my knowledge, an asshole is EXIT ONLY!
- 13) St Louis: Babs> with your friends?! That is deranged.
- 14) St Louis: \*looks at Newt\* Wow, I'm surprised.
- 15) Vamp: \*quirks eyebrows\* Anal sex.

- 16) Tomera: I only walked in on my parents once... that I can remember. I was 5. I'll never forget it.
- 17) Babs: St Louis> What's deranged is that... if I was still living at home or just in college by then... that would have made my friends 16 and 17. :-)
- 18) Babs: I walked in on my parents at lunchtime. :-)
- 19) St Louis: I hate it when my parents talk about nasal sex.
- 20) Babs: Not today, mind you. :-)
- 21) Mikie: High 5's FREEFALL.
- 22) Spaceball: My parents wouldn't talk about it. All I know about them is sometimes I hear my mom moaning at night like 1:00 AM... Our rooms are right next to each other.
- 23) Weirdo: I'd do anything that would please the woman. But anal sex is just too much. That's something I would not do.
- 24) Newt: Why are you surprised?
- 25) Tallboy: Parents and nasal sex... I wonder if the nose hairs would tickle or not.
- 26) Spaceball: Nasal!?!?
- 27) Appraiser: Nasal sex... \*laughs\*
- 28) Babs: You know what really surprised me? \*shudders just thinking about this\* The night that Derek and I slept over at Ginny's place. It was WELL known that his sister had sex and often, but I SAT on her vibrator. Talk about a shock.
- 29) Strigoi: I have a friend who says she loves anal sex.
- 30) Grantaire: How can anal sex be pleasing? I would think that it would hurt like hell (for the female)
- 31) Ace O Spades: \*looks around\* \*ponders if this can get any more out of hand\*
- 32) Dreamkeeper: \*laughs\*
- 33) Babs: \*laughs\* Dad calls her "Momma." She calls him "Daddy." The curse of thin walls. :-)
- 34) FREEFALL: \*is high 5d" It just doesn't make sense... Assholes are one way streets... DO NOT ENTER, NO PARKING, etc.
- 35) St Louis: Newt> I don't know. \*shrugs\*
- 36) Vamp: this is pretty tame if you ask me
- 37) Mikie: \*ponders anal sex\* I do not see how ANYONE can enjoy that... but... to each their won I guess
- 38) Babs: \*laughs\* This is silly.
- 39) St Louis: \*laughs\* wondering if anyone would pick up on nasal sex
- 40) Babs: \*likes the idea of nasal sex\* couldn't say you weren't in the mood when you had a cold. \*grosses\* NEVERMIND. I'm thinking too much. \*laughs\*
- 41) Spaceball: how the fuck can you fit a cock in a nostril??? Gotta be one thin ass dick!

