INTERACTIONS THROUGH THE SCREEN: THE INTERACTIONAL SELF AS A THEORY FOR INTERNET-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

by

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ii

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Abstract

This thesis presents an emerging concept called the *interactional self* to illustrate how, contrary to theories of "cyberspace" and "cyberselves," there tend not to be sharp socio-phenomenological distinctions between "virtual" and offline sociability within one's life-world. As such, using aspects of the philosophies of experience of Heidegger, Mead, Schutz, and Husserl as foundations, this thesis argues that social interactions online, for most, are extensions of and not apart from their everyday, situated life-worlds.

After briefly introducing the path towards our contemporary "will-to-virtuality" and various utopian and dystopian visions of "cyberspace," an alternative conceptual picture of the interactional self is gradually revealed using the metaphor of a portrait painted on a "social-world canvas." In this painting, the ontology of Heidegger's *Dasein* supplies the first brushes for outlining the early sketches of the interactional self, showing that online, as in offline settings, we encounter the world and others from the position of beings deeply engaged in practical daily acts and "interpretative understandings." These brushes are then dipped into Mead's intertactionist colours and Schutz's socio-phenomenological textures, eventually filling in the portrait. Illustrated via a case study of blogging practices, Mead's theory of the "generalized other" highlights the notion that the interactional self does not concretely distinguish between offline and online social settings but instead, as in more traditional "off the network" situations, uses Internet-mediated communication for performative practices that afford self-expression and maintain social cohesion. Schutz's phenomenology of the life-world gives further perspective to the interactional

self, showing that online sociability should not be viewed as being apart from the "intersubjective" intersection of life-worlds rooted in everyday life. With some help from Husserl's phenomenology, Schutz is subsequently relied on for understanding online textual embodiment, spatial extensions, community, role-playing, and fantasy, adding yet more socio-historical shadings to interactions online.

Ultimately, the picture that emerges is framed within the following four concluding hypotheses: 1) The interactional self encounters social acts, online and off, as part of its greater life-world, practicing performative and group-enforcing self-management through 2) varying and interlinked dimensions of sociability and 3) pragmatic yet meaningful uses of the communicational tools at hand in 4) contextually relevant degrees of self-disclosure.

Dedication

"Nunca tuve buena memoria, siempre padecí esa desventaja; pero tal vez sea una forma de recordar únicamente lo que debe ser, quizá lo más grande que nos ha sucedido en la vida, lo que tiene algún significado profundo, lo que had sido decisivo…en este complejo, contradictoria, e inexplicable viaje."

~Ernesto Sabato, 1998, *Antes del fin*

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Eduardo and Clelia Vieta. Their unwavering support and boundless love throughout my life have enabled me time and time again to traverse paths that would otherwise have remained impenetrable. Los quiero mucho…

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CMC .... Computer-Mediated Communication

IMC .... Internet-Mediated Communication

HCI .... Human-Computer Interaction

MMPORG .... Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games

MUD .... Multi-User Dungeon / Multi-User Dimension

RW .... Real World

VR .... Virtual Reality or Virtually Real

WAP .... Wireless Application Protocol

Introduction

"We represent this original phenomenon of our humanity thus: we are what we are only through the community of mutually conscious understandings. There can be no man who is a man for himself alone, as a mere individual.... Truth therefore cannot be separated from communicability. It only appears in time as a reality-through-communication."

~Karl Jaspers, 1957, *Reason and Existenz*, pp. 77-79

I would like to propose in the following pages that the Internet, while imbued with powerful and efficient asynchronous and synchronous technologies for interpersonal, inter- and intra-group, and potentially mass-distributed communication, is mainly a collection of mediational tools used in the mundane course of everyday life. While the Internet does disclose new possibilities for human interaction, humanist-minded communication studies are also revealing that the sociality mitigated by the network-of-networks is deeply ensconced in the communicational and informational routines of everyday life. As a result, I would also like to propose in the following pages that a socially situated self, not a virtually fragmented self, helps us better understand the Internet's impact on sociability in these everyday contexts. Further, this socially situated self, I maintain, is a self that is revealed by its interactions with others mostly rooted in known social networks of affinity and conviviality; this is a self primarily embedded in the world of embodied flesh-and-blood, not splintered bits-and-bytes. In the spirit of social interaction theory and existential notions of worldly encounter, I would like to therefore call this socially situated self the *interactional*

1

self.[1] In addition, because this interactional self pragmatically positions the Internet and its inherent technologies within meaningful use-contexts, I would like to term this online interaction between individuals *Internet-mediated communication* (IMC[2]).

As such, this thesis explores how technologically-mediated Internet sociability interplays with one's sense of self, self with others, and self and world. Rather than theories of cyberspace and cyberselves pitting the "virtual reality" (VR) of an "online world" against the "real world" (RW), I would like to efface this dichotomy by grounding my exploration in the too-often overlooked philosophies of experience and the worldly contingent self articulated in different circumstances by Martin Heidegger (1962/2001), George Herbert Mead (1934), Alfred Schutz (1962; 1970; 1973), and, because of his influence on Schutz and Heidegger, Edmund Husserl (1913/1931).[3]

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[1] This term is not originally mine. See Chapter 1 for details concderning its background.
[2] With the term "Internet-mediated communication" and its acronym "IMC" I am borrowing from and purposely modifying the acronym for "computer-mediated communication" (CMC) in order to differentiate Internet-mediated human interactions from other types of computer-mediated interactions. At the same time, I believe the term IMC still situates the phenomenologically-sensitive theories of human social experiences online within the greater body of human and social science work consisting of CMC studies, human computer interaction (HCI) research, and the emergent field of Internet studies. Having said this, I believe the term "Internet-mediated communication" is better than the more generic term "computer-mediated communication" when specifically attempting to look at Internet-based social interaction because it distinguishes the Internet as an emerging and important conglomeration of communicative tools that is affording new and meaningful ways for people to engage with the world. The word "interactional" also suggests Internet sociality should be looked at from the point-of-view of existential and sociological phenomenologies, pragmatism, social interaction theory, and symbolic interactionism. Additionally, "IMC" specifically points to an epistemic focus on the multifarious Internet-centred and network-supported technologies and the *interactive* and *interactional* natures of socializing with others on the Internet. Lastly, the term suggests that Internet sociability supports transactional social exchange and collaboration facilitated by its constituent technologies' communicative affordances, opening up new horizons of communicative potential without having to appeal to overly deterministic technophobic or technophilic views of cyberspace. All of this will be elaborated on throughout this thesis.
[3] See Appendix 4 for a brief discussion concerning some of my reasons for specifically appealing to these four philosophers in this thesis.

2

To help me along the way by providing me with further interpretive handles for applying these early- to mid-20th century philosophers to the empirical evidence I present throughout the thesis, I also appeal to several key ideas in Andrew Feenberg's (1999; 2002; 2003) critical philosophy of technology; Don Ihde's (1983; 1990) phenomenology of technologically-mediated existence; Maria Bakardjieva's (2000) ethnography of the Internet in everyday life; Darin Barney's (2000) phenomenology of networked existence; Paul Dourish's (2001) phenomenology of situated actions; Barry Wellman's (1999) social network theories of the Internet; Manuel Castells's (2001) sociology of the Internet; and numerous other ethnographic studies looking into Internet sociability. These researchers and theorists and their empirical endeavours are showing that the foundational works of communication study's 20th century humanist heritage are still relevant for critically interpreting our late-modern "age of computerized networks" (Barney, 2000, p. 29) where "the words 'technology,' 'information,' and 'communication' constitute the holy trinity" (p. 29) of our epoch. In one way or another, the philosophies of Heidegger, Mead, Schutz, and Husserl all shed light on where we sit as "networked individuals"[4] (Castells, 2001, p. 128) within our epoch's "holy trinity" while still illuminating the meaning of human

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[4] To Castells (2001) and Wellman (1999), the concept of networked individualism encapsulates the predominant form of sociability online, based on "a social pattern" of individuals building their "portfolios of sociability" (Castells, 2001, p. 132) and "networks, online and offline, on the basis of their interests, values, affinities, and projects" (pp. 130-131). In these social settings afforded by "recent technological developments in communication" (p. 130), the networked individual is capable of sustaining "strong ties at a distance" (p. 130) while fostering weaker, more one dimensional ties that are nevertheless important social groupings that support interest-based communities requiring lower levels of commitment, "lower entry barriers, and lower opportunity costs" (p. 132) but that still satisfy the specific social needs of each participant. I assume the concept of a "networked individual" to be a fundamental condition of the interactional self and further interpret this from Schutz's socio-phenomenological perspective in Chapters 5 and 6 (also see Chapter 1).

experiences (Husserl), the nature of "Being" (Heidegger), the social contingency of the self (Mead), and the intersubjective constitution of the life-world (Schutz).

Most importantly for this thesis, the work of scholars such as Feenberg, Bakardjieva, Barney and others have helped convince me that Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz are essential for understanding Internet sociability and community as new yet multi-dimensional and intimately interconnected parts of each users' broader and a priori socially-embedded, mundane, and intersubjective life-world. In other words, Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz help us see, I argue, that the sociability that is mediated by the Internet is best thought of as the *world online* – part of our already always and embodied situated world – not a separate "online world." Consequently, I hope to show how a socially-emergent and *interactional self* built on Heidegger's hermeneutics of worldly encounter, Mead's symbolic interaction, Schutz's sociological phenomenology, and Husserl's phenomenology of experience, is ultimately very useful in helping us understand, on the whole, what happens between the screen and the self and other selves behind other screens.

Within the rubric of these four foundational philosophers' conceptualizations of the human experiences of the existential, pragmatic, and socially-rooted self, this thesis will always have the following three questions as a backdrop:

- Does IMC create a new social reality – a virtual reality – or is it, as Castells (2001) and Wellman (1999) posit, situated in everyday life?
- What happens in the mediated interactions between the screen and the self and other selves behind other screens?
- Does IMC reveal a new way of doing new things or a new way of doing old things?

In considering these questions I will first gradually paint a conceptual

portrait of an interactional self that engages in online sociability using empirical evidence from an extended literature review of ethnographic and quantitative studies of Internet sociability. Second, I will carry out my own phenomenological analyses of the following IMC phenomenon: an email exchange (Chapter 3), embodiment in IMC (Chapter 5), and various phenomenologies of online communities (Chapters 5 and 6). Additionally, I will provide a brief case study of the phenomenon of blogging and a literature review of scholarly communication studies that look into blogging practices in Chapter 4. This blogging case study and literature review serve to show how blogs are not only exemplar of the social situatedness of IMC within the lived experiences of "bloggers' everyday lives but also show how blogs are contemporary examples of how the structure of IMC technologies both afford particular social interactions while also being shaped by those interactions within the very use-contexts of IMC. In this light, all analyses in this thesis, including the case study, are also implicitly grounded in Feenberg's (1995c; 2003) critical and hermeneutic "double-aspect"[5] and "worlding" theories of technology, as I lay out in Chapter 2.

Ultimately, the entire thesis unfolds around seven grounded postulates of the interactional self.[6] These seven postulates, and the chapters where they

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[5] The "double-aspect" theory of technology stipulates "that social meanings [imbued in technology] *and* functional rationality are inextricably intertwined dimensions" (Feenberg, 1995c, p. 12, emphasis added).
[6] The seven postulates can be said to be "grounded" because, as a phenomenological disposition requires, I first describe the experience or empirical evidence of a phenomenon before coming to the theoretical generalization of the postulates (Schwandt, 2000). Throughout the thesis I try to hold off on theorizing about the phenomenon in question until the last possible moment as best I can. This is not always completely possible, however, especially because of the need to also synthesize the key aspects of each of the main philosophers' respective theories of experience, both for myself and for the reader. This thesis, therefore, is as much an account of my own

subsequently appear, are as follows:

1) The interactional self's sedimented and socio-biographical offline affinities, on the whole, dictate its online activities. (Chapter 2.)
2) The interactional self is the "point-zero" of all human experience and lives within a socio-biographically-rooted life-world where meaning is interpretively mediated within both the life-world's technological contours and the experientially-based and socio-culturally informed use-contexts of those technological contours. (Chapter 2).
3) The interactional self is in a constant state of interpretation of itself and its world, practically using the things of the world, online and offline, as conduits for communicating with others and for self-understanding. (Chapter 3.)
4) The interactional self emerges within a social context by projecting itself onto others and being projected upon through social and symbolic interactions. (Chapter 4.)
5) The interactional self encounters others through intersubjectively overlapping life-worlds and within varying degrees of bodily and spatial extensions. (Chapter 5.)
6) The interactional self practices community-building and community-sustaining acts that are the intersubjectively motivated contributions of individuals committed to participating in communicational reciprocity to accomplish or partake in common projects together. (Chapter 6.)
7) The interactional self uses instrumental anonymity and strategic self-disclosure as part of the normal course of encountering its life-world, online or offline. (Chapter 6.)

In laying out these seven postulates, the phenomenology of Husserl will be my painter's palette; the hermeneutic ontology of Heidegger will provide my brushes; the social philosophies of Mead and the intersubjective phenomenology of Schutz my paints and textures; and the embodied and sedimented world described by the empirical studies I review throughout my social-world easel and canvas. Inspired by Heidegger's call to get to the "essence of truth" by looking at the world in a spirit of *"aletheia"* – an unfolding "truth revealing"

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encounters with the main propositions of the philosophers of experience I engage with as it is a phenomenological or social interactional investigation of Internet practices. As such, I have attempted to balance these explanatory needs with the descriptive requirements of a phenomenological standpoint.

(Heidegger, quoted in Inwood, 1999, p. 13)[7] – the aim of this thesis is not to definitively show the way the world online *is* but, rather, to ponder possibilities for how the life-world and IMC might *be revealed* and, thus, ultimately have ourselves revealed in the process. In the spirit of this Heidegger-inspired meditative disclosure, then, the emerging theoretical image of the interactional self will gradually reveal a *socially situated* self that uses IMC pragmatically yet meaningfully and contextually as part of its embedded and embodied socio-cultural and socio-biographical world, not within a separate, uprooted, disembodied, and unhinged virtual world.

A Few Words Concerning the Phenomenological and Interactional Focus of this Thesis

A key point deserves clarification from me right off the top: This thesis does not engage in a full-on focus on aspects of power and political economy with regards to the social aspects of the Internet. Instead, it seeks to, from a phenomenological standpoint, look primarily into Internet user experiences, how user agency might unfold at the micro-sociological level, and how sociability might be mitigated via IMC. Thus, in the following pages I purposefully bracket out a full-blown critical analysis of Internet-mediated sociability, the institutional constraints of the Internet, and the power dynamics at play in our contemporary consumerist and technocratic society in order to more fully engage with the

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[7] *Aletheia* is Greek for "'truth; truthfulness; real, actual...the not hidden or forgotten'" (Heidegger, quoted in Inwood, 1999, p. 13). It is "that which is un-concealed, that which gets discovered or uncovered" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 57). According to Heidegger, *aletheia* encourages us to approach the essence of truth from "'reflection on the ground of the possibility of correctness' and from 'recollection of the beginning'" (Heidegger, quoted in Inwood, 1999, p. 13) in order to take the things of the world out of their "'hiddeness'" (p. 13).

sociological and phenomenological approaches I propose. This is a regrettable choice I had to make early on due to space constraints and my desire to effectively grapple with the phenomenological and interactional theories that I engage with. At the same time, however, I fully recognize and remain sensitive to the strong presence of influential technical and political power structures, the social inequities within our contemporary techno- and socio-political realities, and the normative force of the technocratic language structures that shape our perspective on the world and thus hold sway over us. Indeed, to face these issues head-on and contribute to the search for more equitable and sustainable ways of living within the technologically-mediated realities that define our epoch are the main reasons I left the corporate world for the world of academia two years ago!

While not the main focus of this thesis, the political is *not*, however, ignored in the following pages. The socio-political aspects of technological mediation are encompassed in this thesis (if indirectly at times) in the very positioning of the conceptualizations of the interactional self and IMC within the greater rubric of the "double aspect theory" of technology (Feenberg, 1995c, p. 12) (see Chapter 2). This is because the double aspect theory elaborates on how users of technology are both caught up in the instrumental rationalizations that dictate contemporary modes of existence as "subjects" to the technocratic constraints of advanced-industrial society while also acknowledging that technology's ambivalence affords users "margins of manoeuvre" to resist and appropriate technologies within the very instrumentalized realities of contemporary life (Feenberg, 1999). These margins of expressive and

empowering user manoeuvrings (or "appropriations") not only open up human-technology relations to users' resistive potentialities but also open these relations to the possibilities for "democratizing" our technological decisions (Feenberg, 1991, 1995c, 1999, 2003). I illustrate the "double aspect" of IMC and assess how IMC technologies have empowering potential throughout this thesis and specifically lay out this dynamic in 1) the blog case study (Chapter 4), 2) the Schutz-influenced analysis of how IMC affords the phenomenological extensions of space for the benefit of marginalized groups (Chapter 5), and 3) in the overview of how Schutz's socio-phenomenological theory of the "in-group" can help design better user-centric online communities (Chapter 6).

While I intend to more fully investigate the socio-political, structural, and power dynamics between technology creators, technocratic systems, and technology users' life-worlds in future work, in this thesis I have decided to particularly focus on phenomenological methods for assessing IMC user experiences and the meanings behind those experiences. A phenomenological attitude and methodology, I will argue in this thesis, can serve as possible starting points for both looking at the dimensions of technocratic control *and* personal and social emancipation. As such, I believe, as do Feenberg (1996, 1999), Ihde (1990), and Bakardjieva (2000), that hermeneutic and phenomenological techniques can be used to complement critical and discursive methodologies in a *critical hermeneutics of technology* (Bakardjieva, 2000, p. 87; Feenberg, 1996). In fact, one of the main desires I had for this thesis when I embarked on researching and writing it was to specifically explore the interpretive and phenomenological dimensions of this emerging critical

hermeneutics of technology project in order to better prepare myself for more explicitly critical work in my future scholarly endeavours.[8]

As such, this thesis assumes the "interactional self"[9] to be a socially, culturally, and politically contingent user construct that positions the everyday technology user of IMC as 1) influenced by the seen and unforeseen technical (as well as political, social, and cultural) structures of our contemporary, advanced industrial reality *while also being* 2) a pragmatically rational individual that is able to make ongoing decisions concerning actions and interactions and is involved and engaged in personal and shared life projects in varying degrees of involvements.[10] The image of the interactional self that this thesis gradually unfolds, therefore, emerges within the interplay of the empirical evidence I present, the phenomenological analyses I carry out, and the seven subsequent theoretical postulates I develop.

With the discussion thusfar in mind, the image of the interactional self that is eventually revealed in the subsequent chapters is a theoretical model of an

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[8] The type of work I have in mind for the near-future will see me blend a hermeneutics of technology (Bakardjieva, 2000), an existential phenomenology of "techics" and human-technology (Ihde, 1983, 1990), and medium theory (Innis, 1951; McLuhan, 1988; Meyrowitz, 1985) with a critical theory of technology (Feenberg, 1999), theories of the empowering "potentialities" inherent in "nonneutral" technical objects (Marcuse, 1964; Feenberg 2003), and democratic interventions in technology assessment and participatory technology design (Kleinman, 2000; Mansell & Silverstone, 1996; Sclove, 1995). Examples of such cross-disciplinary critical projects for technology studies that straddle both the theoretical and the practical realms that have implications for a democratic reassessment of technology include Barney (2000), Bakardjieva (2000), and various examples in Feenberg (1999).
[9] I address my decision to use the term "self" – a contentious word amongst some contemporary theoretical schools such as postmodernism, poststructuralism, and deconstructionionism – in Chapter 1.
[10] In these two respects, this thesis has been primarily inspired by the work of two of my supervisors: Prof. Andrew Feenberg's (1999) critical and constructivist hermeneutics of technology and Dr. Roman Onufrijchuk's (2003) Techno-Experiential Design Assessment (TEDA) program. I am deeply indebted to both of them for their guidance and for their intellectual inspiration with regards to these two major points that, it could be said, both make up my thesis's "chasis."

IMC user that experiences Internet sociability as tightly woven within a lattice consisting of *three worldly encounters* that start from the perspective of an "experiencing life" (Schutz, 1962, p. 123). These three encounters are: 1) *encounters with the self*, 2) *encounters with others*, and 3) *encounters with community.*[11] That is, as phenomenology and social interaction theory help us understand, the interactional self's socio-biographically informed life-world, whether online or offline, is constituted at various times and in overlapping fashion as a self-in-the-world, co-constructed through its worldly encounters, its shared lived experiences with "intended" others, and by this worldly self's deep desire to be in community with others (for an illustration of this intersubjective and interactional self of worldly encounter, see Appendix 1). Indeed, at the heart of this thesis's concept of the interactional self is the unabashed existential proposition that all humanity – online or off, presently or historically – shares an essential condition: *the will-to-communicate*. As Karl Jaspers (1957/1997) poetically articulates:

> To be genuinely true, truth must be communicable. We represent this original phenomenon of our humanity thus: we are what we are only through the community of mutually conscious understandings.... There can be no man who is a man for himself alone, as a mere individual.... Truth therefore cannot be separated from communicability.... Out of the consciousness of a becoming truth, first springs the possibility of a radical openness of *the will to communicate* in actuality. (pp. 77-106, emphasis added)

Jaspers' sentiments also lie at the heart of the human philosophies of experience I appeal to in this thesis and are therefore core to the theory of the interactional self that will be elaborated on in these pages.

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[11] I am again indebted to Dr. Onufrijchuk (2003) for pointing me to these aspects of human experience in a technologized world.

Chapter 1:
A Path to the Interactional Self

"I am, this life is, I live: *cogito*."

~Edmund Husserl, 1913, *Ideas* I, p. 143

Before fully engaging with its implications for IMC, this chapter seeks to situate the concept of the interactional self within an historical perspective. I do this cautiously, however: This is certainly not a definitive history; to embark on any attempt at a definitive history of the concept of "the self" is to engage in an enormous task certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. Indeed, whether even such a total history exists is questionable. The concept of the self can be seen to be at the heart of metaphysics and philosophy since at least Socrates' charge to the soul-searcher – quoting the inscription at Delphi's temple to Apollo – to "know thyself" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Leahey, 2001). How well we can come to know this self, however, is another matter. As poststructuralists have pointed out, any self knowledge is always susceptible to the socio-cultural and socio- political contexts and the linguistic conventions we find ourselves in. Thus, while this chapter can only aspire to a thumbnail sketch of my own interpretation of the trajectory of notions of selfhood leading to the interactional self, it is nevertheless important before moving on with the main thrust of the analysis proposed in this thesis for me to clarify my decision to use the term "the self" and to attempt to place "the interactional self" within some historical

context. This is particularly important in light of the problematization of a notion of "the self" by poststructuralists, postmodernists, and anti-humanist theorists working within the rubric of the philosophies of language, critical notions of power, and the "linguistic turn."

With these precautions at hand, this chapter attempts to situate the interactional self within a narrative trajectory of the self and its theoretical evolution into the "subject," a trajectory that has preoccupied modern and postmodern philosophical inquiry (Docherty, 1994; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Silverman, 1994). The chapter concludes by positioning the interactional self as a phenomenological cousin of the "communitarian self," thus, as I will make clear shortly, placing the interactional self in a middle ground between the intensely rational, liberal humanist theories of the unitary self on the one hand and a complete negation of any possibility of a sense self in light of the "absent subject" of postructuralism on the other (Hayles, 1999; Silverman, 1994). While, as I will also clarify in this chapter, I do not entirely agree with the postmodern notion that we can no longer have any foundation or concept of selfhood in light of our complete immersion in a reality made up entirely of language-games, consumer imagery, and simulation, I do view language and narrativity as playing a crucial role in defining the self in conjunction with the individual's social contexts and biographical experiences as sustained and altered by that individual throughout his or her life. This "narrative of life," in agreement with the postmodernists and poststructuralists, is partially influenced by the language that that individual is immersed in. The interactional self, however, also possesses aspects of agency that bring with it the possibility for recreating, rewriting, and even re-evaluating

this sense of self with others and in light of the social, cultural, and material world that it is immersed in. I thus view the interactional self as having much overlap with aspects of postmodern notions of the subject, in particular with the subject's narrative makeup and socio-biographical and socio-historical contingencies, without negating that the individual still has access to a sense of self, however "constructed" and "co-constructed" that sense of self might be.[12] My argument for this "middle ground" for the interactional self will become clearer in this chapter.