- 42) Babs: \*thinks more\* \*grosses herself out\* \*laughs and flaps her arms in the air\*
- 43) St Louis: \*laughs\*
- 44) Babs: St Louis> \*giggles madly\* lubrication.
- 45) Grantaire: One helluva nose to be able to have nasal sex.
- 46) Babs: \*sticks her tongue out\* Eww... my mind is sick.
- 47) St Louis: Babs is grossing me out.
- 48) Sexual Deviant: Anal sex is one of the most beautiful thins that money can buy.
- 49) Babs: I'm sorry guys. Seriously. I don't know how that got into my head. \*laughs\*
- 50) Andy Rancid: \*is in X-es\* Nasal sex??? What about Aural Sex???
- 51) Ace O Spade: \*tries to think up something that could make this just a little worse\*
- 52) St Louis: I'm glad I know the sexual history of the Martin family \*grins\*
- 53) Spaceball: Aural sex??? \*ponders how it is possible\*
- 54) Appraiser: Babs!!! I'm shocked!!! :-)
- 55) Weirdo: Now Babs is turning me on.
- 56) Babs: \*giggles\* Mom and dad are happy. So what do I care. Now LISH... would never discuss this. She's very hush hush about things like that.
- 57) Babs: SICK! :-)
- 58) Tallboy: I'd volunteer someone I know on here to fit up a nostril \*glances at mom, she knows who\*
- 59) Babs: Appraiser> \*laughs\* I'm sorry... \*is sheepish, and laughing\*
- 60) Weirdo: SD> ???
- 61) Sexual Deviant: Weirdo???
- 62) Ace O Spades: \*ponders\* Aural sex? Why?
- 63) Q Who: \*transponders\* What the?
- 64) Crass: \*ponders possibility of optical sex\*
- 65) St Louis: \*laughs\* sillies
- 66) Verny: \*enters\* \*laughs at sex talk\* \*wants to join in but not sure how\*
- 67) Spaceball: optical sex... fitting your dick between her eyes and glasses?
- 68) Tallboy: ok, how 'bout fucking your belly button?
- 69) Babs: \*laughs\* I was conceived in a frickin' motel room... some cheap place without a t.v. :-)
- 70) Andy Rancid: Nasal Sex???
- 71) Crass: glasses would be considered contraception in that case, Spaceball.
- 72) Weirdo: Well Verny, start by talking about masturbation. Then move into the intercourse part. Then talk about oral. Then anal. Then nasal. Then come up with your own contribution.
- 73) Andy Rancid: FYI (for your information) Everyone. EYES ARE NOT A BODY CAVITY!!! They're kinda filled.

### Case 5: Drugs

- 1) St Louis: I don't do drugs. I snort coke, but only for my chemical imbalance. Speaking of, I'm missing a brick. I know it's around here somewhere.
- 2) Babs: \*laughs at St Louis\*
- 3) Release: \*has St L's brick\*
- 4) Alchemist: Coke? Coke is it. Have a Coke and a smile. Can't beat the real thing.
- 5) Babs: Coke is shit. Wait.
- 6) Carcass: She's a brick. House.
- 7) St Louis: \*lives in the coke capital of the world\* not Columbia, Atlanta
- 8) Babs: Alchemist> \*grins\*
- 9) St Louis: \*makes coke brownies\* looks like powdered sugar, but it's not \*giggles\* who wants some
- 10) Essen: \*lurves coke\* The soft drink...
- 11) Babs: Yummy. I want some smack. Gimme.
- 12) Fry God: I want some!

### Case 6: Current Events

- 1) St Louis: Don't forget to vote tomorrow.
- 2) Babs: Vote tomorrow? Who's that? Vote Clinton, vote Perot, vote Dole, vote TOMORROW!
- 3) Martian Attack: have already voted...
- 4) Carcass: And while you're there, vote for Perot. Any other choice is throwing your vote away.
- 5) Freshman: \*raises hand\* I am voting.
- 6) Amish: [inserts] Carcass: "And while you're there, vote for Perot. Any other choice is throwing your vote away." Uh, wrong.
- 7) Babs: If you don't vote Perot, you're throwing your ears away.
- 8) St Louis: I don't give a shit when you voted. You're voting tomorrow despite how many times you voted before.
- 9) St Louis: \*laughs\* your ears
- 10) Metellen: voting for dad for twp supervisor of Kochville twp; and "Frank" for something and "no" on D and "yes" on G.
- 11) Alchemist: The media is full of shit. Vote as an informed person, but know that first of all.
- 12) Carcass: Metellen> Hey! It's a SECRET BALLOT! You realize you're breaking a federal law by telling us?
- 13) Babe B Girl: Vote for proposal G. Michigan people. Vote yes on proposal E so we can have casinos!!!
- 14) Carcass: Spoken like a true landless Amer-Indian.



- 15) Essen: Who here doesn't know yet who's gonna win the elections tomorrow?
- 16) Metellen: Yeppers, I do but those thins are uniquely Michigan so it's not the federal part. It's local.
- 17) Wizzbyu: YES ON PROPOSAL E MICHIGAN
- 18) Babs: Man, you don't want that. Casinos? Blecky poo. It's bad enough we have the lottery now.
- 19) Metellen: the casino thing has a hidden tax increase people don't do it.
- 20) St Louis: I like the lottery. We use it to send B average students to public universities for free and they're gonna use it for free pre-school education too.
- 21) Babs: Man, you should see. There's this HUGE banner up on this one guy's house here. "Forget voting for Clinton tomorrow. VOTE RALPH NADER!" Um...
- 22) Wizzbyu: If Dole wins all students are fucked... Bend over and tattoo two B's on you ass as BOB gets a piece.
- 23) Carcass: If Nader wins, I'LL push the fucking button.
- 24) Essen: \*laffs at Wizz's post\*

#### Case 7: School

- 1) Speed Junior: DECISION 96!!! Should I change my major... VOTE: Psychology, Broadcasting (unlikely except as minor), Computer Sci.  
Standings: Psych- 5 Broadcasting- 3 Comp- 2
- 2) Spaceball: Broadcasting w/ comp sci minor. \*nods\*
- 3) Sari Sumilite: \*votes\* psychology!!!
- 4) Renthass: [inserts] Speed Junior: "DECISION 96..." Why don't you change it to sex ed?
- 5) Spaceball: er... comp sci w/ broadcasting minor.
- 6) Renthass: Actually I was thinking comp sci with broadcasting minor.
- 7) Justin Case: broadcasting sucks

#### Case 8: Food

- 1) Speed Junior: ROASTED peanuts kick ass.
- 2) Ball Of Fuzz: SJ> Nope! There will be no roasting of the peanut gallery... and the cashew. They're nice peanuts. \*nodnod\*
- 3) Speed Junior: BOF> cashews are cool too... peanuts are sweeter.
- 4) Ball Of Fuzz: SJ> I'm the head peanut. \*grin\*
- 5) Speed Junior: BOF> but I LOVE honey roasted peanuts.
- 6) Ball Of Fuzz: SJ> I like my peanuts... They're the greatest batch of peanuts ever.
- 7) Speed Junior: BOF> If you say so

### Case 9: T.V. Shows and Movies

- 1) Q Who: Oh no. ST:DS9 (Deep Space 9) just did a Tribble episode using video intercutting and it reminding Aradia of "Forrest Gump."  
\*transponder\* We hate "Gump Trek."
- 2) Michael Bremen: Q Who> I thought Terry Farrell looked totally edible in the Uhura outfit...
- 3) Hunter Rose: Dax is doable.
- 4) Q Who: Michael Bremen> We thought Jadzia a delicious sight and made note of all the DS9 crew managed at some point to oggle. ;-{}}
- 5) Michael Bremen: Even Voyager was almost watchable...
- 6) Q Who: ST:V's (Star Trek V) 2-parter is just a rehash of STIV except he moved all the cultural reference from SF to LA.
- 7) Michael Bremen: But at least they're ripping off stuff that worked...
- 8) Q Who: self-referential material is the first sign of failing imagination.
- 9) Michael Bremen: \*sigh\* I'm more concerned about how a story is told, rather than how "original" the plot is. If it entertains, suspends my beliefs, and doesn't insults my intelligence, I'm usually quite okay with it.
- 10) Q Who: We agree a story should entertain first and inform if possible, but the original "Trouble with Tribbles" was a lame piece of writing to begin with. Hardly worth the sequels it has spawned.
- 11) Grantaire: Q> When is that DS9 episode going to be on?
- 12) Hunter Rose: It's been on. It's done and over with. And it sucked major donkey cock.
- 13) Moineau: exactly correct in all conclusions drawn through interpretation of the presented material. \*rambles\*
- 14) Q Who: Grantaire> First run of DS9 is at 8 PM Fri in Green Bay. We have no idea about other places except IC. Read info for Star Trek forum.
- 15) Michael Bremen: \*shrug\* Not much quality survived after Roddenberry Sausage Company got done with a script, if Harlan Ellison is to be believed. (Roddenberry, the creator of Star Trek)
- 16) Q Who: He has a legitimate beef regarding "City on the Edge of Forever." He has nothing useful to say about Trek beyond that.
- 17) Grantaire: Q> Thanks. I just didn't want to wade through all those posts in ST.
- 18) Michael Bremen: \*shrug\* Interesting glimpse inside the machine, though... How are you on Babylon 5?
- 19) Q Who: B5 has its moments. The true indicator is that we do not record it.
- 20) Michael Bremen: Q Who> You're a crueller man than I, Q Who... but I guess that's part of your charm... ;-)
- 21) Q Who: J.M. Stracynski accused Paramount and Berman et al of stealing his idea and turning it into DS9. Well. In the TV biz whoever gets on the air first is