The Enlightenment's Concept of the Self

At the heart of early-modern theories of liberal democracy, personal rights and freedoms, property rights, and rational progress is the view that we have a mostly stable and unified sense of self. Known as the humanist view, this notion of the self is rooted in the "Cartesian self": a self that is capable of rational thought; that can doubt and ponder on both the reality and the dubitability of the things of the world; and that, in its selfhood, thinks of itself as a free being

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[12] While this chapter (and my thesis) can be seen as dealing mostly with Western notions of selfhood, I realize I do this with the risk of seeming to intentionally efface the rich and varied non-Western concepts of the self. My focus on Western notions of selfhood is regrettably needed for the sake of space and the thesis's manageability. To have embarked on an exploration of non-Western concepts of identity and selfhood would have seen me overextend this thesis beyond the scope of an MA thesis. Importantly, I recognize that the notion of an "interactional self" is not unique to Western thought, as Tonks (n.d.) points out. (I also cannot take credit for the term.) Tonks quotes Lebra (1992) to explain that for the Japanese, for example, the "interactional self," like the Western concept of such a self, is "the awareness of self as defined, sustained, enhanced, or blemished through social interaction" (p. 106). It is no surprise, however, that I came to the concept via the works of Ihde, Heidegger, Schutz, Mead, and Goffman without being aware early on in my research that the Japanese also have a similar view of such a worldly self. Indeed, one of my supervisors, Prof. Andrew Feenberg, has spent many years observing and writing about the links between continental thought, modernity theory, and Japanese philosophy and confirmed to me that the notion of an "interactional" self does indeed exist in Japanese culture. See, for example his essay "Alternative Modernity? Playing the Japanese Game of Culture" (Feenberg, 1995a). I hope to explore these non-Western concepts of selfhood in future research.

capable of making choices and engaging in consensus and debate (Leahey, 2001). Out of Descartes' *"Cogito ergo sum"* ("I think, therefore I am") – his "thinking self" – early modernity's developmentally linear framework for understanding the self and the world emerges. According to Underwood, "in the Cartesian self, the individual *is* mind, liberated and autonomous, capable of engaging in rational debates with other subjects" (Underwood, 2003, sec. 1). Ihde (1983) contends that "Descartes' ideal of clear and distinct ideas grounded upon certainty may in one sense be said to have invented both the 'subject' [the rational self] and the 'external world,'" or the object (p. 11, emphasis in original). Descartes' thinking self is the idea that we have a stable or coherent self, set apart from the world and even from the body. It is also the beginning of modernity's stubborn focus on the primacy of scientific confirmation and deductive reasoning which, from a Cartesian perspective, eventually perverted into the implicit rejection of the Christian-Augustinian notion of self-as-soul (the opposite of Decartes' intentions) which has subsequently driven the liberal humanist desire for progress and instrumental reason throughout the past three centuries.

Thus, the Cartesian humanist self can be seen as being at the root of one of Western philosophy's major views of the self: the "individualist" and liberal humanist self (Baldine, 1997, pp. 27-28). This individualist self is, first and foremost, said to have free will. This free will is, however, mitigated by what Hobbes and Locke termed the "state of nature": a state where the individual theoretically has the right to do anything he or she pleases but where that brutal right is moderated by the knowledge that it is ultimately in the self-interest of the individual to enter into social contracts and live in peaceful coexistence with

others ("Free will," 2004). Kant took Western philosophy beyond this position in his critique of the relativism in the notion of the greatest good for the most people, replacing this utilitarian position with his affirmation that absolute moral laws also exist (the "categorical imperative") and that reason can be used to encourage and access these laws (Bowie, 2003). Taking off from these Kantian notions, individualist philosophers like John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin claim that the self as an individual is therefore the most fundamental place from which to consider things like the rights of people, human dignity, and justice. In this view, individuality comes before ends and we are all free moral agents where our dignity is inextricably intertwined with our identity (Baldine, 1997; "John Rawls," 2004; "Ronald Dworkin," 2004). These ideas make up the foundations of our still-present liberal humanist heritage and are at the root of for example, the modern legal system, the belief that the state should not meddle too deeply into the lives of individuals, and the notion that the economy should be free from state intervention in order to maximize the rights of people to ultimately engage in free association, free expression, and unfettered economic exchange.

Communitarian and Narrative Notions of the Self and the Subject

The unified and stable framework of this liberal humanist self has been critiqued by various philosophical movements, in varying degrees, starting perhaps with Nietzsche in the late 19th century and with increasing vigour throughout the 20th century. The critique of the rational, liberal humanist self began to be especially palpable within the broad movement that has come to be known as "continental philosophy" (Kearney, 1994). It also shows up early on in the 20th century in writings of American pragmatists such as James, Dewey,

Cooley, and Mead (Ihde, 1983; Rorty, 1999, pp. 77-81). Indeed, alternatives to logical positivist theories of truth and knowledge and the coherent and rational self began to be explored late in the 19th and early in the 20th centuries on both sides of the Atlantic. Examples of these alternatives to the liberal humanist self include Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and its effacement of the subject-object dichotomy (Husserl, 1970); Heidegger's articulation of *Dasein*, Being, and the existentialism he inspired (i.e., Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, etc.), especially seen in existentialism's sharp critique of Descartes' reliance on a detached and God-like *cogito* (Taminiaux, 1994b); and Dewey's call to set aside the "'belief in the fixity and simplicity of the self'" (Dewey, quoted in Rorty, 1999, p. 77) in light of a more "relational" notion of life (p. 77). In the middle to late decades of the 20th century, the liberal humanist self came under further and more relentless attack in the notions of the linguistically-permeated "absent subject" of postrstructuralism, especially in the works of Barthes, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, and the postmodern theories these thinkers have inspired (Docherty, 1994; Silverman, 1994; Underwood, 2003).

In this section, then, I will first touch on a few exemplary notions of the communitarian self of late-modernity that has been inspired by phenomenology's, existentialism's, and pragmatism's contestation of the liberal humanist self. In the subsequent sections I will elaborate on a few implications for notions of selfhood within more recent poststructuralist and critical postmodern theories, theories that have ultimately also inspired contemporary radical critiques of the posthuman. I will finally situate the interactional self

within this historical trajectory, eventually placing it within a phenomenological paradigm.

The Communitarian and Narrative Self

The "communitarian," or social self, "grounds human identity in the community" (Baldine, 1997, sec. II) and, in its full articulation, is a relatively contemporary view of the self represented by thinkers such as Husserl (1913/1931), Mead (1934), Schutz (1970), MacIntyre (1984), Taylor (1989), Habermas (1984; 1989), and Giddens (1991). Both imbued with rational capabilities yet also heavily contingent on interactions with others, the communitarian self could, I suggest, be better known as a "communicational" self, influenced as it is by notions such as the will-to-communicate, as Jaspers informed us in this thesis's Introduction. In political theory, the communitarian self is an individual rooted in public life where responsibility and obligation comes before the individual. Thus, it is not possible for the communitarian self, in principle, to be detached from others (Baldine, 1997, p. 29). In social theory, the communitarian individual is only possible after the social; consciousness and self-identity is indebted to the social and to others (Mead, 1934; Sartre, 1964). Influenced in part by the linguistic turn in philosophy, sociology, and critical theory that took shape in the middle decades of the 20th century, MacIntyre (1984), Giddens (1991), Taylor (1989), and Habermas (1984, 1987), for example, all introduce theories of language, narrativity, communicative action, and speech acts into their own interpretations of the communitarian/communicational self.

MacIntyre (1984), for instance, has a "narrative concept of selfhood" (p. 202) in mind when he argues that an individual is fundamentally a story-teller,

shaping his or her biography in the narratives woven with others: a "subject of a history that is my own" (p. 201) but that is also "embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity" (p. 201). For MacIntyre, "the detached self of modern individualism [of Descartes, Hume, Locke, Leibniz, etc.] has no story" (Baldine, 1997, p. 4).

For Giddens (1991), partially inspired by MacIntyre's and Taylor's views, "self-identity...is not something that is just given" (p. 52) as a result of the habits of one's actions or a priori human nature or one's behaviour but is sustained, in part, by the "narrative of the self" formed by, as Charles Taylor informs him, one's "capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (p. 54). For Giddens, in "late-modernity" this narrative capacity is mitigated, and in some ways truncated, by the erasure of space and time constraints and the personal fragmentations of life roles caused by our saturation in mediated life as well as the subsequent "transformations in self-identity and globalisation" (p. 32) that this over-mediation brings with it. Together, "self-identity" and "globilasation" both differentiate, for Giddens, our media-saturated times from any other historical epoch; they are the "two poles of the dialectic of the local and the global in conditions of high modernity" that directly implicate the self (p. 32). Giddens further posits that these changes to the "intimate aspects of personal life...are directly tied to the establishment of social connections of a very wide scope...[which is seeing] for the first time in human history, 'self' and 'society' [as] interrelated in a global milieu" (p. 32). Hence, not only are conceptions of the self implicated in this mediated globalization, but individuals are now also forced to strategize ways to reconnect with notions of rootedness and stability in

innovative social and political ways (i.e., the popular mantra "think globally, act locally" comes to mind).

In Habermas's influential two-volume work, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987) his critical social theory is also implicitly fused with the communitarian/communicational self: For Habermas, action and interaction are intertwined with "symbolic exchange and speech contexts" (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998, p. 116). According to Habermas, we can reclaim agency from the "system's" instrumental control and the "technization of the lifeworld" (Habermas, quoted in Feenberg, 1999, p. 101) by appealing to intersubjective actions and the expressive and morally guided interactions of individuals engaged in open discourse with each other. In these ideal communicative scenarios, Habermas sees opportunities for the "lifeworld" to overrule the "systems" of command and control that have crept into the public and private spaces of everyday life. For Habermas, individuals are inextricably tied to each other via a communicative rationality that is *not* about the mere acquisition of knowledge or the over-reliance on the instrumental logic of our contemporary "systems of purposive rational action" (Habermas, 1971, p. 93) that serve to dominate us in our contemporary neo-liberal, technocratic, and progressivist corporate and consumer paradigms. Instead, through the rationality made possible by and specifically found in the "lifeworld," "subjects who are capable of speech and action acquire and use knowledge" (Habermas, quoted in Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998, p. 117) intersubjectively for the reclamation of the public sphere for democratic and meaningful purposes dictated by local and social needs.

The Decentering of the Self

The communitarian self of MacIntyre, Taylor, Giddens, and Habermas, while influenced by the linguistic turn in 20th century Western philosophy that situated this self within a narrative and linguistic emergence, still holds on to notions of a moral rationality explicitly dependent on an ethics of the other. As such the communitarian self can be seen as responding to the stark individualism of the liberal humanist self. But for some 20th century philosophers, these responses don't go far enough. For these philosophers, the very notion of "the self" is to be contested as an ideological construct saturated within the power structures concretized in language and the "simulacra" inherent in contemporary, image-laden, and mediated life. The self, these poststructural and postmodern thinkers claim, is now to be considered completely "decentred" from any notion of unity or essence.

The concept of the "decentred self," while not necessarily exclusive to postmodern theories,[13] has been mainly influenced by the principle movements in the 20th century's turn to the study of language as a filter of the real. This turn was particularly influenced by European structuralist linguistics (de Saussure), semiology (Barthes), linguistic anthropology (Lévi-Strauss), poststructuralism (Foucault), postmodernism (Lyotard; Baudrillard), as well as Lacanian psychoanalysis (Docherty, 1994; Silverman, 1994). Hall (1996), approaching the instability of the contemporary individual from the cultural studies standpoint,

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[13] Freud, for example, also talked of the existence of such a self in his notions of sublimation and the tripartite theory of the individual's personality (i.e., the superego, the ego, and the id).

gives a thorough definition of this decentered self, pitting it against more liberal

humanist inclinations:

> We can no longer conceive of the 'individual' in terms of a whole,
> centred, stable and completed Ego or autonomous, rational 'self.'
> The 'self' is conceptualized as more fragmented and incomplete,
> composed of multiple 'selves' or identities in relation to the
> different social worlds we inhabit, something with a history,
> 'produced,' in process. The 'subject' is differently placed or
> positioned by different discourses and practices. (Hall, 1996, p. 226,
> quoted in Underwood, 2003, emphasis in original)

Thus articulated, most postmodern critiques of the self can be seen as, first and

foremost, direct challenges to the Cartesian-influenced, humanist self that began

with the Enlightenment project, especially the liberal humanist proclivity to see

the individual as a unitary, whole self (Docherty, 1984; Silverman, 1984). In this

critique, there is commonality with the communitarians. Where poststructuralist

(and, ultimately, postmodern) theories of the decentred self begin to differ from

the communitarian self, however, is in their focus on the linguistic and discursive

elements that define as well as make "absent" the subject.

Poststructural and postmodern notions of the "decentred self" have been

especially influenced by the works of Lacan and Foucault (Silverman, 1994).

Both, according to Silverman, lay out how "self is decentered" and how the

"subject *per se* remains absent" (p. 401). In Lacan's linguistically-influenced

"structural psychonalaysis" (Silverman, 1994, p. 399) the "subject is dispersed

throughout language...[where t]he language of the self is the language of the

chain of signifiers" rather than being rooted in the "signified" (the signified in

this case being the self-knowing individual) (p. 401). The subject is thus, in

Lacanian analysis, pure signification. For Foucault, the subject can also be seen

as similarly dispersed in language but is specifically entangled in "power"

relations which, in the "*episteme*" of the late-20th and early-21st centuries,

originates in the "scientific disciplines" and the "horizons" of the "social

practices, artifacts, and power relations" these normative disciplines shape

(Feenberg, 1999, p. 110). In Foucault's histories and "archeologies" of notions of

"the subject" we witness an absenting of this very subject within the regimes of

power that form around a period's "discursive practices" or, as he termed in his

book *The Order of Things*, an epoch's "*episteme*"—common knowledge themes

and values that permeate a particular period and shape that period's linguistic

conventions and power structures (Rabinow, 1984; Silverman, 1994). It is worth

further elaborating on the implications of Lacan's and Foucault's respective

thoughts concerning the "absent subject" as it implicates notions of the self.

For Lacan, the unconscious is structured like language and the

individual's psyche is ensconced in linguistic "sign systems" (Underwood, 2003).

As with semiologists such as de Saussure's and Barthes's contentions that our

social beings are the constructions of our language, for Lacan the unconscious

was also a construction of language. Thus, society can be seen to "inhabit the

individual" in the linguistic narratives the individual is immersed in

(Underwood, 2003). As such, claims Lacan, rather than the images of ourselves

signifying a stable centre in each of us, it is we that signify the image of ourselves

formed initially at the "mirror stage" of early childhood where we first notice

ourselves as an image (Silverman, 1994, pp. 399-401). That is, for Lacan, the

subject and its subconscious are both merely images entirely framed by linguistic

paradigms. The "self" is thus, for Lacan, a "chain of signifiers" (Silverman, 1994,

p. 401).

In Foucault's poststructural theory, the "self" is also negated and is instead viewed as a volatile "subjectivity" made known through the filters of language and, in particular, the power differentials entrenched in the "discursive practices" framed by language (Silverman, 1984, p. 401). In Foucault's analysis of these discursive practices and their implications for the sustenance of the subject, Foucault introduces a historicized theory of power that serves to ultimately and primarily problematize the subject (Foucault, 2003). For Foucault, the 20th century's "dominant frame of knowledge production" (Silverman, 1984, p. 403) – its predominant "regime of truth" or *"epistemé"* [14] – was to be found in the "decentering of the subject" (p. 403), a stance of our times indicative of a problematized self with "no central origin, no unique place of focus, no present subject as there once was for the modern age" (p. 401). This "absent subject" of our times, according to Foucault, is made absent by the power structures shaped by the normative "discursive systems" of science and medicine that define our epoch (Rabinow, 1984, p. 12). Within our contemporary discursive systems, the tensions that ultimately occur between these ruling "regimes of truth" and their corresponding "subjugated knowledges" (Feenberg, 1999, pp. 110-111) efface any notion of firm sense of self. We are now not centred, unified selves but rather subjugated and controlled individuals that succumb unwittingly to the governing powers-that-be via the very linguistic conventions and

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[14] According to Feenberg (1999), "regimes of truth" are "power-dependent epistemic horizons that characterize particular periods and disciplines" (p. 111).

institutionalized environments that make the power hierarchies we live in seem normative and even natural.

Rooted in these writings, for postmodern sociologists and poststructuralist critics, we are, at most, a multitude of subjectivities intimately entwined in social contingencies, local narratives, and unseen yet ever-present power structures and institutional constraints that both prevent us from attaining our modernist call for emancipation while, at the same time, offering us, as de Certeau (1984) posited, localized tactics for overcoming the "'strategies of institutionalized controls" that permeate everyday life (Feenberg, 1999, p. 112, emphasis in original).

As Feenberg (1999) points out, however, all is not lost for subjugated individuals. Contemporary subjectivities can resist regimes of truth in ways that open up within the very power structures that form between these regimes and their subjugated knowledges. That is, within these regimes of truth, controlled subjectivities experience a constant tension between their having to yield to the sublime ruling power structures and the related openings for resistance that simultaneously emerge from these very power dynamics; it is within these tensions that openings for resistance occur, however small these openings might be.

De Certeau (1984), for example, posited that localized social groups practice "tactics" for overcoming the "strategies" of institutional and normalized controls within everyday life (Feenberg, 1999, p. 112, emphasis in original). Inspired by Foucault's analysis of "regimes of truth" and the openings in those regimes that allow "subjugated knowledges" room for resistance, these tactical

opportunities are to be found in the very dominant codes of the institutional

structures containing the upper hand in the socio-political power differential.

Oppressed social groups and individuals can thus "react 'tactically'" to the

strategies of institutionalized power even while remaining within the structure

of the dominant strategy of control (Feenberg, 1999, p. 113). As Feenberg

explains: "Tactics thus belong to strategies the way speech belongs to language.

The technical code of society is the rule of an exorbitant practice, a syntax which

is subject to unintended usages that may subvert the framework it determines"

(p. 113). Slang might be viewed as one such tactic, for example. Later, in

Chapter 4, I will argue that blogs and blogging practices might also afford these

subversive aims for bloggers and blog readers.

The Juncture of the Posthuman

The version of the posthuman proposed by Haraway's (1991)

appropriated "cyborg," for example, offers another such possible opening within

the ruling power regimes of contemporary neo-liberal technoscientific paradigms

that resonates with Foucult's and de Certeau's potentials for locally-rooted

liberation. The cyborg concept as envisioned by Haraway also emancipates the

decentred and absent subject by offering a suggestive possibility for recreating

the very notion of subjectivity in a way that divorces it from the baggages of the

self's liberal humanist and progressivist foundations. As Haraway sees in her

own project, "Michel Foucault's biopolitics is a flaccid premonition of cyborg

politics, a very open field" (Haraway, 2003, p. 429). Indeed, for Haraway, the

cyborg is a powerful metaphor for the feminist constructivist program. In works

such as her influential book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of*

Nature (1991), Haraway reclaims the cyborg within a reformulated liberalizing narrative of "technoscience" by postulating the notion of emancipated cyborgs populating cyber-frontiers as the ultimate metaphor for the feminist constructivist program (2003). A created creature of social reality and fiction, part machine, part biological being, to Haraway the cyborg symbolically liberates women and the subjugated from millennia of paternalistic oppression that has made a political mine field of the female body. The cyborg is a post-gendered, self-created being-as-clean-slate concept. In cyberspace, cyborg theorists postulate, identity and body are harnessed and moulded to the specifications and unshackled whims of its creator-masters, cybernetic machine-beings ready to be programmed by oppressed groups seeking political voice.

Some feminist thinkers who have taken to the cyborg theories of Haraway have appropriated this liberalizing view of the cyborg and its promises in what has come to be termed "cyberfeminism" (Hawthorne & Klein, 1999). Cyberfeminism postulates the notion of emancipated cyborgs populating the cyber-frontiers of the Internet as a way through the "differences in power between men and women in the digital discourse" (p. 2). Cyberfeminism is therefore needed, claim authors such as Hawthorne & Klein and Haraway, because, as Haraway writes, "the boundary between the physical and non-physical is very imprecise for us" (Haraway, 1991, p. 153).

Katherine Hayles (1999) offers a similar emancipative possibility for the future trajectory of the "posthuman." Hayles sees in the posthuman a possible alternative to the white-male-dominated "possessive individualism" inherent in the liberal humanist self, a self which is, according to Hayles and quoting C. B.

Macpherson, "owing nothing to society" (p. 3). In her book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Hayles directly connects the stand-alone, possessive humanist self to the recent neo-liberal and blindly technophilic drive that is ultimately forcing the human into the realms of the "posthuman" (p. 3). This new version of the liberal self is, for Hayles, a product of "market relations" (p. 3) and the normative masculinist and progressivist trajectory of our contemporary technocratic predisposition. The neo-liberal and technophilic logic of this modernist predisposition, Hayles posits, is leading our current scientific, cultural, and political discourses and narratives to conclusions that are making the concept of a *post*human at the expense of embodiedness an already-decided given. Thus, Hayles argues, the posthuman is closely aligned with, as Feenberg (1999) puts it in another setting, "the technocratic ideology" (p. 101) of our times: the deterministic technological insistence that what is best for us now is unbridled technocratic progress and the unobstructed freedom of the marketplace. Indeed, claims Hayles, the liberal humanist penchant for placing the mind at the seat of the self has placed the separation of information from its materiality at the heart of the wide acceptance of the ideology of virtuality in our contemporary "networked society." In its extreme manifestation, this narrative of virtuality, Hayles argues, transforms into what could be termed a will-to-disembodiment: the flesh-fleeing concept of the ideology of the posthuman that brings it in close affinity to the Cartesian notion of the mind being superior to the body. In her narrative history of the posthuman, a history that sees its origins with the US military's cybernetics missile research that began immediately after WWII with Norbert Weiner and

eventually extended into the sociology of communication via Gregory Bateson and the Palo Alto School, the human being has now been usurped into the cybernetic social-political-historical narrative. Hayles lays this narrative out in vivid detail, making the case that our current will-to-virtuality is rooted in the interweaving of the evolution of cybernetic systems theories with evocative science-fiction books and movies, a compliant neo-liberal corporate agenda, and the sympathetic liberal humanist tendency to rid information of its materiality. "Because information has lost its body," writes Hayles (1999, p. 4), "this construction [of the human being as informational processes] implied that embodiment is not essential to human being" (p. 4). Thus, metaphysically and practically, the posthuman can be viewed as the possibility of a self separated from the body. What this desire ultimately means for humanity is another matter.

Critical feminist theories such as those laid out by Hayles and Haraway can thus be said to be *for* embodiment and not for the neo-liberal disconnection of information (mind) from materiality (body) that has been the historical trajectory of the "narrative" of cybernetics, a narrative that has brought us to contemporary – and uncritical and neo-liberal – notions of the virtual and the self's place in the virtual. (Phenomenologists would undoubtedly agree with this "pro-embodiment" slant, as I describe in the next section.) In this light, Hayles and Haraway are both attempting to demythologize this strong narrative tendency that, for the two theorists, still connects many aspects of our modernist and uni-linear progressivist thinking to the Enlightenment's liberal humanist self. In a resistive – if not de Certeau-like – tactical move, Hayles, like Haraway,

desires to efface the real/virtual dichotomy and the separation of information from its matieriality by reclaiming the posthuman from its current apocalyptic trajectory.[15] Also like Haraway, Hayles ultimately (and ironically) sees the liberating possibilities in the posthuman as, in my words, a "post-self" concept that unshackles us from our historical roots in the "white European male" construct of the liberal humanist self that has, according to Hayles and Haraway, for too long surrendered us to an oppressive, technocratic, and capitalist narrative. Thus, Hayles argues, the search for a future of liberated possibilities within our technologically-mediated and masculinist reality could very well lie within a reconstituted and recontextualized cyborg – a re-writing of the next chapter in the continuing story of the cyborg as it were, that reclaims it in the name of empowerment.

Both Hayles and Haraway believe that in literal and metaphoric ways, critically sensitive individuals can usurp the cyborg and posthuman narratives in order to reconstuct our subjectivity and, thus, our sense of self. For Hayles (1999), we are at the juncture of two possible futures: On the one hand we can, as a society and a species, fall prey to the dystopia of a *post*human hell where machines rule every part of our lives as articulated in films such as *Bladerunner* and *The Matrix* and novels such as *Neuromancer*. On the other hand, we can become active and socially conscious players in "the construction of another kind of account" (p. 285) where the posthuman becomes a possibility for "emergence" in a co-constituted "partnership" between system and lifeworld, humans and

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[15] A trajectory, I might add, that could, if left unchecked, end up in the simultaneously horrific and quaintly amusing "transhumanist" desire of a growing number of contemporary individuals (see, for example, the "Trahnshumanist Resources" webpage: http://www.aleph.se/Trans/).

machines (p. 285). "For some people, including me," concludes Hayles (p. 285), "the posthuman evokes the exhilarating prospect of getting out of some of the old boxes and opening up new ways of thinking about what being human means" (p. 285).