the owner.

#### Case 10: Self

- 1) St Louis: \*has grabbed guys' butts\* It's more fun when its a friend. I knew this one guy whose locker was next to mine and I'd grab his butt every time I saw him. He liked it.
- 2) Marlowe: Just never grab my butt, please. It's happened to me before... last year when I came out as a bisexual at work. One of my co-workers (a heterosexual) always grabbed my butt when he walked by me. Just to tease me...
- 3) Marlowe: I guess that's the only time my bum has ever been touched. but it wasn't consensual. And I just about smacked the guy.
- 4) Ointment Fly: Marlowe> that's low and fucking stupid. No butt grabbing is a fine rule for me too.
- 5) St Louis: I don't like guys grabbing my butt unless it's a real good friend where it's just kinda like playin' around.
- 6) Ointment Fly: Marlowe> do smack him next time. your body not his.
- 7) Marlowe: Ointment> I agree. Apparently, one of the managers had started talking about my orientation behind my back, and he has a really twisted view of what us queers are supposed to be like. Like somehow, we're supposed to enjoy being touched sexually by people we hardly know??? Get real.
- 8) Ointment Fly: Marlowe> yes, everyone knows that lesbigays all wanna have it all the time from everyone every way, particularly from hets. \*laughs\*
- 9) Marlowe: I heard all this from a friend of mine, another co-worker. Apparently, she walked into a conversation between a couple of managers and other employees, who were all talking about my personal life as if they actually knew something about it. Like they were discussing which of my co-workers I had a crush on and the like. This one told my friend, "What's wrong Valerie, the manager, told me how he is..." I just about lost it when I heard about that.

## Appendix XII

### *Social Status*

#### Case 1: Animosity

- 1) Andilee: newbie = new to ISCA, everyone at sometime is a newbie and I give up, you guide hater you.
- 2) Lxndr: I'm a guide. I don't hate them. :-)

- 3) Brown Ranger: I don't hate guides. I just hate FM's (forum moderators). They're assholes around here.
- 4) Andilee: I've only had one run in with a FM... oh... wait... make that 2
- 5) Wim Rumping: Andi> Good! Maybe one day, you'll find out that the evil starts with Doctor Dave... then the sysops, then the FM's, then the guides... and finally the users.
- 6) Justin Case: Andilee = newbie = new user to ISCA. newbie = moronic clueless loser
- 7) Andilee: Justin> bite me!!!
- 8) Justin Case: Andi> bend over.
- 9) Renthass: The first thing I see when I get on is guide hating in babble. Sheesh. We work and slave for a bunch of idiots and get abused for it. No wonder I don't help anymore.
- 10) Lxndr: I'm a guide. I help everyone.
- 11) Renthass: I'm a guide too. I just don't use the freakin' flag anymore.
- 12) Wim Rumping: Renthass> I started it... Brown Ranger isn't allowed to ask the sysops about giving me my guide flag back. The time and asshole other guides who think they're funny \*nod nod\*
- 13) Lxdr: Was your flag taken away?
- 14) Renthass: Mine? No... I can put it on, but I chose not to.