While the posthuman offers both an exhilarating potential as well as a frightening outlook for the technological future that is inevitably at our doorstep, we should still not forget the implications for notions of selfhood and, indeed, for determining our future as a species that might lie within more traditional conceptions of the self put forward by phenomenologists and social interactionists. I turn to this next, positioning such a phenomenological and interactional self as possibility for a middle ground between the completely unitary self of the liberal humanists and the totally eradicated self of the poststructuralists and the posthumanists. I believe it to be a sound place from which to revisit the interplay between IMC and the self and self and others.

The Phenomenological Self as a Middle Ground for Understanding the Place of IMC in our Everyday Lives

At the heart of the pragmatist and experiential portraiture of the interactional self that I lay out in this thesis is a phenomenological theory of the self. This self has similar roots to the communitarian self but provides, unlike the theories of the self and the subject mentioned so far, an explicit theory of human experience situated in lived meanings and practices. This phenomenological self will be gradually elaborated in the rest of the thesis and forms the basecoat from which the phenomenologically-contoured interactional self will eventually be revealed. Importantly, phenomenological notions of the self are compatible in

many ways with postmodern concepts of the subject: First, phenomenology addressed many of the issues that postmodernists have also critiqued concerning the liberal humanist self of Descartes, Hume, Locke, et al., without forgetting the centrality of experience, the importance of the other, and the engrained socio-biographic contexts in which an individual finds him or herself in. Phenomenology, also in partial agreement with more recent postmodernist and poststructuralist leanings, claims that the self is not a complete unity; the self does not have a core outside of the world but is instead deeply entrenched in the world. The phenomenological self does not seek a separation of the self from the world but instead looks at how the subject is deeply intertwined with the world. That is, for phenomenologists, the self, unlike Descartes' *cogito*, does not "own itself." Instead, it is co-possessed by the world *and* by the other. Additionally, the self is not "just experience" or "just reason" but is partially constituted by the world, having access to the meanings embedded in experience and reflection while also possessing the ability to reason and share these meanings and experiences with others.

Thus, similar to more recent postmodernist and poststructuralist thought, phenomenologists (Heidegger, Husserl, Schutz), like pragmatists (Mead, James), and symbolic interactionists (Blumer, Goffman), are all opposed to a Cartesian dualistic self (Ihde, 1983, p. 13). Rather than the Enlightenment's ideal of the subject being self contained and separate from the world, phenomenology claims that the subject is, as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and Schutz believed, *"already always* situated in a world" (Ihde, 1983, p. 13) and already directed towards its objects via the *intentionality* of consciousness (Husserl,

Schutz) or experience (Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty) (Moreau, 2000).[16] Rather than

Descartes' "*cogito ergo sum*," therefore, for phenomenologists, it is: "I am, this life

is, I live: *cogito*" (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. 143).

Where phenomenology begins to distinguish itself from other philosophies

and movements is in its theory of "intentionality" (Moran & Mooney, 2002).

That is, for the phenomenological self, the phenomena and objects of the world

are always under our conscious interpretation – whether those things are

materially experienced, remembered, reflected upon, or imaginary – and

positioned within the process of "the relationship between the actor and the

objects in the world" (Ritzer, 2000, p. 412), not ensconced introspectively in the

mind of the actor, as Descartes proposed.[17] Thus, in phenomenology,

consciousness and experience are part of a process giving meaning to the objects

of the world via the individual's very experiences of that world. Moreover,

consciousness is *always* intentionally directed towards the things of the world

(that is, consciousness is "intentional," or always directed towards something)

(Ritzer, 2000, p. 412; Ihde, 1977, p. 23): Consciousness is always conscious of

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[16] Intentionality is the key Husserlian notion that consciousness is always directed toward an object and is central to phenomenological explanations of encountering anything in the world (Husserl, 1913/1931, pp. 257-260; 1970, pp. 233-244). Ihde (1977) deems intentionality "the central feature of experience"(pp. 23), describing it as "a structure...which correlates all things experienced with the mode of experience to which the experience is referred" (p. 23). More technically, *intentionality* is the correlation between "*noema*" – "the objective statement" of...the experience," or the *what* of an experience – and "*noesis*" – "the subjective reflection of the objective statement," or the *how* of an experience (Ehrich, 1999, sec. 2) (also see Husserl, 1913/1931, pp. 255-281).
[17] Although phenomenologists still speak of "subjects" and "objects," they are not to be considered as separate aspects of the world and, especially in the case of "objects," apart from the subject and left to the subject to conceive of as in an image or representation of the real object which is "really" situated outside of the mind (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. 136). Rather, in phenomenological apprehending, things experienced are always contextualized to, and thus experienced by, an "experiencer" (see Chapter 5 for more on this.)

something; experience is always experience of something. Through these intentional and experiential interactions, meaning is thus made and interpreted.

The phenomenological self can also be viewed as the centre of experience. For phenomenologists, the world is, first and foremost, made known from the perspective of the "experiencer." Further, the reality of the world is adumbrated within the perspectival "horizons" of the experiencing subject—that is, all perception and apperception has a "limit" and "shape" (Ihde, 1977, p. 47) made up of a central "core" thing experienced and its surrounding "field" extending out to the experience's "fringe" that forms the less-noticed backgrounds to all things experienced (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. 240; Ihde, 1977, p. 60; Schutz, 1970, p. 318). Living existentially in the "natural attitude" of everyday life (the world of intersubjectively held common-sense), the alternating core/field/fringe "appearings" of all things experienced happen within the individual's living "stream of consciousness" of the present unfolding world in the "Now and Here" (Schutz, 1962, p. 133).[18] Further, in the reflective phenomenological stance of the *epoché* (the phenomenological step of the "transcendental reduction" which suspends, but does not negate, the existence of the objective world in the stream of consciousness) the meanings of the experiences of the world entrenched in consciousness are "revealed" or "grasped" as "the pure life consciousness in which and through which the whole objective world exists for me, by virtue of the fact that I experience it, perceive it, remember it, etc." (p. 123). Hence, *the experiencing human being is the experiential centre of its world*. This "experiencer as

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[18] I explain this further in Chapter 5.

point zero" concept Schutz (inspired by Husserl) alternatively called the theory of the "null point" or "zero point" of experience (Schutz, 1962, pp. 126-127).[19]

For the phenomenological self, however, the world is *not* experienced in solitary existence, it is instead "intersubjectively" lived and validated. "For Husserl," Moustakas (1994) argues, "the world is a community of persons...[engaging in] a continuous alteration of validity...as people articulate and describe their experiences" to each other (p. 57).[20] Intersubjectively, we thus assume that others are also centres of their worlds like we are of ours. There is a "mutual interrelatedness of my existence and that of all others" (Schutz, 1962, p. 126), evidenced by the acting and world-altering embodiedness of the other (see Chapter 5). In other words, I know the other exists in a similar situation as mine – thinking, desiring, grasping the world, etc. – because the other's bodily actions are similar to mine, thus suggesting that the other experiences things as I experience them, intersubjectively validating our mutual existences and each other to each other (Schutz, 1962; Husserl, 1970). Alternatively, and as specifically addressed by phenomenologists such as Husserl, Scheler, Levinas, Gurwitsch, Schutz, Sartre, Arendt, Natanson, and others, in this intersubjectivity the reciprocity of interactions between me and the other affirms my existence, that I am a self (Moran & Mooney, 2002). As Sartre (1964) has powerfully

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[19] Sawicki (2001) states that this is clearly evident in Husserl's posthumously published *Ideas* II, where Husserl claims that "[t]he animal body bears the zero-point of orientation for the pure ego, as its absolute 'here'.... [T]he animated body...is also the one who is zero.... Thus, the zero shifts position in relation to the other unified centres to which perceptions accrue; but as it does so, the series of their appearings change in a regular way" (Husserl, paraphrased in Sawicki, 2001, sec. 6).

[20] Husserl (1970) writes about the other thusly: "[I]n our continuously flowing world-perceiving we are not isolated but rather have, within it, contact with other human beings.... [I]n living with one another one can take part in the life of the others. Thus in general the world exists not only for isolated men but for the community of men...[in a]...communilization...[where]...there constantly occurs an alteration of validity through reciprocal correction" (p. 163).

written: "I am possessed by the Other.... The Other holds a secret—the secret of who I am" (p. 475).

From the Phenomenological Self to the Interactional Self

So, instead of the individualist and liberal humanist self – grounded in Descartes' notion that mind is a priori to the world as an empty vessel ready to be filled by the world – or the empiricist's assertion that all we know of the world is what our senses inform us, for the phenomenological self the world is already there and is implicitly constituted in the self's consciousness or experience as consciousness and experience are intentionally directed towards encountered objects and others.

For phenomenologists, then, the world is needed to understand the self, and the self is needed to understand the world. As Ihde (1983) writes: "Phenomenologically, it is *from* the world that I come to understand myself. Thus, it is in interaction with the world that I come to any form of self understanding, contrarily, without the world I would understand nothing" (p. 13, emphasis in original). "For interpreting self-understanding," Ihde continues, "...the phenomenological self is seen to be neither self-contained nor separated from a context, a field, a world" (p. 14). Intentionality – how one directs oneself towards the world – is always "*interactional* in form" (p. 14, emphasis added) and the subject/object correlate is effaced (Hakim, 2001). Phenomenologically, therefore (and as Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz will assert for us in Chapters 3 to 6), we become selves – *interactional selves* – fully immersed in and informed by our entanglements with the world.

Looking Forward to the Interactional Self and IMC

By mapping out the interactional self as a phenomenologically- and hermeneutically-sensitive interpretive handle for rethinking Internet sociability, in this thesis I am, in some way (if inadvertently), attempting to accomplish a similar project to Hayles's: This thesis seeks to, in part, efface the virtual/real dichotomy that has been opportunistically hijacked in many ways by consumerist and marketing interests, interests that can be seen as creating an *"episteme"* of virtuality that are increasingly being used to meet technocratic and business ends at the expense of users' desires and needs. Instead, I would like to use this thesis to situate the Internet within our everyday settings and everyday experiences in order to show how we can, like Hayles (1999) proposes, begin to "get out of the [quickly sedimenting] boxes" (p. 285) that are framing a similar uni-linear and techno-rationalistic "will-to-virtuality" for IMC, paralleling Hayles's observations concerning our contemporary technological existence in general.

Implicit in this thesis, therefore, is a proposition that we can design better and more user-sensitive IMC technologies if we understand the pragmatic ways IMC is incorporated by users within their everyday life settings and the socio-phenomenological meanings that users give to these IMC tools and mediated interactions within their very use-contexts. I believe a fruitful way for coming to understand these meaningful appropriations might start with a phenomenological and hermeneutic analysis of IMC because, as I show in numerous examples and phenomenological analyses throughout this thesis, users constantly and creatively appropriate the Internet into the needs and

desires of their daily lives; some communication technologies, however, tend to facilitate personal appropriations more than others. In Chapter 6, for example, I conduct a Schutz-inspired phenomenological analysis to show how some community applications are more conducive to these user appropriations than others.

What the grounded theory of the interactional self presented in this thesis attempts to do, therefore, is to offer a local-level, micro-sociological and phenomenological model that could serve as one possible interpretive key to begin to better comprehend how users pragmatically approach and appropriate the IMC technologies in their lives. In a way we can say that the battle for the future of the virtual is already being waged in the very everyday uses being made of the Internet. While structural barriers such as access to the network and the price of computer technologies are still prohibitive for many, millions of Internet users, by their very appropriations and daily uses of the technologies the "network-of-networks" supports, are showing why the Internet should be left as an open communicative space for human interaction and why, therefore, the digital divide must be bridged.

While, as I have already mentioned, this thesis does not engage in an overt study of power differentials or a political economic debate, it does, in spirit, support the work of researchers and scholars that seek to bridge the digital divide and reveal institutionalized power structures by shedding light on the subjective experiences of users engaging in digital culture as located within their local use-contexts. While the emancipative potential of the Internet for an extended public sphere is clear (see, for example, Kahn & Kellner (forthcoming)),

what we have also seen in the past dozen years or so with the advent of the commercial and widely dispersed Internet is the tendency for a technocratic rationality to try and permeate and consolidate IMC within a market-driven paradigm (Feenberg, 1995, 1999). This consolidation by private interests is partially rooted in our epoch's overtly corporate and consumerist adherence to the "wonders" of the virtualness of "cyberspace" that is a chapter of the same narrative of the posthuman presented by Hayles. In this marketing-driven thrust we have, for example, seen, with varying rates of success, the attempt to close off public access to information by subscription-driven portals, the inundation of in-boxes with senseless spam, the narrow claim by some that classrooms can be replaced rather than enhanced by "e-learning" initiatives, a continuation and in some cases a widening of the gulf that makes up the digital divide, and the ever-present risks of digital surveillance and greater and greater encroachments on our personal privacy. All still remain open-ended questions. In this respect, this thesis has a strong, social-democratic bias: it seeks to pursue Feenberg's (1999) quest for the "democratic rationalization" of technology from technocracy and looks to the democratizing possibilities inherent in the hermeneutic flexibility of technologies. At core, I believe that localized and rooted use-contexts can reveal sites of potentially successful user struggles against the technological realities users face on a daily basis (see Chapter 2). The concept of the interactional self seeks to contribute to the unraveling of these struggles from the level of the experiencing IMC user. What phenomenology helps us do is understand the meanings users give to technologically-mediated practices from deep within their lived experiences. I believe the interactional self, situated as it is

somewhere between the narrative-filled communitarian self and the constructivist and linguistically decentred subject, is a way to understand how the Internet is both appropriated into the lives of its users and how its users are also shaped by the structures of IMC technologies. In addition to being a hermeneutically-sensitive, wordly, and contingent individual, this interactional self also possesses the agency and the capacity for ethically-informed and reasoned exchanges, negotiations, and planning within the intersubjective realms of the life-world, which I explain further in Chapters 4 to 6.

It is with this reflexive and emancipatory spirit, and *not* with a desire to take us back to the problematic liberal humanist "self," that I embark on conceptualizing – or, better said, searching for the "potentialities" of – a phenomenological and social interactional self. As I show in the following pages and in the remaining chapters, this phenomenologically-informed self has already dealt with the Cartesian baggage that has saddled the liberal humanist self. Related closely to communitarian notions of the communicatively rational individual of Habermas, the narrative self of MacIntyre, and the reflexive and socio-biographical and intersubjective self of Giddens, the interactional self should be viewed as having close affinities with the socio-historical contingencies of the postmodern subject and the emancipating project of the feminist posthuman program without negating the potential for agency and respectful discourse in the intersubjective realm. Further, in both phenomenological and social interactional theories of the self I see a clear space for an ethics of the self in the concept of the "other." This ethics is not as strongly evident in postmodernist and poststructuralist notions of the decentred subject,

in my view. I also believe that the interactional self can help us to *not* over-theorize the implications of the virtual and the "technocultural formations" of "cyberspace" (Turkle, 1995, p. 298) that have exagerated the implications of the Internet on individuals by theorists such as Sherry Turkle (1995). These over-extensions have had, I believe, far too much influence on the public and academic discourses concerning the uses of the Internet in everyday life because of their overgeneralizations made about "life on the screen" based on evocative but limited studies of a few idiosyncratic online behaviours (Barney, 2000). I address some of these topics specifically in the next chapter and throughout this thesis.

Chapter 2:
Social Interactions and the "World Disclosing" Nature of Internet-Mediated Communication

"[The Internet is] an extension of life as it is, in all its dimensions, and with all its modalities."

~Manuel Castells, 2001, *The Internet Galaxy*, p. 119

Virtual Utopias and Dystopias

As Frank Webster observers in his recent book *Theories of the Information Society*:

> Commentators have increasingly begun to talk about 'information' as a distinguishing feature of the modern world...that a new 'mode of information' predominates, that ours is a now an 'e-society', that we must come to terms with a 'weightless economy'...a 'global economy.'

Indeed, academic accounts of the "information age" have both influenced and been influenced by the popular press and pop culture narratives about both the "new economy" and the new "cyberian" dimensions of contemporary life. We now live, it is said, in a "new information and entertainment ecology" where "information technologies and entertainment media literally saturate modern life" (Bucy, 2004, p. 1). For some, it is further claimed, the freedom to go anywhere and be anyone on the digital networks is an opportunity to liberate the "self" from the shackles of *laissez-faire* neo-liberalist uniformity and the oppressive homogeneity of suburbia (Turkle, 1995; A.R. Stone, 1995; Poster, 2001). For others, the information age and the over-stimulation and inundation of data is evidence of a potential nightmare of the posthuman run amok where

we are losing our very humanity as we drown ourselves in a sea of unsolicited email, bad prose, and inhuman work expectations (Borgmann, 1999; Slouka, 1995) – in a sense, to reword Postman (1985), for these dystopic thinkers we're multitasking and mechanizing ourselves to death.

Both techno-optimists and techno-cynics tend to view our current digitalized iteration of the information age as spearheaded by the proliferation of digital communications networks into every aspect of life. Indeed, the digital network as reality and metaphor can be viewed as our contemporary age's new Prometheus (Barney, 2000). For "cybertheorists," the Internet – or, more dramatically, "cyberspace" – and its inherent technologies are having "profound consequences for our way of life and, indeed, for the ways in which we think about ourselves, because it alters our network of social relations" (Poster, 1990, p. 8) by "dislocating communicative action…from the territorialized spatial relations of modernity" (Poster, 2001, p. 16). For techno-sceptics, it is these very "dislocating" features of the network that are bringing dystopic unease and personal disconnect into contemporary life. In a now famous and much debated study that gave much ammunition to pessimistic views of the Internet, Kraut et al. (1998) concluded that the Internet is a paradox: both a "social" technology but one that decreased quality time offline and led to reduced "psychological wellbeing." Nie & Erbing (2000), in a separate study with related conclusions, found that the more we use the Internet the less time we spend with "real people" (quoted in Burnett & Marshall, p. 65). And Putnam (2000), in his popular book *Bowling Alone*, claimed that we are turning into "suburban hermits" preferring to stay home with our televisions and computers rather than

engaging in civic life. Contemporary philosophers with cautious views concerning our technological existence such Borgmann (1999) and Dreyfus (2001) view these studies as highlighting the fracturing of the individual from the more "authentic" connections of face-to-face life, underscoring their own views that "real" community and human connection cannot be sustained effectively on the networks.

For more optimistic cybertheorists, the view of the Internet as possessing the ability to dislocate communicative actions is, in an ironic twist to the sceptics' findings, usually the point of departure for their claims that cyberspace brings with it the potential for the reinvention of the self and its liberation from the confines of the everyday and the mundane. Our cyber-saturated times, they claim, are demarcated by a radically "fractured" and "hyperreal" world – a *post*modern world – of surface over substance, relativity over essentiality, and *bricolage* and *collage* over received certainties and historical stabilities, turning the Enlightenment project of a stable and knowable world on its head more intensely than ever before (Baudrillard, 1994; Jenks, 1998; Poster, 2001; A. R. Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995). In this view, cybertheorists are borrowing from Jean-François Lyotard's belief that the spirit of the postmodern condition defining our age has thus resulted in deep "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, quoted in Barney, 2000, p. 197). To cybertheorists, cyberspace and the cyberselves recreated on its frontiers are yet more opportunities – or "events" – to "wage war on all forms of totality" (Docherty, 1994, p. 477-478).

Theorists with these postmodernist leanings usually continue this line of revelation by contending that hyperlinked worlds of infinite possibilities and

altered "networks of social relations" are in fact critical to, and proof of, a new

kind of community which can exist apart from physical locale or traditional

institutions like the neighbourhood and the family (Turkle, 1995; Poster, 1990,

2001), the exact opposite of what techno-sceptics like Dreyfus and Borgmann

advocate. Such postmodern communities are rootless yet with the potential to be

highly inclusive and emancipating specifically because of their diversity of access

points and asynchronously dispersed infrastructures (Barlow, 1996; Rheingold,

1994; Tapscott & Caston, 1993). That cyberspace is an actual "place"—albeit a

highly pliable one—and not just a metaphor for the Internet's packet-switched

multi-nodal network is posited as a given amongst these pundits. Some of the

more dramatic views in this camp, inspired by William Gibson's much vaunted

1984 novel *Neuromancer* and taken up critically by Kroker & Weinstein's 1994

dystopic counterweight *Data Trash*, believe that we will eventually be incited to

upload our individual and collective consciousnesses onto the network-of-

networks in a "will to virtuality," (Kroker & Weinstein, 1994, p. 2), ultimately

freeing ourselves, although at times in a recalcitrant way, from the constraints of

physical space, modernist institutional frameworks, and the mortal fate of the

body.[21]

According to these cybertheorists, the self too is now free from not only

the Enlightentment's a priori structures of the unified self, but also from the

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[21] Kroker & Weinstein (1994) term this near-future "technotopia" (p. 2). While paralleling
Baudrillard's implosive theories that see "individuals abandon(ing) the 'desert of the real' for the
ecstasies of hyperreality and a new realm of computer, media, and technological experience"
(Kellner, 1995, p. 297, paraphrasing Baudrillard), Kroker & Weinstein take on a markedly
McLuhanesque irony that ultimately presents a critical analysis of virtuality, stating as they do
that "technotopia is [actually] about disappearances: the vanishing of the body (into a relational
data base), the nervous system into 'distributive processing,' and the skin into wetware" (p. 2,
emphasis in original), transforming society within a virtually "recombinant culture" (p. 2).

oppressive Weberian "iron cage" of rationalized and bureaucratized modernity. For cybertheorists, there is personal liberty to be found in the decentering of the self[22]: Cybertheorists view the experiences of MUD participants and online gamers, for example, as instances of the freedom for personal reinvention to be found in "fragmented" (Turkle, 1995, p. 178), "diffracted" (A. R. Stone, 1995, p. 36), and playfully multiple, heterogeneous, and flexible cyber-scenarios, transforming the self into "cyberselves" living in hypermediated simulacra with no "territory, referential being or substance" (Waskul & Douglass, 1997, p. 380). The common contention among these postmodern theories of the cyberself is encapsulated in psychologist and Internet researcher Sherry Turkle's influential book *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* where she contends that, because of the Internet, we now "are moving from modernist calculation to postmodernist simulation, where the self is a multiple, distributed, system" (Turkle, 1995, p. 148). Moreover, the freedom for personal and communal reinvention that is being forged through our screens and keyboards and onto the networks is said to define the new limits of the human condition itself as we "develop models of psychological well-being that are in a meaningful sense postmodern, [encouraging us to] think of ourselves as fluid, emergent, decentralized, multiplititious, flexible, and ever in process" .

It is hard to argue that theories of cyberspace do not enthral the imagination. The notion of new possibilities for the human in a euphoric version of the posthuman excites us. At the same time, the techno-sceptics leave us perhaps a bit too paralyzed and helpless to do anything about the ills of

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[22] See Chapter 1.

cyberspace except perhaps to turn away from it and stick to more "traditional" ways of living and interacting. Both, I think, rely too-heavily on the argument that new "technocultural formations" (Turkle, 1995, p. 298) are shaping the very meanings of the self and society in ways that I read as overly deterministic and unnecessary for making their points. Both, I argue, over-determine the impact of the digital networks on our everyday lives. Indeed, in both camps' fervor to underscore the connections and disconnections regarding human/Internet dynamics, they can both be seen as setting up an unnecessary dichotomy—the real world vs. the virtual world—without adequately delineating where the real ends and the virtual begins. It is one of my intentions in this thesis to show how a socio-phenomenological approach might show us a better way for coming to know the place of Internet sociability in our everyday lives and, in so doing, to suggest how a phenomenological perspective might help to look beyond this real/virtual dichotomy.

The Social Interaction Position: Internet Practices and Social Situation

The technological optimism that resonates with some cybertheorists' writings, such as Sherry Turkle's account of "life on the screen" and Howard Rheingold's (1994) book on virtual communities, was taken up by business interests and marketing imperatives in the early- to mid-1990s as a sign that a new dawn was approaching for reaching ever-splintering markets. For many corporate and consumer interests, the free-market was going to receive a shot of much renewed vigour in the wake of the recession of the early '90s through the new marketing "channels" that cyberspace was seen as opening up. The Internet

was now going to deliver better customer resource management capabilities, better direct and lifestyle marketing opportunities, and better delivery and ordering infrastructures. Indeed, the creeds of customer empowerment and the new 'Net economy became two of the main mantras of the decade. On the other end of the spectrum, this "techno-boosterism" was counterweighted by a growing wave of melodramatic media reports of addicted Internet users driven to suicidal despair on the empty, shallow, and depraved streets of cyberspace where pornography and gambling were seen as potentially tearing apart society's long-held bonds.