### Case 2: Status

- 1) Ripclaw: Who cares about guide flags. They are stupid anyway.
- 2) Brown Ranger: Ripclaw> ARE YOU A NEWBIE OR SOMETHING??? Flags are prestigious.
- 3) Ripclaw: [inserts] Brown Ranger: "ARE YOU A NEWBIE OR SOMETHING??? Flags are prestigious." Oh yeah. A cyber status.
- 4) Lxndr: Flags are not prestigious nor are user numbers despite vociferous counterclaims.
- 5) Brown Ranger: Hey Ripclaw... If you don't want one, that's your choice.

### Case 3: Perception of Newbies

- 1) Q Who: Why do all the newbies have no original thoughts?
- 2) Hunter Rose: I have original thought.
- 3) Hunter Rose: Mainly, because I wasn't raised on MTV and tv dinners.
- 4) Moineau: \*steals all oldbies' original thoughts and sales them dirt cheap to the newbies entering Babble\*
- 5) Grantaire: \*posts in an original way\*

## Appendix XIII

### *Collective Memory*

#### Case 1: Personal Knowledge

- 1) Lxndr: STB is Genvieve's sister. Genvieve = Beavis
- 2) Sister To Beavis: Genvieve is Beavis?
- 3) Genvieve: \*grins\* \*hugs Lxndr\* gee... I wonder where you came up with that.
- 4) Sister To Beavis: tee hee
- 5) Brown Ranger: Hey SISTER TO MIKE!!! HOW ARE YOU?
- 6) Sister To Beavis: ok... I am leaving... this stupid sister to Mike shit is annoying bye
- 7) Brown Ranger: I'm sorry.... I was just kidding... please stay!
- 8) Wim Rumping: \*waves Sister\* I think you might need to consider changing your online name if it bothers you that much.

#### Case 2: Gossiping

- 1) Renthias: [inserts] Alice From Hell> "did you hear?" [inserts] Recipient (DARK PHONIEX) from Alice From Hell> "Howdy miss banned from babble. And hear what?" heh.
- 2) Wim Rumping: It's so sad that Alice is banned from Babble... \*pouts\* I miss her groping.
- 3) Brown Ranger: How'd Alice get banned from Babble?
- 4) DARK PHONEDX: Why was Alice banned?
- 5) Wim Rumping: Brown> Alice got kicked out, and she got to keep her guide flag. Life isn't fair!
- 6) Brown Ranger: But what was Alice doing wrong?
- 7) Dan Da Man: How the hell does somebody get banned from Babble?
- 8) Renthias: Alice didn't get twitted. :-P
- 9) Wim Rumping: Renthias> If she got twitted, she would've been back already. I only got twitted for 1 day and lost my flag for 90.
- 10) Sweetness: Why did Alice get kicked out of Babble?
- 11) Wim Rumping: I've read why Alice was kicked out... But I forgot. I think it was flaming...

#### Case 3: Deception

- 1) Jason Garnar: You Americans have a problem.
- 2) Hoof: JG> Which is?

- 3) Jason Garnar: Us British people are more cultured than you bloody Americans.
- 4) Hoof: JG> \*laughs\* Right.
- 5) Sir Mike: Garnar is as British as Nessus is White.
- 6) Sexual Deviant: Bloody football hooligans. You're not singin', you're not singin', you're not singin' anymore. You're just pissed because we beat you in a war. One nil, one nil, one nil.
- 7) Jason Garnar: Hoof> It's true, mate.
- 8) PromQueen: Well, my little Brit, if you hate us so much, why have you accessed this mode of communication?
- 9) Jason Garnar: Americans suck.
- 10) Hoof: JG> And what exactly is your culture?
- 11) Pacu Pati: Jason Garnar> Fuck culture. We have guns. Big fucking guns.
- 12) Jason Garnar: PromQueen> You're just like all the American birds. You buy 'em a few beers and they're yours for the night.
- 13) PromQueen: Someone is in the damn wrong place to be talking about how Americans suck. At least we don't celebrate the day you killed Guy Fawkes... Nyah!
- 14) PromQueen: \*growls at Pacu\* That is a great way to prove Garnar right, put those things away.
- 15) Hoofs: JG> Just like British ones.
- 16) The Great Godzilla: Any culture that gives us Boy George, and a host of other talentless '80's sicko pop/rock acts has to have something wrong with it on a very basic level.
- 17) Jason Garnar: I'll take John Major over Bill Clinton any day.
- 18) Hoof: JG> And I'll take Roosevelt over Chamberlain.
- 19) Andy Rancid: British have no culture. They just have what they ripped off of whatever countries they occupied like France, India, IndoChina.
- 20) Jason Garnar: Right. I guess The Beatles, The Who, and The Rolling Stones didn't influence anybody.
- 21) PromQueen: I BBBEEEGGG to differ. Do you know me? Have you ever met me? Do you get a kick off of putting people down you barely know just so you can feel special? Do you get a kick off putting other people down? Well, fuck me, you're the most cultured person I've seen all day (sniff, sniff... hope you can smell sarcasm Brit)
- 22) Hoof: JG> and who influenced them? American blues artists.
- 23) TreeBark: and the American blues didn't influence them either.
- 24) Jason Garnar: And who influenced them? Everyone else.
- 25) Sexual Deviant: TreeBark has her argument shit totally together. Haha!
- 26) Pacu Pati: Fuck culture. Big fucking guns.
- 27) Jason Garnar: Talk to me when your dollar is stronger than our pound.
- 28) Jason Garnar: bloody hell.

- 29) Sexual Deviant: JG> Only a weasel tries to argue about who started what in music. Why don't we all just shut up about music, as it is a circular argument. Let's make fun of the queen instead.
- 30) Waif: \*is annoyed at the clueless\* \*pokes head up from float\* Garnar is from NY, hence the irony
- 31) Pacu Pati: \*points\* Garnar is sitting somewhere jerking off 'cause he pissed off everybody. Wake up you morons.
- 32) PromQueen: Garnar, are you forgetting something very important? Rock and roll started in America, sweetie. If you read the history, with out saying something you have no idea about, then maybe people would believe some of the things you say.
- 33) Waif: Pacu> You're quite sure about the jerking off, though?
- 34) Jason Garnar: What's wrong with the queen? She's better than bloody Hillary Clinton.
- 35) Jason Garnar: Well, maybe I'll come up then. Met a hot blonde from around there.
- 36) Rangos: Bloody? Can use words like that here...
- 37) Jason Garnar: I can and I will mate.
- 38) Sexual Deviant: I wouldn't know. I haven't had the queen or Hillary Clinton. She's just fun to make fun of. And you're the ond from the country that produced a political asswipe like A.L. Webber.
- 39) Rangos: but first you need a date! Hehehe... I made it rhyme.
- 40) Jason Garnar: And you fuckers have Newt Gingrich... Point?
- 41) Hoof: News flash: Berlin is the new capital of England.
- 42) PromQueen: Silly Garnar. You know, I'm starting to have doubts about if you really are an Englishmaan. Or if Waif is right (and she usually is). I know a lot of Brits and they have more class in their toenail then you have in your entire body. Who pissed in your Cornflakes?
- 43) Sexual Deviant: Hold on a minute... You say you hate Americans, but now you want to go fuck one who's blonde? I see, that's the British attitude. Everybody sucks, but you can fuck them all the same. I see that's why India was so pleased with your types.
- 44) Jason Garnar: PromQueen> I'm just fucking with you. I'm American. And you're gullible.
- 45) Jason Garnar: \*clap clap\*
- 46) Pacu Pati: \*points to Garnar's post\* You dumb motherfuckers.
- 47) Sir Mike: Jason kicks ass.

## Glossary

**ARPANET:** the first nationwide computer network developed by the Defense Department's Advance Research Projects in 1969. Its first link connected the University of California Los Angeles, the University of California Santa Barbara, Stanford Research Institute, and the University of Utah. It was designed to increase communication among researchers a computer network developed by

**Asynchronous Conversation:** a form of CMC where messages are sent and stored in the serving computer's memory. These messages can then be read and responded to at the convenience of the receiver of the message.