Spurred on by the obvious need for more balanced accounts of the place of Internet mediation in our socio-cultural settings, a growing body of ethnographic and survey-based research projects ultimately grounded in the human and social philosophies of experience are increasingly showing that perhaps "cyberspace" is more mundanely placed in our daily lives (Bakardjieva, 2000; Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimmons, 2002; Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004; Howard, Rainie, & Jones, 2002; Markham, 1998; Markman, 2003; McKenna, Green, & Gleeson, 2002; Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004; Papacharissi, 2002; Romero, 2003; Slater, 1998; Walker, 2000; Wynn & Katz, 1997). Rather than the arguably deterministic notion of a "multiple, distributed system" where "technocultural formations" shape our very notion of personhood (Turkle, 1995, p. 298) that lead to "new configuration[s] of the construction of the subject" (Poster, 2001, p. 6), or the alternative view that cyberspace is creating socially and psychologically disconnected individuals, these ethnographic studies are refocusing the Internet's impact on the self and online sociability with the

advantages that hindsight and more traditional, though no less relevant, scholarship bring to bear. Manuel Castells (2001), for example, in his exhaustive analysis of recent research looking at Internet sociability in his book *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society,* disagrees with the idea that the Internet is that different or apart from situated life, claiming boldly that "the uses of the Internet are, overwhelmingly, instrumental and closely connected to the work, family, and everyday life of Internet users" (p. 118). Barry Wellman (1999), from the perspective of social network theory, supports this: "The Net is only one of many ways in which the same people may interact...it is not a separate reality" (p. 169). This view is confirmed by much current scholarship and underscores the main theme of the studies I review in this thesis, perhaps best articulated by Miller & Arnold's (2002) Goffman-inspired look at gender and identity designed into personal home pages: "What people are doing on the Web is primarily what people are doing offline...by and large, and the things people do on the Web, and the selves presented there, should not be expected to be distinct and separated from actions and self in other areas of life" (sec. 5.3). As the myriad studies reviewed by Castells (2001) and Wellman (1999) show, it appears that Internet sociability brings with it and supports the pleasures, habits, baggage, needs, desires, and wants of its users' socially situated cultural lives.[23]

Underscoring this position and casting substantial doubt onto cybertheory's decentred selves and social lives in virtualness, a growing number of social thinkers such as Castells (2001), Barney (2000), Webster, Wellman &

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[23] For a good assortment of ethnographic studies that support the thesis of the Internet as socially situated in the complex socio-biographies of its users, see Jones (1995; 1998). For more quantitatively-focused research that arrives at the same conclusions, see Wellman & Haythornthwaite (2002) and Howard & Jones (2004).

Gulia (1999), Feenberg & Bakardjieva (2002), and Wynn & Katz (1997) are also uncomfortable with the monopoly this often deterministic and at times overtly technophilic research has enjoyed in popular media and marketing accounts of online sociability and identity play, especially with "e-enthusiasts" such as Kelly (1997), Tapscott (1998; 1993), Barlow (1994; 1996), and even Bill Gates once he became convinced that the Internet was here to stay (Gates, Myhrvold, & Rinearson, 1996). In addition, Barney (2000) claims that, paradoxically, accounts such as Turkle's, though insightful with respect to particular online behaviours, are also "less helpful if one's concern is to understand what network technologies do *to* us" (pp. 203-204) because such cybertheoretical tellings focus too much on "idiosyncratic" behaviours on particular online applications (role-playing on MUDs, in Turkle's case) "that are not representative of the range of ways in which most people encounter network technology" (p. 204). Illustrative of a more cautious position, and supporting Barney's assessment, Castells (2001) concludes that "role–playing and identity-building as the basis of online interaction are a tiny proportion of Internet-based sociability" (p. 119), forcefully pointing out that the over-reporting of studies that advocate a new world, a new economy, a new kind of human interaction, and a new multidudinous self emerging out of hypermediated technologies "distorted the public perception of the social practice of the Internet as the privileged terrain for personal fantasies" (p. 119). Instead, Castells emphasizes that the Internet is "an extension of life as it is, in all its dimensions, and with all its modalities" (p. 119). Wynn & Katz (1997) also point this out: Foreshadowing my discussion of Schutz's dimensionalized life-world in Chapters 5 and 6, their study of the practices of

developing and sustaining personal home pages shows how instances of online anonymity are mostly strategic at best and do not typically deviate much from offline instances of anonymous interaction. While not negating the potential for anonymity and fantasy-play as users opportunistically appropriate the affordances of certain IMC technologies, Wynn & Katz instead argue that anonymous behaviours and role-playing are not reflective of most types of interactions online; role-playing and anonymous online behaviour are typically engaged in by a comparatively small, although growing, sub-culture of game players or for reasons of personal security when transacting online, the authors show. Even with EverQuest[24] enthusiasts, for example, social interactions engaged in on its vast worlds[25] are much more rooted in everyday life than commonly assumed, as Chee & Vieta (2004) have found and as I discuss in related discussions in Chapter's 5 and 6. Ultimately, online anonymity is more often than not dependent on and indicative of the interactional needs and characteristics of the social situation at hand, as Wynn & Katz and Wellman & Gulia claim and as I theoretically lay out later on in this thesis (see Chapter 6). Rather than a liberation of the mortal self from the confines of mundane space-bound and time-bound life (playfully referred to by some as "meatspace"[26]), anonymous online activity tends to parallel the multiplex and pragmatic ways we engage with the world and with others in everyday life, grounded as we are

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[24] EverQuest is the most popular of the online role-playing games known as Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, or "MMPORGs" for short (see Chee & Vieta (2004) and Chapters 5 and 6 for more details).
[25] According to Chee (Chee, 2004), the EverQuest online world is not user created. Rather, the social interactions that emerge on it are. Norrath (the principle EverQuest world) is developed by Sony.
[26] For a definition of the term, see http://info.astrian.net/jargon/terms/m/meatspace.html ("The Jargon Dictionary," 2000).

in a situationally bounded and socio-historically rooted reality (Ihde, 1990).

Indeed, a growing number of qualitative and quantitative Internet studies underscore Castell's, Wellman's, and Wynn & Katz's claims: For most users, these studies show, the Internet is a tool for communication (also see Rowland, 1999). For instance, as UCLA's (2003) ongoing Internet report, "Surveying the Digital Future" shows (see tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 2), emailing and increasingly instant messaging are the two most popular activities on the Internet. Wellman & Gulia (1999) show how these communication practices are also mostly rooted in known social networks of kith, kin, and professional networks. As the number one and two online activities respectively in 2001, 87.6% of online users used email and instant messaging, mostly connecting with known recipients on a regular daily basis, up from 81.6% in 2000 ("Surveying the digital future," 2003) (see table 2 in Appendix 2). Also indicative of how mundanely-placed the Internet is in our daily lives, these communicational activities were followed in popularity by "Web surfing or browsing" for information (76.3%), "buying online" (48.9%), "finding entertainment info" (47.9%), and "reading news" (47.6%) (2003).[27] Playing online games, a usual haunt of the "virtual self" according to cybertheorists (see Turkle, 1995, for example), was practiced by 36.6% of the population in 2000 of whom, in turn, only a fraction engaged in the ostensible "role-playing" endeavours ruminated over to such a great extent by the popular press and cybertheorists (for example, of the estimated 709.1 to 945 million current Internet users (Cyberatlas, 2003),

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[27] Howard, Rainie, & Jones (2002), reporting on another data set gathered by the Pew Internet and American Life Project ("Pew Internet and American life project," 2004), conclude that "[t]he vast majority of those who are online in a typical day read and send email" (p. 51). Further, this is the case among all ethnic, age, education, and income groups (see table 3 in Appendix 2).

there are only an estimated 435,000 EverQuest players worldwide (Ng, n.d.)[28].

Indeed, as Chee & Vieta (2004) found, and as will be discussed further in Chapter

6, to what degree and how often MMPORG players actually even engage in "role

playing" activities should be re-evaluated in light of how players integrate

EverQuest into their everyday lives (see Chapter 6). Additionally, and as table 2

shows in Appendix 2, the online activities of more seasoned Internet users seem

to follow the same general patterns as novice users with the communicational

activity of emailing dominating time spent online by both expert and novice

groups. Indeed, even more experienced users tend to not experiment with new

types of online activities. An exception here is the increased usage of the Internet

for work related purposes amongst more experienced users. Tellingly, and as

table 2 in Appendix 2 further shows, more experienced users play less games,

browse less, use chat rooms less, and even use the Internet for entertainment

purposes less than more novice users. Instead, older users tend to use the

Internet for more specialized, pragmatically instrumental, and mundane

activities like banking, stock trading, for news information, and work. Perhaps

this is evidence that even the mighty and world-altering Internet eventually loses

its novelty. It certainly shows the mundane place it holds in the lives of the

majority of its users.

In light of this mounting empirical evidence, it seems that the "will-to-

communicate," not the "will-to-virtuality," has been the driving force behind the

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[28] EverQuest is, by a long shot, the most popular of the online role-playing games known as
"MMPORGs." For some alternative readings of the social phenomenon behind these games see
the work of Chee & Smith (2003) and Chee & Vieta (2004). Also see Chapter 6 for a re-
theorization of the social interactions that occur on EverQuest from the perspective of Schutz's
theory of "multiple realities."

rapid diffusion of the Internet over the past dozen years (also see Rowland, 1999; Feenberg, 1995b). This communicational root at the heart of the Internet could be considered a continuation of the same sociological trajectory that revealed the social potential of the first computer networks such as ARPANET in the 1970s (Rowland, 1999); the French Minitel (Feenberg, 1995b) and the WELL (Rheingold, 1994) in the mid- to late-1980s; CompuServe and Prodigy in the late-1980s and early 1990s (Rowland, 1999); as well as the rapid growth of the PC and the early success of the Apple IIe computer (1999). In the history of the anthropological and sociological adaptations of all of these technologies, the one striking similarity is that their popularity skyrocketed amongst the non-technologist and non-business user when their potential as communicational devices became evident (Rowland, 1999; Feenberg, 1995b). This will-to-communicate via the network-of-networks has recently witnessed the rapid proliferation of chatting, email, accessing the Internet via cell phones using wireless application protocols (WAP), and text messaging (Rheingold, 2002; Weinberger, 2002). The current case of the blog (Bausch, Haughey, & Hourihan, 2002) (see Chapter 4) and the growing popularity of "wikis" (multiple-authored web sites) (Kahn & Kellner, forthcoming) seem to be the latest iterations of this will-to-communicate that drives IMC technologies.

Simply put, ethnographic studies and survey research are increasingly showing that the Internet has been tightly integrated into the situated social practices of its users. The Internet seems to be a powerful and strategic communicational tool chest used to interact with known social networks of kith, kin, and ken and, as I show later, for more "weaker" types of interactions such as

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connecting with potential partners, for career networking, for work-related tasks, support groups, and, by some, for more emancipative and even activist purposes (Bakardjieva, 2000; Castells, 2001; Feenberg & Bakardjieva, 2002; Herring et al., 2004; Jones, 1998; H. Miller & Arnold, 2002; Nardi et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2003; Smith & Bakardjieva, 2001; Wellman, 1999; Wynn & Katz, 1997). As these recent social interaction studies suggest, Internet users on the whole build their social networks, online and off, on the basis of their socio-biographically proximate relations, intersubjectively sedimented social values, and embodied projects, mostly combining online activities with offline affinities.

These socially-situated discoveries side with explanations that lean more on social interactionist, pragmatist, and phenomenological sign-posts, not on theories built on accounts relying solely on the fringe behaviours of experimental cyberselves, as the postmodernists are wont to do, nor on narrowly focused studies that primarily point to the socially isolating aspects of Internet behaviour, as the techno-pessimists tend towards. This growing evidence of more complex social situation begins to sketch out the first preliminary conceptual images of the interactional self on our social-world canvas, suggesting our first postulate for the interactional self in IMC:

- *Postulate 1: The interactional self's sedimented and socio-biographical offline affinities, on the whole, dictate its online activities.*

Towards the "Worlding" Theory of IMC

From the discussion thusfar, it is clear that defining online sociability by relying solely on accounts of fringe, exceptional, or marginalized behaviour is problematic. It is important to note here that my aim is not to discard or discredit postmodern theories. On the contrary, postmodern sensibilities have

gone far in providing both critical and hopeful accounts of the varied contours of our contemporary existence in advanced industrial society. An influential group of postmodern writers, for instance, have spent considerable time warning us of the potential risks and failings of our contemporary speed-obsessed technological existence (e.g., Virilio & Der Derian, 1998) and the crisis of consumerist culture (Baudrillard's cutting, anti-Tocqvillean exposé *America* (1988) comes to mind). Baudrillard (1994) and Goldman & Papson (1996) in particular, have warned us of the crisis of signification and, in particular, the signified (the referent) in our present cultural habitus as a result of media culture's over-reliance on signifiers at the expense of substance (symbols that merely reference other symbols and images that reference images) (i.e., the deluge of infotainment, the hyper-significations of marketing communication messages, the fetishism of surface over substance, etc.). Others, as I have already discussed, have provided vividly provocative interpretations of the state of our contemporary media-saturated world and of the possibilities and freeing hope that lies in mediated, information-driven existence (e.g., A. R. Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995) or even in the democratizing potential of mass-mediated messages (e.g., Vattimo, 1992).

Having said this, colourful cybertheorist accounts of multiple cyberselves living in autonomous and liberated cyberworlds separated from situated and embodied life through the screens of the Internet do not offer firm enough theoretical handles for both the social scientist and humanist theorist concerned with most-likely ways that the technical *and* experiential contours of IMC both influence and are influenced by everyday settings. They also do not tell the tale of interactions through the screen

completely enough to effectively account for the "double aspect" (Feenberg, 1995c) nature of technological mediations – "that social meanings *and* functional rationality are inextricably intertwined dimensions" (p. 12, emphasis added) – especially for planning, designing, and implementing IMC applications and infrastructures. Instead, Wynn & Katz (1997) suggest that the social theorist and social researcher should turn to "a substantial body of theory in social interaction based on the premise of co-construction" (p. 297) that discusses "identity as an artifact of social context" (p. 301). The history of this social interaction theory, according to Wynn & Katz, includes the inheritance of Simmel's social action theories, Mead's symbolic interactionism, Schutz's intersubjective sociological phenomenology, Goffman's theories of self-performance management, Schegloff's theory of identity as a by-product of the group, and Berger & Luckmann's notions of the social construction of reality. "All view selfhood," Wynn & Katz (1997, p. 301) explain, "as a product and process of social forces, whether in the context of everyday interaction, negotiations over meaning and manners, or struggles for social dominance" (p. 301). For reasons I lay out in the following pages, I would also add the phenomenology inspired by the work of Husserl and Heidegger to this group.[29]

Nevertheless, the fact that communications studies must begin to rethink the nature of the self, self and other, and social interaction in light of the new mediated realities disclosed by the Internet, as suggested earnestly by postmodern theorists, is not to be negated or undervalued. In fact, that existence amongst technology rearranges aspects of human life has been accepted since at least Plato's day (Scharff &

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[29] For a complementary list and a similar interdisciplinary approach that also includes the works of phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Husserl, see Ihde (1983, p. 2).

Dusek, 2003). More recently, "medium theorists" such as Innis, McLuhan, Ihde, Chandler, Meyrowitz, Ong, and Havelock, for example, have articulately and fervently shown, if not as provocatively as the postmoderns, that communication media in various ways "give shape to experience" (Chandler, 1996, par. 9) because of their "selectivity" (par. 9), "transforming the communication situation" (Ihde, 1983, p. 48) due to their "nonneutral" characteristic (p. 48) that can even be said to "restructure consciousness" (Ong, 1982/2002, pp. 77, 133-134).[30] Medium theorists have particularly shown how new media have not only influenced micro-perceptual realities, but also historical trajectories (Innis, McLuhan), political infrastructures (Innis), sociological formations (Meyrowitz), and socio-cultural consciousness (Ong).

Cultural studies (Williams, Hall, Ang, Morely, Hebdige, Silverstone, etc.) has also advanced much invaluable work that concerns the influences of mediated existence on the individual and the group but adds a socio-political slant to the mix: Cultural studies has demonstrated that audiences receive, appropriate, use, negotiate, and reinterpret mass-mediated messages within their local and domestic situations in order to meet their own ends, not necessarily the intended ends of the producers of corporatist and prepackaged mass-mediated content. In particular, cultural studies-influenced researchers have shown new possibilities for de Certeauian-type tactical and resistive (re)interpretations and decodings of mass-mediated messages and communications technologies by otherwise excluded and marginalized lives

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[30] Chandler (1996) sums up the role of mediation as viewed by medium theorists such as McLuhan succinctly: "The selectivity of a medium arises from the way in which it formalizes phenomena within its own constraints. Any medium facilitates, emphasizes, amplifies, enhances or extends certain kinds of use or experience whilst inhibiting, restricting or reducing other kinds.... [Use of any medium] always involves a 'cost.' There are [macro- and micro-phenomenological] losses as well as gains" (par. 10).

(Bakardjieva, 2000; Smith & Bakardjieva, 2001).[31]

Yet other more humanistic philosophical perspectives such as, for instance, aspects of the Frankfurt School (culminating in Marcuse's "one dimensional" thesis), the early Habermas, the later Heidegger, the work of Ellul, and more recently, Borgmann and Dreyfus,[32] have also given similar world-altering force to the "technization" of modern life but from a deeply cautionary and even technophobic perspective Feenberg terms "the substantivist critique" of technology. In its more extreme form (i.e., Heidegger, Ellul) substantivism is called "essentialism."[33]

But the view that technology frames, moulds, changes, selects, influences, or determines reality is only part of the story. To base a critical perspective of technologically-mediated reality solely on this premise would be to risk the pitfalls of technological determinism and, in its worst case, essentialism. Cultural study's approach, for example, seems to suggest, if incompletely,[34] the hermeneutic openness

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[31] De Certeau (1984) posited that localized social groups practice "tactics" for overcoming the "'strategies' of institutionalized controls" that permeate everyday life (Feenberg, 1999, p. 112, emphasis in original). Inspired by Foucault's analysis of "regimes of truth" and the openings in those regimes that allow "subjugated knowledges" room for resistance (see Chapter 1), these tactical opportunities are to be found in the very dominant codes of the institutional structures containing the upper hand in the socio-political power differential.

[32] I would also include aspects of McLuhan in this camp, see especially McLuhan & Fiore (1968).

[33] "Substantivism" gives a "substantive content to technical mediation" (Feenberg, 1999, p. 2) that sees technology ultimately "transform what it is to be human" (p. 2). To substantivists, technology is not merely instrumental or neutral but is engrained with "specific values" that cannot separate the means from the ends. The substantivist view is encapsulated in the phrase "the tools we shape in turn shape us." "Essentialism" is the more extreme form of substantivism, according to Feenberg (1999, pp. 2-3). Essentialists also argue that technology frames our values to such an extent that it "reveals" our epoch as distinguished by the fact that technology is no longer "mere instrumentality" but now "forms a culture of universal control" (pp. 2-3) (i.e., Heidegger, Ellul). Essentialists view technology as "essentially" reducing everything in its environs, and especially its very human users, to "functions and raw materials" (p. viii), where efficiency and goal-oriented tasks override human values and meaning. The effects of this are that users are "enframed" within technologies' very operational infrastructures (Heidegger, 1977).

[34] Feenberg (1999) suggests that cultural study's focus on "reception theory" and the "domestication" and "user appropriations" of household technologies, while a useful starting point, does not adequately account for cases such as IMC where "users do not bring technology in from the outside but act though it on the public world" (p. 107). Bakardjieva (2000) has

and multiple possibilities for user engagement in deciding the eventual applications of the technological things of everyday life that might not have been intended by its designers (e.g., the unforeseen recent phenomenon of using cell phones as pocket watches). The complementary critical phenomenological approaches of Feenberg (1999; 2003), Ihde (1990), Bakardjieva (2000), Barney (1999), and others, for example, offer a further dimension to cultural study's acknowledgement of user agency in that they attempt to articulate not only the workings of the tactical and imaginative appropriations of technical things by users within their immediate life-worlds but suggest that, because of the very reality of user appropriations of technology into their everyday life circumstances, technological implementation and design decisions should be considered within the socio-political, legislative, and participatory spheres, as well; there is simply too much at stake for our well-being not to.

The unifying theme in Feenberg's work, for instance, is to ultimately show how substantivist critique informs the "deworlding" nature of the technological while at the same time correcting the over-determination of technology by subtantivism's more extreme form, essentialism. As such, Feenberg sides with technological constructivists and posits that technology is rather "underdetermined" and thus malleable to use-contexts as humans hermeneutically interpret the place of technologies within their everyday lives. Pinch & Bijker (1987) call this the "interpretative flexibility" (p. 40) of technology, immersing the historical development of the technical in the "meanings" social groups give to artifacts (p. 40): Thus, artifacts are said to be "socially constructed." As such, technology, Feenberg (1999) claims, has an "ambivalence" to it

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attempted to reconcile Feenberg's critical theory with cultural study's hermeneutics in her ethnographies of the Internet and everyday life.

that compels users to hermeneutically assimilate the technical into their own life situations, allowing for a wider range of user applications than assumed by either substantivists or rational technological evolutionists (this is the case especially before a technology is "black boxed" – the phenomenon whereby the artifact is perceptually, culturally, and even politically dislocated from its social and historical contingencies once it becomes normalized and stabilized).[35] Understanding this ambivalence is important, according to Feenberg (1999), because it opens up technology to the realm of the deliberative and democratic (p. 7).

The crisis of modernity as identified primarily by Marcuse's (1964) treatment of technological rationality as a sociological problem (and picked up by Feenberg (1991; 1999; 2002)) has meant that a technocratic ideology of rational control has usurped the realms of the technical and the cultural, thus obscuring the ambivalence and malleability of technology. In modernity, technical thinking – "instrumental reason" – is considered the default way of thinking at the expense of more passionate and artistic expressions of human values within our technological existence. But this is not that way it has to be, claims Marcuse. As Foucault, Marcuse, Habermas, and Feenberg have all shown, there is nothing that naturally, or essentially, compels us to make the instrumental reason that predominates modernist ways of thinking the "natural" order of the world. Indeed, technologies and techniques have been deemed "rational" by human values. We have, within our modernist socio-political order, bestowed too much power onto the technical. All four theorists show that alternative forms of

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[35] The ambivalence of technology is not to be confused with the neutrality thesis of technology that is advocated by strict technological rationalists (Feenberg, 2002). Ambivalence, rather, deeply entrenches the technological into the open-ended and political realm of human values while still recognizing the technical structures that give shape and functional direction to technology (2002).

rationality are possible.

Marcuse and Feenberg, in particular, show alternative ways of thinking of the technical sphere that can enlist it in projects focusing on beneficial and egalitarian social change. This possibility has led Feenberg to coin the term "subversive rationalization" (Feenberg, 1995)³⁶ to underscore the democratic possibilities for the rational and the technical. For Feenberg and Marcuse, then, technology does not possess an absolute, a priori ontology outside of human values. On the contrary, technology is saturated with human values. As such, which value predominates in the technical sphere will define the place of the technical in the cultural and political order and will dictate who controls it and who must submit to its control. "On this view," Feenberg (2002, p. 15) later asserts, "technology is not a destiny but a scene of struggle.... It is a social battlefield...a 'parliament of things'" (p. 15).

Thus, within this "social battlefield" two principle and interlocked dynamics are at play: As Pinch & Bijker (1987) have convincingly shown and as Feenberg (1999), Ihde (1990), and Winner (2003) have concretely advanced in their related critical philosophies of technology, technologies both frame and are framed by the life-worlds of their users. This, at least theoretically, opens up the possibilities for end-user empowerment and the democratization of the technical realm. Recent communication scholarship, for instance, partially inspired by critical hermeneutic views of technology (Bakardjieva, 2000; Barney, 2000; Dourish, 2001; Mynatt, O'Day, Adler, & Ito, 1998; Smith & Bakardjieva, 2001) are showing that technology – and communication media in particular – indeed "afford" (Mynatt et al., 1998) and "select" (Chandler, 1996)

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³⁶ Feenberg later amended this term to "democratic rationalization" to better account for the participatory possibilities in technological designs and implementations (1999).

certain human actions, interactions, conditions, and even perceptions (Ihde, 1983; McLuhan, 1964/1994) over others. At the same time, critically- and hermeneutically-sensitive researchers such as Feenberg Ihde, and Bakardjieva, hold the view that technologies are *given* affordances by the very use-contexts, situational specificities, social biographies, existential needs, and life-world meanings of their users. Two examples of this emergent research committed to accounting for both the technological affordances as well as the hermeneutics of everyday use-contexts are Feenberg's (1995b) essay on the social (re)construction of the French Minitel (a pre-Internet version of a packet-switched communication and information network) and Bakardjieva's (2000) ground-breaking study that looks at the ways Internet users "domesticate" the network, their computers, and their personal spaces for their own socio-cultural and political ends (see Chapter 5 for a detailed overview of the latter study). These new hermeneutic and constructivist research programs are convincingly showing that more socially-sensitive studies that better address user-centric experiences are needed by technology and society researchers in order to effectively account for the interplay between the technical and the social. Tellingly, they are engrained in the premise that technology and the rationality behind it both constructs and is constructed by social reality; makes and is made by social interaction; gives meaning to and is given meaning by users' life-worlds.