**Bulletin Board System:** (BBS) a network of computers used to share information electronically. They are associated with clubs for special-interest groups (e.g., hobbies).

**Chat-group:** social networks of individuals linked via computers in cyberspace for the purpose of communicating in synchronic discourse which may or may not be topic oriented.

**Chat-room:** a metaphor representing a symbolic space (i.e., cyberspace) where individuals locate themselves and communicate.

**Chronemics:** the use and perception of time. Time orientations such as past, time-line, present, and future may affect the structure, content, and urgency of communication.

**Client:** a computer that connects to a more powerful computer for complex tasks.

**Collective Memory:** An accumulation of memory that shared by a group of individuals.

**Common Interest Associations:** associations not based on age, kinship, marriage, or territory that results from an act of joining.

**Computer Literacy:** the knowledge required to operate a computer functionally.

**Computer-mediated Communication:** (CMC) the process whereby people communicate electronically via computer.

**Computer Service Provider:** a business which provides access to computer



networks and/or the company's database.

**Connection Time:** the amount of time computers are linked to a serving computer.

**Cultural Models:** descriptive models "of" and prescriptive models "for" behavior which is culturally learned.

**Cyberspace:** a term first defined by William Gibson in his science-fiction novel, Neuromancer. It represent a form of conceptual space where words, human relationships, data, wealth, and power can manifest itself through CMC.

**Electronic Mail:** (e-mail) a program that allows users to send and receive messages electronically. It requires an computer address and a mailbox.

**EMISARI:** (Emergency Management Information and Reference System) a computer conferencing program developed by Murray Turoff in 1971.

**Emoticon:** text-based icons used to represent emotional states (see Appendix II)

**Environmental Features:** the physical surrounding that provides contextual cues. It includes spatial organization, size and volume of space, arrangement and selection of objects, lighting, color, temperature, and noise.

**express Mode:** (X or X mode) a form of communication on ISCA where individuals can send one-to-one messages.

**Face-to-Face:** (FTF) the context where the people communicating are physically present.

**Feedback Delay:** a delayed response time associated with CMC that affects the communication process.

**File Handle:** the name that a person uses when participating in a chat-group. It can be used to retrieve information about that person.

**Flaming:** verbally assaulting or retaliating statements meant to insult another user on-line.

**Forum:** Topic-oriented chat-rooms on ISCA.

**Forum Moderator:** (FM) an individual who volunteers a certain amount of time

during the week to monitor forum on ISCA.

**Forum Surfing:** the process of switching from forum to forum in order to participate in multiple forums simultaneously.

**Gender-Switching:** the process of assuming an opposite gender on-line.

**Guides:** knowledgeable ISCA users who have passed the test on the rules, regulations, and commands of ISCA and who have been given the authority to instruct new users about these elements.

**Hacker:** an individual who is knowledgeable of the operating systems of computers and who use this knowledge to manipulate computers for his/her own purposes.

**Haptics:** behaviors of touch such as positive affect touches, playful touches, control touches, ritualistic touches, hybrid touches, and task-related touches.

**Hardware:** equipment that processes data, consisting of input devices, a processor unit, output devices, and auxiliary storage units.

**Institution:** social practices that are regularly and continually repeated. They are sanctioned and maintained by social norms.

**Internet:** a wide area network, a worldwide network of computer networks using TCP/IP protocol suite.

**Inter-Relay Chat:** (IRC) a computer program based on a server-client system for the purpose of communicating in synchronic discourse. It was developed by Jarkko Oikarinen from the University of Oulu Finland in 1988.

**ISCABBS:** (Iowa State Computer Association Bulletin Board System) a bulletin board system developed at the University of Iowa in 1990 to promote and improve the computing services at the university.

**Kinesics:** (also known as body language) all forms of bodily movements except touching. This process includes postures, movement styles, and specific gesture categories such as emblems (i.e., gestures with direct verbal translations), regulators (helps to maintain conversational coherence), adapters (unintentional nonverbal displays), etc.

**Lurk:** to read the messages in a chat-group for a short time before posting.

**Moderators:** volunteer ISCA users who are given the authority to moderate discussions in particular forums. They have the power to delete postings that they consider destructive or irrelevant to the rules and the format of a forum.

**Multi-User Dimension/Dungeon:** (MUD) a computer program designed to create the illusion of rooms, worlds, and time periods through text descriptions. MUD players are expected to role-play, to chat with other characters, to solve quests, and to fight monsters.

**Narratives:** descriptive statements in CMC that express actions or describe things for the purpose of constructing a virtual reality.

**Netiquette:** the unwritten rules of etiquette on computer networks such as the prohibition of spamming, shouting, flaming, and so forth.

**Net-sex:** the consensual act of explicating intimate details and sexual actions between two or more individuals on a computer network.

**Network:** collection of computers, especially personal computers, that allows users to share data and computer resources.

**Newbie:** an ISCA user who is new to the system who is not considered by some users as being proficient in the rules, commands, netiquette, and so forth.

**News Group:** topic-oriented discussion groups found on Usenet, a computer network.

**Occulesics:** communication through eye contact. It can function to intensify, mask, or neutralize communication.

**Off-line:** being not linked to a computer network.

**Oldbie:** someone who has spent a significant amount of time on ISCA and who is familiar with the system, rules, commands, other users, and so forth.

**Olfactics:** the nonverbal communicative effects of one's own scents and odors. This includes dental and bodily hygiene which may affect the process of communication.

**On-line:** being linked to a computer network.

**Physical Appearance:** physical attributes of a person that signify attractiveness,

race, height, weight, body shape, hairstyle, dress, and artifacts.

**Profile:** a term on ISCA that refers to the command function that allows individuals to view other people's profiles. A profile itself is a computer file that stores five lines of information created by the user of that particular account. Usually, profiles include personal information about users: real name, address, phone number, e-mail address, interests, hobbies, etc.

**Proxemics:** expressions of personal space which may be signified by physiological responses, anxiety cues, withdrawal, decreased task performance, perceived discomfort, and verbal aggressiveness.

**Real Life:** (RL) the distinction made by computer users that separates daily off-line activities such as work, school, family, etc. from on-line activities which are in the realm of virtual reality (VR).

**Role-Playing:** the act of pretending to be someone or something. For example, pretending to be James Bond, a princess, or an ogre is role-playing.

**Sanctions:** rewards or punishments for behavior in accordance to social norms.

**Server:** a computer that shares its resources with other computers on a network.

**Snail-Mail:** an idiom used to refer to postal mail and its relative speed to e-mail.

**Social Cues:** behavioral or environmental features that communicate nonverbally information about a person or persons.

**Socialization:** a cognitive/social process where an individual learns cultural models (e.g., values, beliefs, norms, etc.) from the members of his/her culture through social interactions.

**Software:** the written computer programs stored on floppy disks, hard disks, and cd-roms.

**Spam:** a process where individual floods a computer system or a screen with repeated messages.

**Synchronous Conversation:** a form of CMC where messages are continually flowing displacing previous messages.

**System Operator:** (SYSOP) an individual who maintains a BBS. His/her duties usually include establishing control systems, managing programs, protecting the system from hackers, and removing disruptive individuals from the system.

**Telnet:** an Internet program that allows a person to log into other Internet-connected computers.

**Thick Description:** an interpretation of behavior based how the participants of a culture explicate their symbolic system through public actions and social discourses.

**Thin Description:** an interpretation based on the surface features of behaviors, actions and events perceived by the ethnographer.

**Virtual Reality:** (VR) a text-based social construction of a place, event, or thing in cyberspace. (e.g., a dungeon, a party, a rose)

**Vocalics:** nonverbal cues found in a speaker's voice. It includes vocal behavior such as pitch, breathiness, volume, rate, and variety.

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