The "World-Disclosing" Nature of Technology

The dyadic relationship between humans and the technologies in their lives is a Heideggerian-inspired dynamic that Feenberg (2003) calls the "world-disclosing" nature of technologies (p. 95). As Feenberg writes:

For Heidegger, worlds are realms of meaning and corresponding practices rather than collections of objects as in conventional usage. A world is 'disclosed' according to Heidegger in the sense that the orientation of the subject opens up a coherent perspective on reality…. Here, interpretation is no specialized intellectual activity, but the very basis of our existence as human beings. (p. 93)

In other words, Heidegger's worlds are ensconced in meaning and practices, in the very experiences of their inhabitants. Technological rationality is also completely enmeshed in the hermeneutics and pragmatics of human life. As such, Feenberg (1995; 1999; 2003) has attempted to reconcile the heretofore disparate traditions of modern dystopic theories of technology with more social constructivist and hermeneutic leanings, proposing a theoretical synthesis he calls the "intrumentalization theory" of technology (1999, pp. 201-222; 2003, pp. 95-101). In this theory, technology both "deworlds" (i.e., technicity) and "reworlds" (i.e., new possibilities, social construction, etc.). It "deworlds" in "the *functional* constitution of technical objects and subjects (1999, p. 202, emphasis added) – what Feenberg calls "primary instrumentalization" (p. 202). It "reworlds" in the "complementary process of *realization* which qualifies functionalization by orienting it toward a new world containing those same objects and subjects" (2003, p. 97) in what he calls "secondary instrumentalization (1999, p. 202). In opposite ways, claims Feenberg (2003), both constructivist *and* modernity theories "fail to recognize the deworlding associated with technology is necessarily and simultaneously entry into another world" (p. 97). In this dyadic model, users are "positioned" by the functional contours of the technology but from a "specific locus from which technical action is possible: the 'drivers seat'" (p. 104, emphasis in original). Feenberg continues: "So located, the subject finds itself before a 'world' of affordances that invite

initiatives of one sort or another " (p. 104, emphasis in original). But these "worlds" are not fundamentally separate and apart from situated life, as cybertheory assumes. I interpret this "reworlding" to be, instead, a new revelation of the many possible shadings of our own life-world. These worlds are like the worlds opened up by art and music (as in "Dali's world" or "Bob Dylan's world") or the world as known through a particular language or culture ("the Chinese world," "the Sicilian world," or "the academic world"). They are new possibilities reconfigured from the concatenations of human living in technologically-mediated realities within our meaning-saturated cultural existence. There is, in other words, a world-revealing or "world-disclosing" duality in the ways humans relate to and appropriate technologies. Feenberg makes this clear when he explains that

> [o]n the one hand, the evolution of technologies depends in the interpretative practices of their users. On the other hand, human beings are essentially interpreters shaped by world disclosing technologies. Human beings and their technologies are involved in a co-construction without origin. (p. 95)

Thus, while the medium is in many ways the message, the medium can also be re-appropriated by its users to forge new, user-centric messages.

By allying my thesis's theory of the interactional self with Feenberg's theory of the worlding nature of technology in human-technology relations, I am subsequently digging into the same phenomenological and pragmatist roots that have also inspired Feenberg's hermeneutic theories of technological existence, exploring some of the possibilities for a similar phenomenological structure to "human-Internet" and "human-to-human through the Internet" relations. I view the interactional self as a disclosive concept that harbours these possibilities.

Towards Retheorizing IMC Through the Contours of the Interactional Self

I would now like to spend the rest of the thesis exploring some recent IMC-focused ethnographic and communication studies that begin to reveal a self that is mundanely situated in online social activities in light of particularly relevant aspects of the theories of worldly encounter proposed by Heidegger, Mead, Schutz, and Husserl. The following analysis will reveal an existential, social interactional, and phenomenological self that, online or off, is interpretatively ensconced in a world of things and of others. In so doing, I will continue to paint the portrait of the interactional self and argue, as Feenberg, Bakardjieva, Wynn & Katz, Castells, Wellman, and others do, that online social actions are, on the whole, firmly entrenched in everyday social settings and everyday social practices. I will attempt to further interpret this using some of the tools of phenomenological analysis. In the process of understanding online sociability through the lenses of phenomenological and social interaction theories, the analytically useful interactional self will eventually emerge as a self rooted in agency, interpretative understanding, and socio-symbolic interaction, fully embodied and pragmatically engaged with the things of the world as they are given to it via the mediations of the network and more traditional forms of interaction.

In the process, not only will the detailed contours of the interactional self living in an effaced online/offline world unfold, but what will also be revealed is the integral role of meaning deeply entrenched in the life-world of the "subjective associations" (Feenberg, 1999, p. xii) that lie at the core of all human-appropriated uses of technology. In this light, the interactional self can be said to

add a specifically subjective and phenomenological "user as point-zero of experience" perspective to Feenberg's hermeneutic instrumentalization theory (Feenberg, 1999; 2003). Crucially for the interactional self, the dynamic interplay between human-technology relations that resonates in Feenberg's dyadic model is also present, in varying ways, in the theories of the phenomenological and interactional self of Heidegger, Mead, Schutz, and Husserl. Through the portrait of the interactional self, I will show that this dyadically hermeneutic human-technology interplay is also revealed in IMC settings. Most importantly, perhaps, I ultimately posit that this phemenological and hermeneutically inclined interactional self can be used to inform Internet technologists, software designers, and Internet users and communicants concerning some of the nuances of the interplay between "device and meaning, technical and lifeworld practice" from the "experiential standpoint" (Feenberg, 1999, p. xii) of Internet sociability. I eventually show in the following chapters of this thesis how the interactional self underscores the claim that, as succinctly articulated by Dourish's (2001) discussion of human-computer interactions, "action and meaning are inherently inseparable" (p. 135). Thus, the interactional self, I argue, ultimately reveals that the phenomenological contours of "device and meaning, technical and lifeworld practice" in the lived experiences of Internet social settings are made up of three vital *encounters*: the encounter with the self, the encounter with the other, and the encounter with community and the world at large.

This brief introduction to the world-disclosing nature of technology for the interactional self living within technologically-mediated realities brings us to our second postulate:

- *Postulate 2: The interactional self is the "point-zero" of all human experience and lives within a socio-biographically-rooted life-world where meaning is interpretively mediated within both the life-world's technological contours and the experientially-based and socio-culturally informed use-contexts of those technological contours.*

Chapter 3:
Heidegger and "Being-in-the-World":
The Ontology of the Interactional Self
and Internet-Mediated Communication

"One is what one does...."

~Martin Heidegger, 1925/1985, *History of the Concept of Time:
Prolegomena*, p. 336

"To the everydayness of Being-in-the-world there belong certain modes of concern."

~Martin Heidegger, 1962/2001, *Being and Time*, p. 102

This chapter continues to outline the emerging sketch of the interactional self on the social-world canvas using the interpretivist brushes of Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology outlined in his monumental text *Being & Time* (1962/2001). The chapter subsequently maps out the interactional self as a phenomenological being intimately intertwined with its world of mundane everyday experiences and engagements, online or off.

According to three recent interpretations of Heidegger's phenomenology of worldly encounter by Barney (2000), Dourish (2001), and Feenberg (2003), Heidegger can help us understand the everydayness of the Internet and its place in our technologically-mediated existence. For Dourish (2001), writing on the topic of human-computer interaction (HCI), Heidegger can show us that even interactions through the screen are "grounded in everyday, mundane experience" (p. 125) and that "embodiment and phenomenology are relevant to

tangible and social computing" (p. 116). For Barney (2000), Heidegger helps us understand what "more pervasive network mediations mean for what we are as human beings" (p. 204). And for Feenberg (2003), Heidegger helps us see that digital communication discloses new worlds *while also* deworlding us of others; that computational interactions disclose "realms of meaning" based on corresponding socio-cultural practices and inherent phenomenological gains and negations ultimately compensated in strategic ways by users (p. 93). Out of these fresh and contemporary interpretations of Heidegger for analyzing networked social and human-technology interactions, and from my own reading of Heidegger's theories of the "worldhood of the world" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 78-148), I have attempted to refocus the "virtual reality" (VR) and the "real world" (RW) dichotomy (paradoxically) assumed by cybertheories into one multi-faceted user-centred life-world. In this multi-perspectival life-world individuals have, on the whole, the capacity for "a coherent perspective on reality," claims Feenberg (2003, p. 93), while simultaneously living in a multitude of world-disclosing scenarios constituting both encounters of flesh-and-blood and bits-and-bytes.[37]

In this light, therefore, rather than a separate "cyberworld" or "virtual reality," Heidegger begins to show us that the "online world" could actually be conceived of as the "world online" which is, as Castells and Wellman already pointed out, not a separate reality but a part of our everyday life. Through Heidegger, I argue, we can begin to say that IMC does indeed offer a relatively new way of encountering our multi-dimensional life-world without saying that it

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[37] I further develop this in Chapter 5 with Schutz's concept of the working/partial self.

is a completely different reality or a separate world removed from the contours

of daily life. Heidegger can begin to teach us that the world online is, instead,

integrated intimately within daily life by the uses we make of it.

Dasein as the Interactional Self in a Life-World of Things

Heidegger's life's work was concerned with meditating on the meaning of

existence (Being[38]) as he, according to Dourish (2001), asked "[h]ow does the

world reveal itself to us through our encounters with it?" (p. 107). From this

ontological beginning Heidegger starts to etch the outline of the interactional self

as fundamentally an entity in constant and interpretative interaction with the

world. This is Heidegger's "practical intentionality" and is wrapped up in his

notion of *Dasein*, "his essence of being human" or, literally, "there where being

dwells" (Dourish, 2001, p. 118).[39] *Dasein* can also be viewed as a more practically

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[38] Heidegger (1962/2001) differentiates between "Being" (*Sein*) and "being" (*das Seiende*). *Das Seiende*, or *Seiendes* ("beings"), are materially observable "entities" which we can count, categorize, measure, and otherwise account for based on their attributes by scientific observation (p. 91). The beings of the world as "entities" can thus be depicted, described, and accounted for "pre-phenomenological[ly]" and "ontical[ly]" (p. 91) in their "What-being" (Inwood, 1999, p. 27). *Sein* ("Being" with a capitalized "B" in most English translations) is the given nature of the existence of things, the fundamental fact that entities (things) *are* and that they exist (Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 21-25; 91-92). It is the "How-being" and the "That-being," the "type, manner, and mode of [B]eing" (Inwood, 1999, p. 27), not a list of properties. All beings "are"; all beings have Being. "Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 62). "If we knew only of beings, having no understanding of [B]eing" explains Inwood (1999, p. 47), "we could not relate to or 'comport ourselves' to beings [*das Seindes*] as such" (p. 47). Heidegger thus called the fundamental difference between *Sein* and *das Seindes* the "ontological difference" (p. 46).
[39] Inwood (1999) tells us that *Dasein* literally means "there-being" (p. 42). Heidegger's translators Macquarrie & Robinson (2001) translate it as "Being-there" (p. 27). According to Heidegger himself, it is "'to be there, present, available, to exist'" (Heidegger, quoted in Inwood, 1999, p. 42). It refers "to any and every human being" in the condition of being human while, at the same time, belonging solely to each individual (Inwood, 1999, p. 42). Macquarrie & Robinson (2001) confirm that Heidegger intends the term to specifically "stand for any *person* who has such Being" (p. 27, emphasis in original). Heidegger thus claims that *Dasein* is "man's Being" (p. 47). Dreyfus (1991) explains: "The best way to understand what Heidegger means by *Dasein* is to think of our term 'human being,' which can refer to a way of being that is characteristic of a people or to a specific person" (p. 14). But, at its core, *Dasein* must be addressed by a personal pronoun, explained Heidegger, because it is "in each case mineness" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p.

71

engaged alternative to Husserl's concept of consciousness (Taminiaux, 1994a).

As such, *Dasein* is constantly directed towards the world, Heidegger tells us, and is firmly situated in a hermeneutic encounter with the "entities" of everyday life as a "Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 78-90), a being constituted by its very relation to the entities and the others of the world. Expanding on Husserl's contention that the world is made known solely through the intentionality of consciousness – that consciousness is always directed towards material, imagined, procedural, or conceptual phenomena – Heidegger proposed a practical intentionality with the world; we come to know self and world through a living engagement with the experiences of everyday life. We don't, however, live everyday life in a constant awareness of "self." Instead, claimed Heidegger, we indirectly relate to and understand a self through the things we encounter in their *readiness-to-hand* (Taminiaux, 1994, p. 50), which I will touch on shortly. In this practical existence consciousness is already always in the world, is formed by the act of encountering the world, is co-constituted by the world, and is in a constant interpretive entanglement with the world.

As a Being-in-the-world, Heidegger claimed that a hermeneutic disposition (*Hermeneutik*) towards the "facticity"[40] of life was the principle state of

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68). In other words, I am a human being but all of us are, at the same time, also human beings. Further, there is an open-endedness to *Dasein*: "Dasein," writes Inwood (1995, p. 176), "has no determinate essence; its being consists in its possibilities, in what it can make of itself be.... It is there in the world...[b]ut...is not confined to a particular place (or time); it 'transcends' and is 'there' alongside other or past events" (p. 176).

[40] Inspired by the German sociological philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, for Heidegger "facticity" or "factical life" was lived experience in a pragmatically practical and inherently social world. For Heidegger, factical life is first for human understanding, rooted as it is in socio-historical experiences mitigated by the flux of time (Taminiaux, 1994a). In Heidegger's (1962/2001) own words, facticity is "a definite way of Being" implying that "an entity 'within-the-world' has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world" (p. 82).

human existence in *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 5-58; Heidegger, in

Inwood, 1999, p. 87): "The ontology of life," wrote Heidegger, "is accomplished

by way of a private Interpretation" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 75). This "private

interpretation" means that, in Heidegger's hermeneutic existence, we come to

know the world through our own practical acts, not through predetermined

theories. "Comprehension (*Verstehen*)," explains Taminiaux (1994, p. 49), "is also

to be conceived in terms of existentiality. In order to...understand the

significance of the utensils [tools, things] it deals with in everydayness, *Dasein*

has to project itself upon this or that possibility" (p. 49). As Dreyfus (1991)

further explains, this "projection," however, is not drawn from our preconceived

theories or ideas of what the world is or should be, but is rooted in the very

pragmatic experiences that face *Dasein* daily. Dreyfus puts it as follows:

> [For Heidegger] the structure of the world is not, strictly speaking,
> a structure that can be spelled out completely and abstracted from
> all instances, so as to be understandable to a rational being who
> does not inhabit our world.... Thus, we cannot achieve the a priori
> knowledge concerning the world traditionally claimed for
> propositions about essential structures. The structure of the world
> is a 'priori' only in the weak sense that it is given as already
> structuring any subworld. (p. 91, emphasis in original)

That is, we must first live in the world to be able to interpret it. But once we have

experienced the things of the world those experiences shape our future

interpretations of that very world; as in basic hermeneutic understanding, we

come to know the whole by understanding the parts but we cannot understand

the parts if we do not have some foreknowledge of the whole. We cannot

rationally extract ourselves from the world in Cartesian-like detachment; we

need the world to comprehend it. We have already always understandings of

that world based on past experiences of it (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 119). As Heidegger himself puts it: "Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon for-conception. An interpretation is never the presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us" (Heidegger, quoted in Pollio, Henley, Thompson, & Barrell, 1997, p. 349). Further, "[e]very inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 24). To Heidegger, therefore, Being-in-the-world and its interpreting state of existence is a priori to theorizing it and, thus, being conscious of the world is contingent upon our experiences of the world: Being (existence) comes before consciousness (thinking) or structures (essences). For Heidegger, therefore, "hermeneutics begins at home in an interpretation of the structure of everydayness in which Dasein dwells" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 34).

Ontologically, then, Being-in-the-world begins to sketch the construct of the interactional self as a fully engaged and practical being "submerged" in a world of involvements. That is, the interactional self is, first and foremost, an entity in constant and interpretative interaction with things and others, contingent upon the world for coming to know itself and its place in the world. The Being-in-the-world living in *Dasein*, therefore, serves as a fruitful foundation from which to gauge the self in IMC from the level of the individual existing in a state of constant worldly engagement with the Being of others and the world's countless things.

Dasein's Unsettledness

While "*Dasein* unifies man in its own existence" (Inwood, 1999. p. 42), human beings' everyday existence proves, in practice, to be anything but unified. As such, there is an indeterminacy to this life of practical encounter (also see Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 67-69, 73). To dwell in *Dasein* is to also necessarily live an anxious existence because there is an open-endedness and uncertainty to its existence and its future. The detailed contours of existence, for *Dasein*, more often than not remain concealed in the complexities of everyday life as it lives expectant of a future that leads to the only ultimate certainty: death. Moreover, Being-in-the-world is a life that must always make decisions with unsettled outcomes (Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 68-69) leading to the one ultimate outcome that awaits us all (p. 281-282). In *Dasein*'s everyday practical life, then, our "rootlessness" and "unsettledness," or "*unheimlich*" (p. 233) ("uncanniness," "not-being-at-home" (p. 233)) are based on the notion that, in its open-ended possibilities, *Dasein* is "thrown" into a world not completely within its control (p. 175). As such, *Dasein* existentially lives in an ongoing tension between 1) the realities of its "throwness" (p. 175) (that *Dasein* finds itself in a world of entities not totally within its control (pp. 329-330)), 2) its projected possibilities (human beings' capacity for agency and choice in a future-oriented direction), and 3) the situational contexts, skills, and knowledge possessed by human beings' everyday involvements (our talents and everyday contexts mitigate if and how we can implement our choices in a world that is only partially within our control). Thus, for Heidegger, human beings' orientation towards the world, living within the throwness of *Dasein*, resonates with the tensions of everyday life that sees

humans have choice but in their already always situatedness within an indeterminate and fluctuating world—in other words, we live in a world of things and of others without a complete sense of how our decisions and engagements will turn out (p. 69).

So it seems that while for Heidegger human beings have choices, Dreyfus (1991) also explains that *Dasein*'s projective and unsettled makeup throws (or lunges, or "submerges") its very Being into a state of flux. According to Dreyfus, this means there is a "preontological" (an already always, or a priori) understanding by human beings that the self has this indeterminacy, or unsettledeness, about it: Human beings intuitively know that they "can never be at home in the world" (p. 37). Further, as Dreyfus continues to explain, while essentially self-interpreting, "everyday *Dasein* does not want to live up to its own interpretive activity" (p. 34) that will ultimately force it to come to terms with and reveal its unsettledness (*unheimlich*) as its fundamental condition. So, instead of living within this "radical rootlessness" we humans instead "plunge into trying to make ourselves at home and secure" (p. 37). It is within this ongoing and ultimately frustrated search for "home" (or centredness and rootedness) which renders *Dasein* forever at the whim of its practices and contingencies (Coyne, 1998). In the turmoil of life, the self can be said to be in a constant, if ultimately futile, quest for centeredness and home.

Heidegger (1962/2001) goes on to say that, in the "thrownness" of *Dasein*'s worldly encounters and in its search for stability within the ontological reality of an uncertain existence, the Being-in-the-world dwelling in *Dasein* is reliant on its very acts of grappling with the entities of the world, calling this

"circumspective concern" (p. 176)[41] with the world. It is here, within our

practical and engrossed engagements with the world where the world is given

meaning and where it is "disclosed" to us. Understanding thus lies in our

graspings, involvements, engagements and in our actual manipulations of the

things of the world. Heidegger writes that "*circumspection* belongs to concern as

a way of discovering what is ready-to-hand" (p. 159) and it is this concernful

way of attending to the world that the world is disclosed:

> [T]he disclosing of thrownness and the current disclosing of Being-
> in-the-world as a whole...[is influenced by a concept
> that]...contributes above all towards a more penetrating
> understanding of the worldhood of the world. As we have said
> earlier, the world which has already been disclosed beforehand
> permits what is within-the-world to be encountered.... Letting
> something be encountered is primarily *circumspective*; it is not just
> sensing something, or staring at it. It implies circumspective
> concern.... (p. 176)

Thus, while Being-in-the-world means that humans are "thrown" into a

world of things and others not totally within their control – and thus human

beings exist in a state of unsettledness – for Heidegger our search for rootedness,

security, and home within this usettledness is experienced in the acts of "letting

something be encountered" in the very practical, daily, mundane acts of

"concern" with the things of the world. This means that it is possible for *Dasein*

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[41] For Heidegger "concern" (*Besorgen*) means involvement in something in a mode of readiness-to-hand, to be fully engaged or engrossed with an activity, thing, thought, etc. He does not use the term "concern" in the sense of being anxious about something ("I am concerned about ___") or that a certain matter is or should be of importance or particular relevance ("This lawyer has an interest in the concerns of the court"). Rather, "'Besorgen' stands...for the kind of 'concern' in which we 'concern ourselves' with activities which we perform or things which we procure" (Macquarrie & Robinson, 1962/2001, p. 83). Within *Dasein's* facticity, claims Heidegger, there are multiple ways that its Being-in-the-world can be a "Being-in" within its practical concerns: "having to do with something, producing something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining....All these ways of being have 'concern'" (p. 83).

to interact with and interpret everyday life in ways that are somehow "more penetrating" than others in circumspectful and concernful ways that more truthfully reveal the world for what the world is through its very encounters with the world. (I will show how these more penetrating, more authentic engagements might be found in IMC via Heidegger's notion of "equipment" (*das Zeug*) in the next section.)

Given the importance of Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* within the oeuvre of 20th century philosophy and how he specifically addressed the nature of human beings as (essentially) made up of "meaningful social practices" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 34), as "self-interpreting" beings, and as beings living in "unsettled" circumstances (p. 37), it is poignant, as Wynn & Katz (1997) point out, that postmodernist theories of self and cyberspace tend to favour fantastical notions of fragmented, decentred, and multiplititious cyberselves that are removed from the very unsettledness and mystery of the socio-historically informed and future-directed nature of everyday life so meticulously laid out by Heidegger. Rather than a grounding in a hermeneutics of everyday life, cybertheories of the Internet use the "narrow bandwidth communication" (A. R. Stone, 1995, p. 94) of the Internet to explain how the computational worlds of bits-and-bytes are used by individuals to "engage in more of the participants' interpretive faculties" (p. 94) as freeing opportunities to explore identity and selfhood separate from the confines of social location and historical contingencies. Indeed, in my researches I found that cybertheory mostly ignores Heidegger's discussions of the

rootlessness and everyday engagements of *Dasein*,[42] articulated almost 40 years prior to postmodernist theories of the ruptured self. This is perhaps not surprising considering the fact that Heidegger is often thrown into the "modernist" cauldron by many postmodernists (Barney, 2000). It is unfortunate, nevertheless, given the deep influence that Heidegger has had on some of the founders of postmodernism, poststructuralism, and constructivism such as Foucault, Derrida, and Bourdieu (Dreyfus, 1991).

As Wynn & Katz (1997) point out, Heidegger's notion of *unheimlich* and our intrinsic resistance to this rootlessness, unsettledness, and homelessness can be said to be the inverse of cybertheory's claim, expounded by Turkle, A. R. Stone, Poster and others, that people seek "to abandon the confines of a limiting self" (Wynn & Katz, 1997, p. 302) within a supposed freedom found in a dispersed and fragmented self. Further, that there ever was a self rooted in the liberal humanist's "unitary phenomenon" (p. 300) that can be overcome, as Turkle claims is the case on the Internet in the shift from the unitary to the multiple and constructed self in the computational realities of the network (see Turkle, 1995, p. 10), has already been addressed by Heidegger's philosophy of *Dasein*, social interactional theories, and theories of the communitarian self (see Chapter 1): As already discussed thusfar, the Being-in-the-world in *Dasein*'s everydayness is anything but unified – human beings are already always rootless and homeless. They do, however, aspire for and seek out centeredness and rootedness even though this search ends up being an eternally frustrated one.

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[42] Heidegger also fundamentally rejected Cartesian dualism of mind and body, more explicitly and earlier probably than any 20th century philosopher (Steiner, 1992). To Heidegger, rather than the mind being the centre of reason and where the world is made meaningful, the meaning of everyday experience happens by being inextricably entrenched in the everyday world.

The important point that Heidegger brings to bear for the self, online or off, is that while there is an underlying anxiety to all human life the self nevertheless seeks to be (however fruitless this search eventually is) in a unified disposition with itself and its world. What prevents human beings from acquiring this ultimate unity is the fact that they are faced with countless distractions and the uncertainties of the world and the future (this is an aspect of human existence that Schutz will also have something to say about in Chapter 5). In the "thrownness" of existence – being in a world with parts of the world outside of the control of *Dasein* – human beings, through their disposition towards practice and interpretative understanding (*Verstehen*) of that world, are in a constant, if ultimately frustrated, search for unity, centredness, and rootedness, not as the cybertheorists claim in search of an ephemeral liberation to be found in decentredness, fragmentation, and multiplicity.

Instead, Wynn & Katz (1997) turn to interactionist and humanist theories to understand the ways users engage with the world online. Indeed, the authors found much evidence of situationally-rooted self-presentation on personal home pages and the "socially grounded nature of interaction" in online social settings, observing rich examples of co-construction and consistent identity practices by home page owners and listserve users (p. 297). Further, Wynn & Katz show evidence that suggests that a Heideggerian ontology that sees us "plunge into trying to make ourselves at home and secure...[giving our lives]...some stable meaning" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 37) might be the actual case online. Indeed, both in the literature and their own empirical evidence, Wynn & Katz (1997) failed to find substantial evidence to support cybertheory's claim that for Internet users

the online provides an "escape from the physical person" in search of a

"decenteralized self" (p. 324). Instead, in a Heideggerian disposition of seeking

to overcome *unheimlich*, they found that users strived to "pull together a cohesive

presentation of self across eclectic social contexts in which individuals

participate...[in]...self-description to the illustration of their Net-linkable social

contexts" (p. 324) as users tightly intertwine their online activities with their

offline realities. Further, the researchers found that online practices unveil users

working to mitigate a sense of unsettledness in practices such as carefully

planned self-presentations on personal web sites and clearly articulated instances

of identifying social affiliations and geographic location in their 'Net narratives.

This ultimately led Wynn & Katz (1997) to conclude that

> as the [interactional] literature illustrates in painstaking
> detail,...[online as in offline settings,] people are engaged in a
> constant effort to structure experience together and to establish
> order in conventions of discourse so that shared meanings are
> possible. (p. 302)

As Wynn & Katz suggest, then, could Heidegger's concept of the Being-in-

the-world of *Dasein* help explain how we practically encounter the world online?

Can *Dasein*, for example, help explain anonymous behaviours as well as online

practices with fully disclosed selves in IMC settings as part of the interactional

self's general disposition for overcoming its own unsettledness and the

ambiguity of the world online (and off)? Could Heideggerian- and interactional-

based explanations of interpreting and unsettled individuals trying to make

sense of the world through the binary codes of computational interactions not at

least be as plausible as cybertheorists' accounts of fragmented and decentred

selves navigating the wild frontiers of cyberspace? A growing number of

theorists and researchers do indeed believe Heidegger can help decipher the ways humans exist within mediated realities. Originally pioneered by researchers working in the field of human-computer interaction (Winograd & Flores, 1986), more recent humanist-trained researchers such as Barney (2000), Coyne (1998), Feenberg (2003), Kim (2001), and others, have shown how notions of Being-in-the-world can be used to reinterpret interactions online. As such, these theorists are beginning to make fruitful advances towards explaining the situatedness of the world online, the practical and pragmatic concerns of Internet users, and the way the self and the other is revealed through the computational mediations of the Internet.

The "Gathering" Nature of Technology, Issues of Power, and IMC

Summing up the discussion thusfar, through the interactional sketches of *Dasein*'s encounters with the things (entities) and the others of the "environing" world, Heidegger helps us see that *Dasein* accomplishes its goals and comes to understand its world, online or offline, through the very practicality of its acts of encounter (Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 78-145). The Being-in-the-world of *Dasein* is, according to Heidegger, "that basic state of [human being] by which every mode of its being gets co-determined" (p. 153). Being-in-the-world is thus, for Heidegger, inherently a "'Being-with' Others" (*Mitsein*) (p. 155) and, as I will explain shortly, a being which encounters "Things" equipmentally assigned in their "serviceability, conduciveness, usability, [and] manipulability" (p. 97) as the totality of "entities which we encounter in concern" (p. 97). Thus, Heidegger claimed that *Dasein* pragmatically "finds 'itself' proximally in *what* it does, uses,

expects, avoids—in those things environmentally ready-to-hand with which it is proximally *concerned*" (p. 155, emphasis in original).

In light of this practical theory of human beings' involvements with the world, in the next section I will explain one way the world online might be made meaningful to its users via Heidegger's existential phenomenology of "equipment" (*das Zeug*) (p. 97; also see Division 1, § III, *et passim*), which is his articulation of how *Dasein's* practical intentionalities with the things of the world in their "in-order-to...assignment," "references," and equipmental structures (p. 97) reveal that very world. In so doing, I take a cue from HCI researchers such as Winograd & Flores (1986), Dourish (2001), and Coyne (1995) and their analytical uses of Heidegger's theory of equipment applied in their attempts to understand how to design more user-centric and experientially sensitive computer interfaces and software applications. As these researchers do for HCI, I also argue that this aspect of Heidegger's philosophy is particularly crucial for understanding the place of IMC in users' everyday lives.

In doing so, however, I want to clearly state that I am purposefully bracketing out Heidegger's essentialist predilection, especially prevalent in his later writings, to think of modern technology generally and mechanical and electronic forms of communication specifically as somehow inauthentic ways of engaging with the world that, at their worst, "enframe" users and the world as "standing reserves" of a technology's very technicity (Heidegger, 1977, p. 23).[43]

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[43] Even as early as *Being and Time* (published in German in 1927) Heidegger (1962/2001) comments on how the "dictatorship of the 'they'" unfolds in the melting of the self into the "Being of 'the Others'" via "utilizing" technologies such as "public means of transport" and "information services such as the newspaper" (p. 164). That is, he rather vaguely (and, it can be argued, deterministically) believed these technologies caused – essentially – the "dissolving" of

While this "anti-technology" aspect of Heidegger's thought should not be casually ignored, I believe there are two reasons for legitimately attempting this bracketing: First, in the mundaneness of IMC, and second, through Feenberg's (1999) useful critique of Heidegger's differentiation of traditional and modern technologies, the potential of modern technologies to, like more traditional human creations, also offer meaningful, user-centred mediations that provide a "gathering" of practices and rituals. I believe, as Feenberg also informs us, that the second point also opens up Heidegger's concept of the ready-to-hand to democratic possibilities that begin to redress power differentials in favour of users. I think it is appropriate to explain these two points further before moving on with the rest of the thesis.

Concerning the first reason for focusing in on the early work of Heidegger's *Dasein* philosophy, I believe, as do HCI researchers, that the mounting evidence of the "everydayness" and the mundaneness of IMC and the practical ways users encounter and use IMC tools justifies a temporary bracketing of Heidegger's enframing "essence" of technology in the context of explaining how the interactional self is fully and mundanely engaged with IMC. As Feenberg has already shown us, technologies, whether they are ancient silver

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one's own *Dasein* into the "averageness" (and therefore inauthenticity) of others or "the 'they'" (*das Man*) (p. 164). In the later Heidegger's more extreme critique of the modern technological condition, mechanical and informational technologies essentially "enframe" users, making them "standing reserves" (Heidegger, 1977) of the very technologies they use. He also critiqued, rather unconvincingly I think, that writing on a typewriter, for example, was less authentic than writing by hand because "[m]echanized writing deprives the hand of dignity in the realm of the written word and degrades the word to a mere means for the traffic of communication" (Heidegger, 1992, pp. 118-119). The work of Feenberg (1999; 2003) offers a strong corrective to this obstinate anti-technology side to Heidegger, showing how Heideggerian-type worlds can indeed be authentically revealed and appropriated by technology users through the very technologies they use while also taking into account the Heideggerian "deworlding" nature of technicity, as I show below (also see Chapter 2).

chalices or packet-switched communicational technologies or suspension

bridges, are malleable to human interpretation based on the meanings inscribed

in them by their very use-contexts. Technologies that facilitate computer-

mediated communication are similarly inscribed and cannot convincingly be

seen as necessarily enframing or dominating users any more than other

technologies based solely on the particularities of the CMC's technical contours.

Underscoring the point, Feenberg (1999) writes that "the ambiguities of

computers are far from unique" (p. 193). There is nothing, in other words, that

deems computers any more technocratic or any less able to "gather" meaningful

human activities solely based on the substantive aspects of their technicity.

Hearkening back to the work of Pinch & Bijker (1987), Feenberg further asserts

that the malleability and interpretive flexibilities of computers are, in fact,

"typical of most technologies, especially in the early stages of their development"

(p. 193). I will illustrate the interpretive flexibility of IMC technologies in various

examples using phenomenological analysis throughout the remaining pages of

this thesis.

Concerning the second point for bracketing out Heidegger's essentiality,

Feenberg (1999) also shows how Heidegger fails to make a convincing case for

the claim that traditional technologies, as "things," possess a clearer ability for

"gathering" meaning, rituals, and practices when compared to modern "devices"

(pp. 194-196). As vivid examples of how the "thing" of computer-mediated

communication also "gathers" people together in highly meaningful ways,

Feenberg uses the cases of IMC use by marginalized patient groups, the

development of the French Minitel, and online education settings. From these

and other examples of similar meaningful user appropriations of IMC, Feenberg concludes that modern communication technologies can indeed "focus gathering practices that bring people together with each and with 'earth and sky,'[44] joining them in a world" (p. 196, emphasis in original). By rendering the "essence of modern technology" solely to its "Enframing" essence (Heidegger, 1977, p. 23), Feenberg (1999) claims that Heidegger closes off the possibility for the "two sided" aspect of "modern technological networks" (p. 197) (that is, as I have already discussed in the last chapter, that technologies have a "double aspect" to them).

For Feenberg, the gathering possibility of modern technology has huge implications for how we can reorder our advanced technological society into more democratically-sensitive configurations. Borrowing from de Certeau's assertion that technologies are imbued with both the technocratic strategies of the system's manager *and* the potentially resistive "tactical standpoint of the human beings they enroll" (p. 197), Feenberg is, in other words, claiming that Heidegger does not adequately discern how "[the managerial strategy] understands itself in objectivistic terms as knowledge and power...[while the enrolled human being] yields its secrets to a phenomenology of lived experience" (p. 197). That is, from the perspective of the ordinary human being (the user), Heidegger fails to adequately account for how modern technological networks

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[44] This is in reference to Heidegger's notion of the "fourfold" (Feenberg, 1999, p. 195), where the "ritual structure of the thing, the human being, and the world they inhabit" come together as "united in ritual practice" that the later Heidegger poetically describes as "earth, sky, mortals, and divinities" (p. 194). For Feenberg, this is Heidegger's romantic way of philosophizing how "the gathering constitutes what he means by 'world,' i.e., the ordered system of connections between things, tools, locations, enacted and suffered by *Dasein*" (p. 194, emphasis in original).

can also be "lived worlds where human beings participate via meaning-filled practices, rituals, experiences, and gatherings" (p. 197).

Rather than completely discarding Heidegger's phenomenology of modern technicity, Feenberg (1996; 1999) finds a way to mitigate Heidegger's totalizing conclusions by incorporating aspects of his profound, if over-extended, insights into a more user-sensitive yet critical hermeneutics of technology. Crucially, Feenberg finds this mitigation, in part, in the link between Heidegger's world-disclosings and Foucault's notions of power, especially in Foucault's middle writings concerning "regimes of truth" and the resistive possibilities that necessarily emanate from these regimes' corresponding "subjugated knowledges" (pp. 110-111). Paraphrasing Foucault, Feenberg writes that

> [t]he sources of the resistances...[are to be found]...in the structure of the power relationship itself; resistances are an immanent reflex of the exercise of power. Part of the phenomenology of the 'lived experience' of all technical mediation, therefore, always includes a relation to power and the potential for openings and cracks in the panoptic ordering of modern society." (p. 111, emphasis in original)

That is, for Feenberg, Foucault's theory of power and the inherent openings present in power structures for subjugated knowledges to resistively act through links Foucault to Heidegger's notions of "worlding"[45]: "A system of power reveals the world in something like the Heideggerian sense. It opens a certain angle of vision and defines a corresponding realm of objects" (Feenberg, 1999, p. 111). Thus, because the "point of view of the dominated" as subjugated knowledges is located within subordinate positions in the power hierarchy, these subjugated knowledges also have a perspective on that hierarchy (a point-of-

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[45] See Chapter 2.

view of the "regime of truth") not afforded to the power holders. It is from this subordinate perspective that the possibilities of resistance open up to the victims of power. For Feenberg, this "counterhegemony offers the hope of radical change without reliance on traditional agent-based models such as the class struggle, which Foucault believes have outlived their usefulness" (p. 111).

Although the power differentials between IMC technology owners, managers, and designers on the one hand and the users of the network on the other is not the main focus of this thesis, these differentials are nevertheless intrinsically present in my ensuing phenomenological analyses of user experiences of IMC. This thesis is to be viewed as a phenomenological way into the situated meanings of IMC as specifically experienced by users living within entrenched social, cultural, and political realities. Thus, implicit in this thesis is the vital notion that embedded within the double aspect nature of technological mediation is the very presence of power differentials at play and that these differentials both close off and open up opportunities for user resistances to technocratic hegemonies. One of the main aims of this thesis, then, is to look specifically at the socio-phenomenological ways that users might find these openings which are necessarily embedded in the double aspect dyad that underscores the relations between humans and the technical mediations of Being-in-the-world. The blogging case study in Chapter 4, for example, offers a clear illustration of how a modern communication technology can at the same time "focus gathering practices that bring people together" (Feenberg, 1999, p. 196) while being rooted in a technocratic background from which the practices of

bloggers are formed and acted upon.[46] This thesis, therefore, is to be considered

an attempt to look at the issue of meaning in Internet-specific technological

mediations and how, as Feenberg (1996) puts it, "worldviews come to be

concretized in technology" (par. 1). It is within these user-centred worldviews

that IMC power structures are also being contested daily. The phenomenology

and social interaction theories of the interactional self presented in this thesis is, I

believe, one way to come to know how these user/technology differentials are

simultaneously structured, contested, and appropriated.

Summarizing the reasons for bracketing Heidegger's essentialism, I ask

the same question of Heidegger that Feenberg (1999) does: Rather than mainly

viewing modern technology "from above," as does Heidegger, why can we not

also "view modern technology from within" (p. 197)? To do so is to come to

understand how users inscribe values into modern technological systems and to

even possibly spot the cracks in the panoptic order of technocratic structures.

Crucially for this thesis, therefore, is the following claim: to look at IMC as

inherently imbued with a double nature is to begin to understand how our

"lifeworld of technology is the place of meaning in [our] modern societies" (p.

197). In other words, to view technology from within, from the lived experiences

of technology experiencers, so to speak, is to understand that modern

technologies can also sustain meaningful horizons of human activities and that

these horizons are not the monopoly of "traditional" tools and structures, as

Heidegger claimed. It also opens up technologies to more humane and

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[46] This is encapsulated in what I call the "structure and practice definition of the blog"; see the case study in Chapter 4.

democratically-minded designs and implementations and, ultimately, to

empowering user appropriations in what Feenberg calls "secondary

instrumentalizations":

> i.e., the integration of technologies to larger technical systems and
> nature, and to the symbolic orders of ethics and aesthetics, as well
> as their relation to the life and learning processes of workers and
> users, and the social organization of work and use. (p. 193)

One way to begin to look at these user appropriations and the

phenomenological underpinnings of the meanings of IMC in our everyday lives

is offered by Heidegger's astute phenomenology of our worldly relations

through the very things of the world in his concept of "equipment" (*das Zeug*). In

these human-thing relations, Heidegger tells us, are embedded the enacted

meanings of all human actions. It is also an aspect of Heidegger's philosophy

that sees him in a non-essentializing, existentially phenomenological disposition

where *Dasein* is at the centre, taking on the "practical as ontologically significant

on its own terms" (Feenberg, 1999, p. 196). While Heidegger could have

addressed the role of these practical "ready-to-hand" objects as objects that

disclose meanings to the user as he did for traditional objects in some of his later

work (such as the silver chalice in his essay "The Question Concerning

Technology" (Heidegger, 1977)), in *Being and Time* Heidegger chose to instead

focus primarily on how *Dasein* itself discloses meaning in its direct use of objects

(Dreyfus, 1991). Feenberg's project attempts to, in part, bring together

Heidegger's notion of the disclosive disposition of *Dasein* with the worlding role

of the modern technical object, proposing that even modern technology reveals

meaningful worlds and empowered uses. I attempt a similarly inspired

phenomenology by looking at *the equipmentality of our interactions online* in the next two sections.

"Equipmentality": Interacting with the World via its Objects and Tools

Heidegger explained that *Dasein's* choices regarding which objects and tools and which orientation to encounter the world from are all practically intended based on the availability of the objects and tools used to interpret the world with and the "equipmentality" of the tool (a tool's fit, or appropriateness[47]) for the task to be done (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 97). In *Dasein's* practical intentionalities Heidegger not only claims that the things of the world are used to interpret the world with but that they are given to *Dasein* (that is, experienced by *Dasein*) in one of two ways: either in a state of being "ready-to-hand" (*zuhanden*) or "present-at-hand" (*vorhanden*) (pp. 96-144).

When an object of our activity is "present-at-hand" ("'before the hands, at hand'" (Heidegger, quoted in Inwood, 1999, p. 128)), we are aware of the object's presence – its "Thingness" – and how it is mitigating our actions (Dourish, 2001, p. 109). This awareness prevents us from using the tool in the way it is meant to be used to accomplish the tasks it was designed to accomplish and reveal the world as it possibly could be revealed by the tool. In a present-at-hand relation with the tool, the tool is an object directly engaged with via an "ontic" understanding of it in the realm of the empirically knowable. Thus, scientific understanding (measuring, observing an object's attributes, etc.) is always

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[47] The "equipmentality " of an "'item' of equipment" refers to that item's fit in terms of a network of other equipment in its "'equipmental whole'" (Heidegger, paraphrased in Dreyfus, 1991, p. 62).

91

engaged in with the object under investigation as present-at-hand. When the object is present-at-hand we encounter it in a detached way that is, according to Heidegger, not a natural engagement with the object in its intended use but, rather, a forced encounter. Using Heidegger's famous example of the hammer, we engage with the hammer in a state of presence-at-hand, for example, when we hit our finger in the process of driving a nail, or when we fix the hammer's broken handle, or consciously lift it from the toolbox to examine the thing as an entity called "a hammer" in a mode of detachment. In this context, the hammer is not being used in its intended way; it is not being utilized or apprehended in its utility, in its hammering possibilities, or in its "fitness" as a tool used to build something through its mediation.

Conversely, the hammer – or any object used to manipulate, encounter, and act towards the world – is "ready-to-hand" ("'to, towards, the hands'" (Heidegger, quoted in Inwood, 1999, p. 129)) when it becomes an extension of one's activity or body and where the awareness of the tool "withdraw[s] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically," Heidegger writes, so "that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work" (1962/2001, p. 99), not the tool. Dourish (2001) explains this further:

> [A]s we act through technology that has become ready-to-hand, the technology itself *disappears* from our immediate concerns. We are caught up in the performance of the work; our mode of being is one of 'absorbed coping.' The equipment fades into the background. (2001, p. 109, emphasis added)

Moreover, as Heidegger tells us, things ready-to-hand are always encountered in the context of other entities – raw materials, other tools, etc. (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 95). Things ready-to-hand are so within a network of related

entities, within an "equipmental totality" (p. 97) that references other equipment. That is, equipment in the ready-to-hand mode is contextual. Heidegger explains the ready-to-hand mode thusly:

> The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw [zurückzuziehen] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically. That with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves [die Werkzeuge selbst]. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work—that which is to be produced at the time; and this is accordingly ready-to-hand too. The work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered. (p. 99)

Because of this contextual disposition in the way that, as Heidegger writes, "our everyday dealings proximally dwell" (p. 99), "[e]quipment makes sense only in the context of other equipment," explains Dreyfus (2001, p. 92). In this "equipmental" context, the full potential of the hammer, for example, is made known only in the framework of the other tools in the tool shed in the "towards which" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 99), or "goal" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 92), of the task that will be mediated by the hammer and its related tools. Moreover, not only does equipment make sense in its contextual totality, but "our use of equipment makes sense because our activity has a point" (p. 92), a greater contextual purpose.[48] This means that equipment, in addition, does not exist independently of other objects but necessarily uses other equipment and resides in a world of equipment that in their totality and meaningful use-contexts also point forward to a task beyond any individual tool.[49] For instance, "[h]ammers make sense by

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[48] This has resonances with Ihde's (1990) culturally-positioned "use-contexts" of technology (p. 128). For Ihde, "technology is only what it is in some [cultural] use-context" (p. 128; also see p. 31).

[49] It is, as Schutz will also inform us in Chapter 5, a future oriented projected disposition towards the

referring to nails, etc." (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 92). Heidegger calls this the "in-order-

to" of equipment (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 97): the contextual relevance of

equipment in the "reference" of tools to other tools and the fitness of tools for a

particular task (or work) which ultimately constitutes the contextualized

meaning of the tool within the totality of the network of tools it is used in.

Heidegger explains it as follows:

> In the 'in-order-to' as a structure there lies an *assignment* or *reference* of something to something…. Equipment—in accordance with its equipmentality—always is *in terms of* [*aus*] its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room…. Out of this the 'arrangement' emerges, and it is in this that any individual item of equipment shows itself. (pp. 97-98, emphasis in original)

Further, when engaged in any goal-oriented activities, we discover the tools to be

used already situated in the totality of their equipmental whole: In use "'Things'

never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves…. *Before* [they do]

so, a totality of equipment has already been discovered" (pp. 97-98, emphasis in

original). Thus, in the "in-order-to," one's concern "subordinates" to the act

being facilitated by the tool in the tools contextual and "equipmental" network.

Indeed, "our most basic way of understanding equipment is to use it" (Dreyfus,

1991, p. 64) and our most "primordial" way of engaging with the objects of the

world and the world beyond the world-mediating objects is in the

"manipulability" (the manipulating) of the tool in full use (Heidegger,

1962/2001, p. 98).

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things of the world.

An aspect of this analysis that should not be overlooked (and that is picked up again by Schutz (see Chapter 5)) is the forward or future direction in the "in-order-to" that looks *beyond* the tool to the work. This forward direction points to a world made possible beyond the tool. Thus, as Feenberg disclosed in Chapter 2, tools, it can be said, "world." This is what Heidegger means when he writes that we do not existentially dwell in our everyday dealings in the "tools themselves...[but]...we concern ourselves primarily...[with]...that which is to be produced...and this [the work] is accordingly ready-to-hand too" (p. 99). As Inwood (1999) explains of the in-order-to of equipment: "No tool stands on its own. The hammer passes the buck: it refers to nails, to wood and to the workshop" (p. 129), and the workshop and the equipmental totality, in turn, "hang together" coherently (p. 129) so as to reveal the world of the workshop and the possibilities of worlds beyond the workshop in the "towards which" ("goal") and the "for the sake of which" ("final point") (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 92) of the work mediated via the equipment.

Deciding in which orientation to encounter the world with – whether present-at- or ready-to-hand – can thus be said to be practically intended and always based on the "equipmentality" (fitness) with the task to be done – that is, with the practical intentionality of the object and the act as disclosed by the tool and as dictated by the task at hand (Heidegger, 1962/2001, pp. 95-98). Unless a tool breaks down and becomes "un-ready-to-hand" in its "obstinacy" because it "'stands in the way' of our concern," it is "missing," or it is "unusable" and thus becomes present-at-hand (p. 103), we approach tools always in their "in-order-to" relevance and thus in their readiness-to-hand (p. 103). Sometimes, however,

there is no wilful choice in this matter because things also give themselves to us either in a state of *zuhanden* or *vorhanden*. They either are there or missing, are useful or useless. Therefore, this practical intentionality of use – the "in-order-to" – is not always instrumentally arrived at but is dependent on the level of "involvement" asked for by the equipment's givenness in "relevance relations" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 92) needed for the task at hand and in their particular state of fitness or brokenness.

The Equipmentality of Our Interactions Online[50]

I believe Heidegger's theory of the readiness-to- or presence-at-hand realities of our interactions with the world can also be used to explain what happens in our everyday encounters mediated via IMC. For example, when we manipulate things using the equipmental network of IMC tools available to us – such as moving a cursor on our computer's desktop; moving or closing and opening our desktop's windows; manipulating objects in programs and files; surfing through websites; clicking on links; filling in CGI scripts and fields; etc – we rarely think of the mouse that moves the cursor that clicks on objects on the screen, let alone the millions of computations being calculated by our microprocessors and the network every moment we engage with the world via our PCs and the networks. Instead, we focus on the files we are manipulating as we move them to and from folders (so we can, practically, retrieve them later or work on them now); or on the acts and purposes of attaching files to an email

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[50] The analysis in this section has been inspired by the interpretive acuity of Don Ihde's phenomenology of human-technlogy relations in his book *Technology and the Lifeworld* (1990) and Winograd & Flores's use of Heideggerian hermeneutics for human-computer interaction design in *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design* (1987).

we're about to send so that others may read what we have written; or we focus on the words or thoughts being written in the email we're cobbling together; or even directly on the anticipated reactions of the email's recipient. We don't think about how the mouse is moving the cursor that clicks on the files that then moves them to the destination of choice (unless the mouse remains obstinately frozen and unmoveable in the middle of our screen). In all of these cases we can see the future direction – the projection – of these acts. They also have an "in-order-to" nature to them (mouse pad, mouse, PC, desktop, files, windows, den, desk, network, etc.); a "towards which" (the goal of sending an email to Joe); and a "for the sake of which" (for the purpose of communicating such and such to Joe). That is, within the equipmental network of the email, for example, the user wants to project the act of emailing in a future direction and influence Joe, perhaps to remind Joe of something or to partake in an ongoing project with Joe, in a general desire to perhaps alter Joe's thinking (and the world) in some way. These are the goals and intentions of the email that require the totality of the email client's (i.e., the email software's) equipmental network in its readiness-to-hand to fulfil. That is, within the equipmentality of the IMC tool that makes the emailing possible (i.e., the email program, the PC, the physical Internet-based network and its protocols, and even the emailer's den and surrounding artifacts making up the email sender's wordly situation from which she locates herself and interacts with and impacts Joe, etc.), the email sender's immediate awareness is usually fixed on the future results of her activity not on the equipmental network itself. Her concernful awareness is, thus, on the results of the acts of linking and clicking and typing, not on the actual acts of moving the cursor or on

the mouse she's using to do the clicking; her awareness is on the recipient of her message, Joe, whom she intends to eventually read the email she's currently writing, not on the fingers she uses to type, the actual individual keys she's typing, or the keyboards mediating the typing.

In addition, when we engage with others online, we usually are not aware of (nor do we usually care about) the code used to program the ICQ or email client we are using to interact with others. Instead, we are fully engaged in the "for-the-sake-of-which" act of the encounter with the other or with the intended change we want to see in the world. Thus, the "work" – again, say writing an email – and the sentiments being exchanged, the message being communicated, and the recipient(s) that we are communicating to, are the central "circumspectful concerns," the "core" of our awareness. The actual IMC tools and each piece of equipment – the physicality of the keyboards, the PC and its intricate wiring and chips before us, the binary code of the network, the network's infrastructure – that is, everything that is mediating the communicational act – fade from our immediate awareness and pull back to the fringe of our experiential horizon, like Heidegger's hammer in full ready-to-hand use in the tool shed. Indeed, if even one of the tools used for cobbling together our email enters our immediate awareness in their present-to-hand mode (say, because the keyboard fails or the computer starts working slowly for some reason) the actual communicational act of writing the email would be greatly hampered if not totally compromised. And so, in the readiness-to-hand of the equipmental network of our email (the PC, the email client, the keyboard, the flickering cursor, the screen, the mouse, the mouse pad, the desk my PC sits on,

the network infrastructure, etc.) the actual tools that make up the equipmental network fades from our core awareness in the "in-order-to" that enables us to communicate with the other through the acts of writing the letter, thinking of the other, and sending the letter "quite authentically" by the readiness-to-hand of the tools and the entire communication endeavour (the entire "equipmental network" referenced by the act of emailing).

Further, in these examples of seamless and uninterrupted online interactions in the ready-to-hand mode, the tools used to encounter others online become, in essence, *extensions* of ones hand, ones body, ones thoughts, and, more importantly, ones relationship with the others we are interacting with at the same time that the communicational tools withdraw from our direct experience.[51] In social scenarios in IMC, the tools that we tend to favour can be said to, in phenomenological terms, *give themselves* to us more appropriately than other communicational tools – that is, are "ready-to-hand quite authentically" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 99) – in light of their readiness-to-hand in our "circumspective concern" regarding the skills we bring to the communicational "work" at hand, our past experiences of similar situations, our present situational circumstances, and the equipmental network that presents itself to us.

In their readiness-to-hand, as the IMC technologies "withdraw" from our awareness and the presence of the other(s) and the practical act of interacting dominates our experiential horizon, the communicational tool "—in

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[51] Ihde (1990) calls the withdrawal of a technology in-use from our immediate experiential awareness an "embodiment relation" with the technology (pp. 72-80). McLuhan (1964) also had similar notions of "media" being the extensions of our bodies, thoughts, and senses. A comparison of McLuhan's theories of media extensions in relation to Heidegger's phenomenology of equipmentality, however, is beyond the scope this thesis and will be dealt with in another setting.

use—becomes the *means*, not the object, of the experience" (Ihde, 1990, p. 32,

emphasis in original). These tools, alternatively, may become at any moment

present-at-hand if our browser were to freeze up, or our computer were to crash

or the network were to go down, preventing us from interacting or

accomplishing the act of actually engaging in the exchange of a message with

another. In moments when a specific communicational technology is present-at-

hand, the technology's limits are, for me the user, brought into my experiential

frame of awareness, shrinking my experiential horizon as the technology

imposes itself onto the act. Thus, I become aware of the cursor's presence or the

blank monitor screen in front of me. Conversely, in the ready-to-hand mode, I

see beyond the pixels and plastic of the tool that is the computer and am, instead,

fully engaged with the world or the other beyond it. The full network of IMC

tools that are ready-to-hand for me extends my reach onto the world by the very

fact that all of the individual tools making up the equipmental totality fall back

to the fringes of my perceptual horizon. The very loss of the tools of

communication to my immediate awareness is, at the same time, a gain for me as

my communicative and interactional reach extends through the screen of my

computer and into the presence of the other as I am revealed to the other and the

other is revealed to me by the very absencing of the tool. In contrast, in the

present-to-hand mode, if the computer were to crash or if my Internet service

provider were experiencing difficulties, the tools making up the equipmental

network before me would enter my core awareness while my communicational

acts and the other beyond would fall back to the fringe of my experience and

immediate concern. In this case, the pixels and plastic of the PC would

perceptually turn into what they ontically are – material entities made up of constituent parts that become useless with regards to my original communicational intentions, turning into obstinate barriers that frustrate my desired engagement with the other that was once brought to my presence by the in-order-to totality of the equipment. In the former ready-to-hand scenario, the engagement with the world and the relation to the tool can be said to be more authentic than in the obtrusiveness (and inathenticity) of the latter.

Summarizing Heidegger's Being-in-the-World for IMC

In summarizing this thesis's first full exploration of the interactional self in IMC from the perspective of *Dasein*'s Being-in-the-world, I make the argument that Heidegger's notion of practical worldly encounters is a crucial first step in understanding fully what happens when the self engages with the things of the world, online or off. The application to IMC is that, rather than a new "cyberself" emerging from "cyberworlds," or a new virtual self being created from the bits-and-bytes of the computational world, online interactions are instead fundamentally pragmatic extensions of Beings encountering each other and the things of the world via the mediation of the equipmental IMC network at their disposal as either ready-to- or present-at-hand. As we use a hammer to extend our arms to drive a nail in order to ultimately build a house from wood, for example, disclosing the worlding nature of the hammer, the hammer's "in-order-to" context, and the house ultimately providing us with warmth, shelter, a location for familial gatherings, protection, solitude, etc., we also use email (or ICQ or a blog) in a worlding sense to engage with others when the practicality, appropriateness, and availability of the IMC tool in the context of the intended

101

social act deems the specific tool equipmentally fit for us to use. This discloses the email tool's worlding nature while, at the same time, "deworlding" the tool from our immediate awareness. On the other hand, if the email tool where to impose itself in a present-to-hand mode, the world of the email tool itself would present itself to us while deworlding us from the other and the other from us. As such, and as I will lay out in subsequent chapters, Internet users quickly discover that certain IMC tools are better than others for sustaining (worlding) certain types of communities, for example, or for facilitating purchasing groceries or books without leaving their den, or for keeping connected with far away family and friends, thus disclosing new worlds and new possibilities for interaction while limiting other worlding possibilities (deworlding; i.e., buying groceries online from home prevents us from touching the fruit before we buy it).

In sum, Heidegger's approach can be said to add phenomenological weight to Wellman's and Castell's sociological claims that the Internet is tightly interwoven within our everyday activities. As Feenberg suggests, Heidegger adds a "world revealing" dimension to the instrumentality of tools (also see Ihde, 1990, p. 34). For IMC, a Heideggerian analysis suggests that the network helps us interact with those we seek to interact with based on the readiness-to-hand of the communicational tools (access, bandwidth, computer terminal, etc.) and the tools' appropriateness for the intended communicational task. In addition, these tools are made meaningful by the very acts that they are used for; that is, they are practically meaningful in use-contexts. Practically, IMC tools are instruments that bring the other into our presence, revealing the other to us via the mediation *and* the technical limits of the tool. At the same time, we use the

tools of IMC in meaningful ways that reveal important human interactions, mould and create new social settings, and disclose the possibilities for extending the life-world. The tools of IMC, it can be said, "world." Heidegger's subtle brush of *Dasein*, therefore, begins to fill in the sketch of the interactional self and we arrive at our third postulate:

- *Postulate 3: The interactional self is in a constant state of interpretation of itself and its world, practically using the things of the world, online and offline, as conduits for communicating with others and for self-understanding.*

I next dip the brush of *Dasein* into the paints of social interaction theory, adding the social colours offered by Mead's social interactionist theories and Schutz's intersubjective phenomenological sociology in the next three chapters, filling in the social aspects of the interactional self which are under-theorized by Heidegger. Mead's and Schutz's views are coloured by the concepts of social emergence and social contingency as both sociological philosophers asked, in separate circumstances: "What does it mean to be social animals, to be human with others?" Their common themes include complementary notions of *the intersubjective* (Schutz) and *socially constituted* self (Mead) and can be seen as building on the ontological sketches of *Dasein*'s Being-in-the-world.

Chapter 4:
Mead and the "Generalized Other":
A Pragmatist Interlude for the Interactional Self
and Internet-Mediated Communication

"When a self does appear it always involves an experience of another; there could be no experience of a self simply by itself."

~George Herbert Mead, 1934, *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 195

George Herbert Mead (1934), one of the original pragmatists, a founder of the Chicago School of sociology, and a pioneering philosopher of social psychology, was instrumental in further developing the view that individuals are products of society, the "self" arising out of social experience as an object of socially symbolic gestures and interactions. This chapter shows how Mead proves to be pivotal in my continuing portrait of the interactional self for an account of online sociability, illustrated through a sociological case study of blogging practices.

Like Heidegger's practical self, Mead's self was also a self of practical and pragmatic intentions. Mead, for example, grounded human perception in an "action-nexus" (Joas, 1985, p. 148) that can be said to be akin to Heidegger's practically intended human actions (Joas, 1985, p. 192), engraining the individual in a "manipulatory phase of the act" as the fundamental "means of living" (Mead, 1982, p. 120). In this manipulatory sphere "the individual abides with the

physical objects" of everyday life (Mead, 1938, p. 267).[52] Unlike Heidegger's

ontological *Dasein*, however, Mead also rooted the self's "perception and

meaning" (Joas, 1985, p. 166) more deeply and sociologically in "a common

praxis of subjects" (p. 166) found specifically in social encounters. Mead's self, in

other words, proves to be more noticeably entwined within a sociological

existence than Heidegger's persistent ontological account. For Heidegger, the

story is more about the development of Being and how the world is revealed

within a realm of things; for Mead it is about the development of the self *and* the

objectivity of the world within the social realm: that "[t]he individual mind can

exist only in relation to other minds with shared meanings" (D. L. Miller, 1982, p.

5).

As such, I'd like to present Mead's theory of the socially contingent self as

a pragmatic interlude between Heidegger's and Schutz's phenomenological

theories of the experiencing interactional self, offering pragmatist tints and

textures to our emergent portraiture of the interactional self. In the next two

chapters, Schutz's sociological phenomenology of the self, with a little help from

Husserl's foundational phenomenological palette, will then supply the final

synthesizing perspectives to both Heidegger's existential and practical self and

Mead's socially contingent self.

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[52] Schutz (1962), inspired by Mead, also called this practical everyday grasping and engagement
with things "the manipulatory sphere" (p. 307). In addition, Schutz opens up this sphere to
mediated interactions; for Schutz, the manipulatory sphere is "the region open to my immediate
interference which I can modify either directly by movements of my body or with the help of
artificial extensions of my body, that is, by tools and instruments in the broadest sense of this
term" (p. 307). I discuss Schutz's take on the manipulatory sphere in light of IMC in Chapter 5.

The "I," the "Me," and the "Generalized Other"

In synthesizing Mead's entire theory one would have to say that what he intended to sociologically and philosophically show was that a self removed from society could not exist. Indeed, without communication with others, Mead tells us, the self would even lack a consciousness:

> We are rather forced to conclude that consciousness is an emergent from [social] behaviour; that so far from being a precondition of the social act, the social act is the precondition of it. (Mead, 1934, p. 18)

In fact, Mead's theory of the socially contingent self was the first full articulation of the shaping of the self within a societal context (Aboulafia, 1986; Joas, 1985; Perinbanayagam, 2000). For Mead, the "significant symbols" required for social interactions *were* communication (Mead, 1934, pp. 68-75), making up a "universe of discourse" from which "meaning" was negotiated and worked out in social "experience" (p. 89-90).[53] Mead's positioning of the self within the social world underscores his dialectical notion that society must be understood as an arrangement that *emerges* through social acts, rooted in the mutual interactions of its agents that are, in turn, also intimately shaped by the very society they act within (Ritzer, 2000). Hence, in Mead's social interaction theory both self and society are intricately bound. Further, it is specifically because of this constant interchange that the social group ensures cohesion and society continues:

> No one individual can reorganize the whole society; but one is continually affecting society by his own attitude because he does bring up the attitude of the group toward himself, responds to it,

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[53] This aspect of Mead's theory of the social self also inspired Blumer's study of symbolic interactionism and Goffman's theories of self-performance management (Blasi, 1998).

and through that response changes the attitude of the group. (Mead, 1934, pp. 179-180)[54]

Key to his theory of the social construction of the self and partly inspired by Hegelian dialectical thought (Ritzer, 2000a, p. 388) and Jamesian theories of the self (Mead, 1934, pp. 3-4), Mead divided the self into two "aspects, or phases" (Mead, 1934, p. 192): the "I" and the "me." The "I" is the creator or the doer of actions within us and dialectically reacts to the more passive "me" (Mead, 1934, p. 192; Ritzer, 2000, p. 402). The "I" is the part of our selves that is impulsive and passionate, contributing to the makeup of the group and the society it resides in (Mead, 1934, pp. 177-180). That is, the "I" can be said to make social change possible. As Ritzer (2000) explains, the "I" houses "our most important values...[constituting] something we all seek—the realization of the self" (p. 401). The "me," on the other hand, is the receiver of how others perceive us, internalizing the action of others. Further, the "me" is socially bound and passive, continuously assessing how to appropriately interact with others, housing the self's social attitudes (Mead, 1934, p. 175). This passive nature to the "me," however, is not to be confused with Heidegger's socially infused "das Man" ("the 'they'") of Dasein where, for Heidegger, authenticity dissolves into the being of "Others" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 164). While passive and "conformist" (Ritzer, 1992, p. 402), the "me" instead has an important social role that Heidegger does not bestow on the inauthenticity of the culturally-led Dasein living with "the they": Though it is true that, according to Mead, the "me" takes

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[54] This is similar to Anthony Giddens' concept of "routinized and recursive social practices" in his theory of structuration where he claims that agency is not purely "voluntaristic" but actors draw upon socio-cultural "rules and resources" that are predictable (Giddens, quoted in Clark, 1990, p. 25).

on "the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes" (Mead, 1934, p. 175) and is, in essence, where a form of social control occurs, this socially influenced aspect of the "me" is, to Mead, crucially necessary for both social cohesion and individual reflection on the self's place in society, acting as a tempered counterweight to the much more impulsive "I." Foreshadowing Schutz's working/partial self (see Chapter 5), the I/me self is, moreover, informed by biographical information stored in the recollection of past experiences by the "me." From each person's unique blend of the "I" and the "me" the person's social personality is forged. Synthesizing the importance of the "I" and the "me" for the self and for society, Mead theorizes that "[t]he 'I' both calls out the 'me' and responds to it. Taken together they constitute a personality as it appears in social experience" (Mead, 1934, p. 178).

This idea that our individual personality reflects the norms of the social group through the "me" is what Mead called the "generalized other," subjectively manifested in the "me." Generalizing the other through the "me" is the part of ourselves that emulates and puts into action what society or the group expects of us (pp. 152-164). Mead defines the generalized other as "[t]he organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self" (p. 154). Further, the generalized other not only shapes the self but moulds the self to the image of the group:

> The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community...and can direct our own behaviour accordingly. [¶]It is in the form of the generalized other that the social process influences the behaviour of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on, i.e., that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members.... [At the same time, an individual] takes that attitude in so far as it is expressed in the attitudes toward his behavior of those other individuals with

whom he is involved in the given social situation or act. But only by taking the attitude of the generalized other toward himself, in one or another of these ways, can he think at all…. (pp. 155-156)

In other words, we assimilate societal/group expectations as guidelines for both acting with other people and for knowing ourselves. As Mead ultimately asserts: "[T]o be self conscious is essentially to become an object to one's self in virtue of one's social relations to other individuals" (p. 172). Thus, through the processes of generalizing the other, individuals are constantly securing or ensuring the intentions of others while fashioning their own personalities. All the while the process helps to maintain social order and bestows social behavioural guidelines to group members.

The generalized other also means that individuals are, in Heidegger's terms, "revealed" through others (a view advocated by many phenomenologists as well; see Chapter 5) but in specific intersubjective and symbolic interactions. Through cooperative association we communicate with others using language[55] and non-verbal cues rich in social symbols, norms, and conventions, objectively looking at ourselves and others and engaging in concurrent self-formation and, as a result, eventual self-transformation within a "conversation of gestures" (pp. 63, 167) and "significant symbols" (pp. 171-172). In daily living within these "gestural conversations," Coser (1977) interprets Mead to mean that

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[55] In Mead's symbolic interactionism, sociological phenomenology, and the latter's successor ethnomethodology, language is the glue that helps the individual and the group interpret the world. It was also important in Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*: "Language belongs to the closest neighborhood of man's being" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 187) revealing as well as concealing worlds as well as aspects of Being. Indeed, language, with it's inherent symbols, signs, and socially constructed meanings, is one of the most central concepts of the socially constructed self, appearing in all of the social interactionist schools (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Jenks, 1998).

> [t]hese significant gestures that characterize most human intercourse….and [interactants'] use of symbols always presuppose the ability of each participant in a communicative process to visualize his own *performance* from the standpoint of the others, to take the role of the others. (pp. 334-335, emphasis added)

These "significant gestures" are thus mutual "performances" where we assimilate the roles and expectations of others and at the same time relay our own roles and expectations to others. The symbolic conventions of interpersonal communication, in turn, provide the interpretive keys for deciphering the "definitions and redefinitions, interpretations and reinterpretations" of our daily social interactions (Coser, 1977, p. 335).

Symbolic Interactionism and IMC

Similar to offline social settings, recent IMC-based research is beginning to show how prevalent these dialectical Meadian social dynamics and socially contingent self-understandings are online, especially for group cohesion and for self-knowledge through "becoming an object to one's self" in the textual performances mediated through the screen. Like more traditional offline social settings, Internet technologies that facilitate interactive sociability – such as email, chat rooms, instant messaging, blogs, customizable personal websites, and even online interactive games like chess, SIMs and, as I will show in Chapter 6, the immersive environments of EverQuest – seem to be, for users, predictable and projective "performative spaces and performed spaces" (Hine, 2000, p. 109) rather than fragmentary experiments with identity, evidencing the social processes of generalizing the other in IMC settings.

For example, in Christine Hine's (2000) ethnographic look at different newsgroups dedicated to a similar topic in her book *Virtual Ethnography*, she found that "styles of address and interaction were distinctive to each newsgroup, and messages are made situationally relevant to the [specific] newsgroup" (p. 109) by the newsgroup's members, thus suggesting Meadian-like group cohesiveness and practices of generalizing the other. This is done by practices such as "quoting parts of previous messages to maintain continuity" (p. 109); practicing consistent message stylings (similar types of expressions, words, tone, etc.); and by common rules that, for instance, "censure...off-topic messages" (p. 111). Hine even found that group distinctiveness was underscored "through particular ways of using the technology" (p. 111) such as sanctioning cross-postings between newsgoups and treating off-topic messages appropriately and promptly so as not to clutter the software interface with irrelevant information (pp. 109-112). Alternatively, she also found that between different newsgroups "the separateness of newsgroup space is maintained by the posting practices of its the members...[and t]heir orientation towards creating situationally relevant messages" (pp. 111-112) that distinguishes one group from another. Thus, between newsgroups, Hine found that styles of addressing each other "differ radically" (p. 109) in the language used, member hierarchy, and other rules specific to the group. Rather than playful free-for-alls, Hine went on to find that inter- and intra-group boundaries and order were communicated and secured through, as Mead suggests, symbolically recognized styles of addressing each other which, in turn, solidified the rules of membership to a particular group. In dialectically Meadian terms, by the simple fact that each member generalized the

other within the newsgroup – by assimilating the norms of the group through each members' "me" – the right balance between group cohesion and individual freedom of expression was ensured. This also foreshadows my analysis of Schutz's working/partial self (Chapter 5) and "styles of experience" (Chapter 6) (which are both related to Mead's social and symbolic interactionism via the work of William James (Joas, 1985, p. 216)). Hine also showed that, not unlike the offline world, as members travelled from group to group, they would self-adjust their performance (their respective "I's") to match the norms of each new group. This is no different than in offline social interactions: Just like one would act and interact differently in a lecture than one would at a sports match, online the interactional self alternates as needed between the "I" and the "me," adjusting one's performance accordingly based on the particular online group's norms, the social setting, and the group's expectations of the individual (again paralleling key elements in my discussion of Schutz, particularly my analysis of "typifications" (Chapter 5) and "We-relations" (Chapter 6) in IMC settings).

Cybertheorists' idea of the fragmented, multiple, and decentred self could be viewed as further challenged with a Mead-inspired analysis of personal web pages. Grounded in Goffman's self-presentation, a group of the studies I review in this thesis found that personal website and blog authors worked hard to ensure that their sites matched the expectations of their assumed offline audiences (Chandler, 1998; Hine, 2000; H. Miller & Arnold, 2002; H. Miller & Mather, 1998; Mortensen & Walker, 2002; Nardi et al., 2004; Riva & Galimberti, 2002; Wynn & Katz, 1997). In a study of academic web authors, for example, Miller & Arnold (2002) reported that both male and female academics

purposefully customized their websites to meet the expectations of their peers. In Wynn & Katz's (1997) study of personal home pages, the authors found that "cases of home page self-presentation [were] mediated through socially defined [offline] links" (p. 1). Invoking Goffman's frame and self-presentation theories (Goffman, 1959, 1974),[56] Hine (2000) also found that different "frames of interaction" (p. 112) socially situated in each individual's offline reality "are sustained, at least in part by the physical separation of different [offline and online] spaces" (p. 112). While these separations, Hine found, were partially effaced by the virtualness of newsgroups and websites, they are not "perceptual boundaries but...performative boundaries" (p. 112) within "situational relevances" (p. 112). Interpreting the sociological work of Cohen (1985) and Meyrowitz (1985) to interpret her own Internet research, Hine explains that between online and offline social frames performative practices are engaged in that, again, maintain social cohesion and define social practices:

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[56] Goffman's Mead-inspired (Ritzer, 2000) frame theory (Goffman, 1974) and his dramaturgical self-presentation analysis (Goffman, 1959) are also relevant for an understanding of the interactional self. Goffman's frame analysis holds that social acts are framed by interactional rules and rituals used as interpretive "schemata" for making sense of everyday interactions and experiences. The earlier and complementary dramaturgical model of social interaction was used by Goffman to powerfully articulate how these social processes worked to tacitly sustain social order by carefully positioning the self in ways that both sustain and define social norms. The dramaturgical model is part of Goffman's elaborate performative theory of human social action. Its central illustrative feature is the metaphor of the actor preparing for the stage: When we put on the metaphorical "mask," Goffman theorized, we are performing in our "front region" where we perform for an "audience," the object of our communicative intent. In the "back region" we take off the mask and take on a more casual, laid-back role where the goal is personal renewal and assessment of how we carried out our communicative practices. The "back region" is especially used in intra-group settings for group cohesion and solidarity among the "team members" as both the individual and the group engage in introspective reassessments and preparations for the next public performance (Goffman, 1959). These performances are implicitly understood by both the "audience" and the "actors" – the social interactants – as a model for not only communicating and using verbal and non-verbal means, but also as implicit social tools to sustain interpersonal structures, to avoid disruptions of communicative performances, and otherwise provide the communicative norms and rules for the functioning of social interactions (1959).

> The focus in constructing and evaluating messages on situational relevances suggests that it is not perceptual boundaries, in the sense of being able to see, but performative boundaries, as socially constructed and maintained spaces of appropriate action, that are crucial. (p. 112)

Thus, as Hine found, online performances intermingled with offline performances in ways that afforded her research participants' a "front region" (the website) and a "back region" (the careful offline planning, research, and preparation of the site) necessary for actually managing the mediated presentation of the self through the website. So, for instance, in the studies just reviewed, participants explained how they would first carefully design a website to look a certain way and contain certain types of information about their professional careers (back region), then circulate the URL of the site to a few colleagues to get feedback (generalizing the other through interaction within a social group), and then finally launch the website (front region) for general consumption by a greater audience only after this entire process is completed. Throughout this process, hit rates were constantly monitored, related email analyzed, and other more informal online and offline feedback channels considered, encouraging personal website designers to adapt and change the presentation of their websites strategically as the feedback was internalized and the "other" generalized.

The next-generation personal website and online journal format known as the "weblog" or simply the "blog" provides further evidence of these Meadian dynamics at work online, offering a privileged example of an emerging set of online practices that bear further witness to carefully prepared self-performances where generalizing the other is integrally situated in the very practices of

"blogging." And in these bogging practices, yet again, the social interactional

self, not the fragmented cyberself, is the norm. I turn to this next.

Presenting the Self and Generalizing the Other Through the Blog: A Case Study

> "Web logs give voice to people whom just a decade ago, you never would have heard from. There are war blogs, peace blogs, food blogs, crude blogs, humor blogs, culture blogs to occupy your day. Geek blogs, freak blogs, teen blogs, mean blogs, fanaticals and radicals who like to rant away. Worker bees and histories, punditry and poetry, diversity, adversity and spicy verbal play. Optimists, pessimists, enthusiasts and hobbyists, journalists and journal-ists with something big to say."

> ~Jennifer Balderama, 2002, "My blog, My self," *C/Net*

Arguably in existence in their current form since late-1997 or early-1998

(Rodzvilla, 2002)[57] and growing in popularity after 9/11 (Bausch et al., 2002),

blogs are mostly personal web sites that have been dynamically overhauled to

facilitate the practices of frequently writing and subsequently archiving posts,[58]

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[57] Rebecca Blood's (2002b) popular account of the history of blogs places the start of the blogging phenomenon circa late-1997 or early-1998. Some blog experts, however, suggest that people have been posting and archiving regular commentary on their websites in the style currently distinguishing bloggers (i.e., frequent posts, reverse chronological order of posts, multiple links off of the site to other parts of the web, etc.) since the dawn of the public Internet; see, for example, http://davenet.userland.com/1994 (Winer, 1994). Indeed, some have suggested that Tim Berners-Lee, the much-lauded inventor of the world wide web and its transfer protocol, http, was the first blogger; his update webpage at CERN that documented all new sites as they became available (http://info.cern.ch/) in many ways took on the shape of a blog and can be said to be the first blog (Winer, 2002)

[58] "Posts" are the most basic "chunks of content" on blogs (Bausch et al., 2002, p. 92). That is, posts are blogs' main content containers, making up the main focal point of blogging author's regular contributions to the blog. Posts can be thought of as being like entries in an encyclopedia or stories in a newspaper. They are usually made up of text but any form of data such as graphics or even sound files could be part of a post. Posts also contain what are called "metadata": additional supplementary information about the post such as the author's name, the time and date the post was created, a title for the post, the post's topic category, a permanent link ("permalink") to a supplementary webpage on the same server that archives the page on a more permanent basis, links to comments by others, etc. Using the newspaper analogy, a post's

inter-blog linking, and commentary exchanges between "blogger" and reader.[59]

In addition to their dynamic functionality, blogs have also been designed to be simple to set up, use, and maintain. Their simplicity, in fact, is said to be forging the new interactive and self-publishing practices of blogging. Further, blogs are viewed by users and experts as set apart from previous web tools because of: 1) their streamlined and functional look-and-feel (mostly text-based entries in dated and time-stamped posts displayed in reverse chronological order (see Appendix 3)); 2) their ease-of-use (web-enabled forms for easy set-up, flexible hosting, many platforms to choose from, no programming knowledge required); and 3) their capabilities to facilitate blogger and reader interactions via commenting functionalities on actual blog entries (see figure 2, Appendix 3). These basic features are, it is argued, affording the following web practices: myriad interlinked bloging networks (Nilsson, 2003); alternative channels for grassroots journalism and new possibilities for the public sphere (Kahn & Kellner, forthcoming); and new opportunities for personal narratives and writing experiences easily publishable to a potentially wide-readership (Bausch et al., 2002; Blood, 2003; Hourihan, 2002; McNeill, 2003; Paquet, 2002).

Subsequently, blogs have seen a rapid rise in popularity from a few dozen such sites in 1998 to around 4.1 million registered blogs as of October 2003 (Bausch et al., 2002; "The blogging iceberg: Of 4.12 million weblogs, most little seen and quickly abandoned," 2003; Blood, 2002b). While it is also the case that

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metadata can be viewed as being akin to the journalist's byline, the attribution to a news service, the date and perhaps the time the story was filed, and where the particular news story was filed from. To see a few exemplary posts as they appear in blogs see figures 2 – 4, Appendix 3. To see the main sections of a typical post, see figure 2 in Appendix 3.

[59] A blog's main editor is known as a "blogger."

most new blogs are only temporarily maintained as new but uncommitted users

experiment with writing online by capitalizing on the blog's low entry barriers

and easy set up (Herring et al., 2004), a core group of roughly 50,000 to 200,000

avid bloggers ("The blogging iceberg," 2003) have gone on to become stalwart

writers, maintaining elegant sites of personal self-expression, grassroots

reportage, or interest-based content that often link to and from other like-minded

blogs to forge into interlinked networks of bloggers with common interests

(Bausch et al., 2002; Efimova, 2003; Nardi et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2003) (see figure 5

in Appendix 3, for an example of how this "network" of running commentaries

and links might appear on an actual blog page). Consequently, not only has the

popular press deemed blogging a newsworthy phenomenon as of late,[60] but

academics have also increasingly taken to looking at the blogging phenomenon

from sociological, anthropological, rhetorical and genre studies, feminist studies,

cultural studies, autobiographic studies, and political science angles.[61]

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[60] There has been a dramatic rise in press coverage concerning blogs since 1998. Hargittai (2003),
for example, did a systematic search for the word "blog" or "weblog" on the LexisNexus
database and found that popular press coverage of blogs began to expand in 2002 and 2003, with
over 544 stories in the world's major English dailies in 2002 and almost 400 by the first quarter of
2003 alone.

[61] As of 2002, at least three years into the blogging phenoeomenon, Mortensen & Walker (2002)
confirmed that while "there is a considerable amount of popular writing on weblogs...there is to
date no published research on the topic" (p. 252). This is changing, however. For this thesis I
attempted to systematically account for all non-technical academic studies containing keywords
such as "blogs", "blog", "weblogs", "weblog" in the most commonly used communication and
sociology journal search engines like Ingenta, EBSCOhost, LexisNexus, and Communication
Abstracts, but my search rendered paltry results that often repeated the same two or three
journalistic articles on blogging. Using time, patience, and extensive searches of academically-
minded blogrolls, and Google, I was able to identify 67 academic studies concerning blogging as
of April 20, 2003. For choosing which studies to include as "academic" I selected reports, essays,
and publications that were written by individuals affiliated with a post secondary institution or
that were linked to and commented about by academic scholars in other essays, blog entries, etc.
I then preliminarily grouped these studies into four major categories: studies that looked at blogs
as social networks and in the context of the public sphere; cultural studies-based writings on
blogs; studies discussing the sociology of blog practices; and studies looking at blogs from a
literary studies perspective. By this publication it is certain that this number has increased. I
intend to publish a full list of these studies, grouped into their appropriate categories and

Defining Blogs

An emerging group of communication researchers and experienced blog experts are beginning to reach a loose consensus on what a blog is and what differentiates it from previous CMC technologies. This definition centres on what I call *the structure and practice definition of the blog* (Bausch et al., 2002; Blood, 2002a; Hourihan, 2002; Nardi et al., 2004; Paquet, 2002; Siemens, 2002; Turnbull, 2001). Paraphrasing and synthesizing the structure/practice definition of blogging, I define blogs as *personal* and *easy-to-use* and *manage dynamic websites* that allow bloggers to *post* passages of text, graphics, links, and, increasingly, other multimedia files *frequently*, with the ability for others to *comment* on these entries, and with the capability to *archive* these files, posts, and comments so that they are *easily retrieved* by both the blog editor and blog reader (Blood, 2002b; Hourihan, 2002; Paquet, 2002; Siemens, 2002; B. Stone, 2002). Additionally, blogs' simple "look and feel" (i.e., presentation and navigation) and the reverse chronology of posts is what is initially noticed as arguably blogs' two most common features. This can be seen in the various blog screenshots in figures 2-5 in Appendix 3.

Elemental to most blogs are the chronological posts most often running down a middle column usually making up its central focal area. It is in this central area where the comments functionality is also usually found. All other more peripheral and usually more permanent links and content are located in sidebars or in the site's header and footer, with the name of the blogger or the

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subcategories, on my own blog in the coming months (see http://arago.cprost.sfu.ca/marcelo or http://www.sfu.ca/~mavieta).

blog usually in the header portion of the site.[62] Paquet (2002) neatly summarizes

the emerging view amongst the blog-as-structure/blog-as-practice advocates by

observing that most blogs (and, therefore, blogging practices) tend to constitute

the following features: 1) "personal editorship," 2) a "hyperlinked post

structure," 3) "frequent updates, displayed in reverse chronological order," 4)

"free, public access to the content," and 5) "archival" capabilities (sec. 1).

Paquet's categories are echoed in varying ways with all of the blog as

"structure/practice" articles I've reviewed, leading me to make a general

observation: *the blog's ease-of-use can be vividly seen in their form and in their*

amalgamation of previous web technologies as blogs are, in Feenberg's (1999) terms,

eventually "concretizing" (p. 217) into powerful yet "elegantly" (p. 217) simple

online writing and publishing tools.[63]

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[62] It is important to note here that most bloggers state their name and provide an email address in
a prominent area on the blog suggesting, as I address in the next section, that bloggers don't
usually experiment with identity in the same ways that one might in other CMC environments
(this also supports other social interactional CMC research findings that I report on throughout
this thesis). Indeed, as can be seen in the blogs in Appendix 3, some bloggers even publish
"About me" sections (see figure 2, Appendix 3) and more detailed information concerning their
likes and dislikes, work affiliations, etc.

[63] The developmental history of the blog and its social roots show evidence similar to Simondon's
concept of "concretization" as theorized by Feenberg (1999, pp. 216-220), "granting" the blog "a
history in a way that [one] can recover for a constructivist concept" of the blog's "progress" (pp.
216-217). That is, in the blog and the practices it affords we see both the "technicity" of its form
and the "human purposes" (p. 217) behind its "usefulness" (p. 217). Blogging platforms, for
example, are, at once, technically evolved forms of previous CMC technologies (BBS posts,
newsgroup threads, email, archiving functionality, etc.) forged together by communities of
programmers and hobbyist users over time and as dictated by blogging practices that have been
cobbled together within the blog's very elegant (easy-to-use and maintain) functionality. This
concretized iteration of previous web tools for flexible communication and personal expression
on the blog is subsequently enabling the social practices currently being witnessed in the
"blogosphere" (see below, this section, for a definition of the blogosphere). There is, moreover, a
related social constructivist aspect to the blog: Not only are most blog platforms offered for free,
but their developmental roots lie in shareware systems like Dave Winer's Frontier/Claybasket
("Dave Winer," 2004; Userland/Frontier, 2004) and the still-free and now Google-owned Blogger
content management system (Blogger.com, 2004). Further, evidence of blogs' social construction
is to be found in their purposefully designed flexible and modular architectures (Bausch et al.,
2002) and in the already established practices of bloggers developing and designing patches and
solutions to weaknesses in blog platforms (content management systems or CMSes) and their
willingness to share their patches with the entire blogging community. In addition, there is even

As such, and as Bausch et al. (2002) bluntly put it, blogs are, while

sophisticated web tools, "simple creatures" (p. 91) from a user perspective.

While bloggers are increasingly experimenting with sound files, images, and

videos, resulting in genres such as "photoblogs, videoblogs, and audioblogs,"

writes Walker (2003, par. 5), she affirms that "weblogs are still primarily textual"

(par. 5). Bausch et al. (2002) agree when they claim that "[a]t their core, weblogs

are pages consisting of several posts or distinct chunks of [textual] information

per page" (p. 7). Simply put but with dramatic consequences for the social

possibilities they afford, blogs are technically and presentationally nothing more

than web sites that have, at their core, "posts" rather than web "pages" (Bausch

et al., 2002, p. 90). That is, with blogs, the document-based paradigm of web

pages has been transformed into the *web post paradigm* (Bausch et al., 2002;

Hourihan, 2002) (for a breakdown of the most important elements of a post, see

figure2, Appendix 3). And it is here, in the "post paradigm," where the ultimate

sophistication of the blog lies. These structure/practice authors view the post

paradigm as fundamentally distinguishing blogs as "an evolved form of personal

Web pages" (Paquet, 2002, sec. 1) and an amalgamated synthesis of older CMC

technologies (Bausch et al., 2002; Hourihan, 2002) that, at the same time, is

reformulating what is possible on the Internet. These new "bloggy" web sites, it

is being pointed out, are becoming a "new medium" forging a new "bloggy way

of doing things" (Halavais, 2003, par. 11): ongoing "textual conversations"

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a willingness bydomr CMS providers to "open up" their platforms for users to modify (for this phenomenon, see, for example, http://www.hotscripts.com, http://www.drupal.org, and http://mt-plugins.org/). Taken together, blogs can be said to be, at once, IMC technologies concretized into expressively flexible personal web pages and BBS-like post exchanges that also contain features like email, graphics posting capabilities, flexible templates, and administrative functionalities permitting multiple authors, all in one easy-to-use platform.

between bloggers forming loose networks of issues- or theme-based communities of blog sites that sees many people publishing their thoughts to potentially many people. Moreover, it is particularly claimed that it is this new paradigm that facilitates a specific type of two-way interaction between the blogger and the blogger's readers": Now, a blogger, through his or her blog website, can post a brief blurb of some sort and the reader is invited to respond to the post potentially immediately after publication. In this process, the reader, in essence, also becomes a joint content creator with the blog owner. Crucially, this process is completely in the hands of the blogger and the reader, potentially avoiding any sort of gatekeeping and with the added possibility of attracting a mass readership. This phenomenon of posting and commenting can therefore be viewed as unique forms of conversations via online text – ongoing emerging dialogues between two or more people on publically accessible, searchable, and archivable web platforms. I discuss the implications of this for social, cultural, and grassroots empowerment in the next two sections.

Blog Writers, Blog Readers, and Microcontent

The post paradigm, the commenting features, and the archiving affordances of blogs prove to all be pivotal for facilitating the common blogging practice that sees bloggers frequently update their blogs and link to and from journal-like entries, sometimes several times a day. According to Hourihan (2002) and Paquet (2002), these simple practices not only encourage a regular readership to form around the best-written and most controversial blogs, but also see readers participating in creating blog narratives in collaboration with the blogging author. Facilitated by the blog's "metadata" structure, these narrative

practices, underwritten by the commenting functionality, serve to create reader-based addendums to the running thoughts of bloggers (I discuss the social implications of this shortly). In addition, because blogs are exceptionally flexible and easy-to-maintain websites affording a public platform for self-expression, their popularity especially took off after key socio-historical moments such as 9/11 and the March 2003 US invasion of Iraq which not only drove the desire of many individuals to write their thoughts on a public forum and interconnect with others of like-mind but, as in the case of the anti-Iraq war rallies in the spring of 2003, saw protesters use blogs as organizing vehicles, as well (AboutItAll.com, 2004; nycbloggers, 2004; Peace.Protest.Net, 2004). These historically galvanizing events, together with the affordances of the post paradigm discussed thusfar, have helped to propel blogs to prominence as many found solace and community comfort in the very acts of public writing, of commenting on others' blogs, and in the act of interlinking between each other's blogs (Bausch et al., 2002)

As such, blogs are said to be introducing the "microcontent" (or "nanocontent") age of the Internet (*Broadening the blog: Part 1, Part 2,* 2003; Paquet, 2002) where bloggers with little or no programming experience can now post frequent, brief, and timely commentary on their own websites, usually with many editorialized links pointing to information of interest throughout the Internet and, most notably, to other blogs (see the examplar blogs in Appendix 3). The technological structure of blogs, their embeddedness in the everyday lives of bloggers, and the practices they engender are said to be transforming blogs into interactive hubs of connection and "distributed conversations"

(Bausch et al., 2002, p. 60) within bloggers' everyday lives (see figure 5, Appendix 3). Taken together, all of these practices, underpinned by the functionality that affords them, are positioning blogs as potentially powerful tools for textual conversations on the 'Net that are opening up countless opportunities for interactions between bloggers and their readers and for the communal memories entrenched in their archives. On this latter point, it is becoming apparent that on the "blogosphere" – the ever-expanding collective of regularly updated and active blogs that make up the meta-network of smaller organic networks formed between blogs (Halavais, 2003; Hiler, 2002) – the practice of archiving posts and related reader comments is capturing for posterity the myriad commentaries and dialogues on emerging trends and events that could be viewed as personal and communal repositories of history from those that are actually living it, given meaning by the blog editors' and readers' very life-world situations. Again underscoring the structure/practice definition of blogs, it is important to note here that archiving on blogs is both based on the *technical capabilities* of blogs and *the practices* of purposefully archiving posts and comments actively developed by bloggers and readers, vividly illustrating Feenberg's (2003) double aspect theory of technology described in Chapter 2. Amending what McLuhan in 1972 dramatically but pointedly said of the "Xerox," one could also say that as "Gutenberg made every man a reader, creating vast new publics,...in our time [the blog] has made every man a publisher" (McLuhan, 1972, par. 58).

The Social Interaction and Socio-Political Impacts of Blogging Practices

If we were to return to our discussion of Mead's theory of the social self in light of the phenomenon of the blog, blogging practices can be seen as showing evidence of Mead's notion of generalizing the other through the public performances of bloggers. These performances can be viewed as simultaneously extending the blogger into the realm of the public while, at the same time, bringing the public into the private realm of the blogger. This public/private effacement defines the blogger (publicly and privately) by his or her emerging textual narratives that are, in contradistinction to the anonymous self of cybertheorists, closely linked to bloggers' offline identities and offline lives. As Canadian blog expert Seb Paquet (2002) points out, this public/private reality and the knowledge that there is a potential audience for every post published, together with the blogging convention that has bloggers write short posts in reverse serialized order, compels bloggers to post pithy and regular entries. That these entries have a chance of being read by peers and others also tends to compel bloggers to write surprisingly well-written and compelling entries. Blog entries, for example, will tend to be shorter and more polished than online personal diaries or quickly written and sent email blurbs (*Broadening the blog: Part 1, Part 2*, 2003; Mortensen & Walker, 2002; Nardi et al., 2004). Often, each blog entry is a constituitive part of a bigger and gradually emergent argument, personal observation, or politically-oriented essay. Indeed, these carefully crafted writing practices distinguish blogs from each other and from other online forms of self-expression. A blog's content can therefore be viewed to be inherently personalized yet intrinsically public presentations and evolving

narratives of the blogger's very identity and self-conception: a public working

out of the self, so to speak. This is inciting readers to return time-and-time again

to their favourite blogs in order to read the latest entry in the blogger's ongoing

narrative concerning whatever might be of interest to the blogger and the

reader.[64]

Moreover, the blog's "continuously running publication" format (Paquet,

2002, sec. 1) sets up an expectation in the reader that more is to come and in the

blogger that more should be written (also see Bausch et al., 2002; Hourihan,

2002). Mortensen & Walker (2002), for instance, claim that "[w]eblogs straddle

the boundaries between publication and process, between writing towards

others and writing for oneself. A weblog is always both for oneself and for one's

readers" (p. 256). This underlines Chandler's (1997) theory of personal home

pages as he postulates that "the Internet offers those who are fortunate to have

access to it a unique opportunity 'to write themselves' on a global stage"

(abstract). Unlike personal home pages, however, the blog takes this self-writing

one step further into the public realm: Readers (*anybody* surfing the web) can

now actively contribute to the self-narratives of web-writers, something not

practically possible on the more static page-paradigm of personal home pages.

This provides the blogger more immediate feedback for not only working out

ideas (Bausch et al., 2002; Mortensen & Walker, 2002), but, in Mead's terms, for

also working out the self through the blogger's internalization of the others' (the

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[64] Recent genre studies-based social research on blogs using content analysis and quantitative methods have found that most blogs are focused on the likes, interests, and minutiae of the everyday lives of its authors (Herring et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2003; Scheidt & Wright, 2004). Nilsson (2003), in particular, found that "[t]he blog is the author's creative space and, as such, very individually centred" (p. 26). Additionally, Nilsson also found that blogs, through their links, also maintain strong bonds of solidarity with others of like-mind.

readers') perceived expectations of the blogger. It can thus be said that the blogger "generalizes the other" through the blog. It could also be claimed that this generalizing of the other is witnessed in the interactive blogging practices and emergent narratives that are directly driven by the blogger's "I." Indeed, in Nilsson's (2003) content and social network analysis of a set of randomly selected blogs the author found that "the individual person – the 'I" of a blog—is very strong" (p. 26). Using the BlogStreet network tracking software as a methodological tool of investigation (Blogstreet.com, 2004), she also points out that "[e]ach weblog is at the centre of its own network" and that an "emerging picture of a socially dense" and tightly rooted network of blogs is becoming the norm (Nilsson, 2003, p. 18). A common blogging practice thus seems to be the tendency to constantly reference others within each blog's narrative flow as bloggers, in further Meadian terms, attempt to generalize the other and relate to each other in their social groupings of like-minded blog networks. This means that bloggers identify with a greater community of bloggers *and* readers within the very content and links of their blogs that point to myriad areas of the web and other bloggers. This interlinking forms into blog networks within the greater blogosphere in a phenomenon that Nilsson calls "links of solidarity" (p. 22).

Mortensen & Walker (2002) see this social dynamic intrinsic to blogging practices – the "links of solidarity" – as a "tension" between the private and public selves of bloggers (p. 257). In bloggers' awareness of an audience, the authors posit, "[w]eblogs straddle the boundaries between publication and process, between writing towards others and writing for oneself" (p. 256). In this

public/private tension, several socio-cultural impacts come to mind that, I posit, can be said to expand Mead's generalizing of the other out onto the public sphere of the Internet in a manner heretofor unseen on the network-of-networks. Turning on its head cultural theory's contention that mass-media bring the public into the private spaces of audiences, the private thoughts and expressions of bloggers as media producers themselves are now also plunged in an unprecedented way into the public. At the same time, the public is invited to engage in and collaborate with the private spaces and thoughts of bloggers. Mortensen & Walker, in agreement with Paquet (2002), further observe that this "public but intimate space of online writing" is precisely what is attracting the attention of reader audiences (Mortensen & Walker, 2002, p. 285). While this rawer, unfiltered, more "Average Joe and Jane" content indicative of the blogosphere is perhaps riding on the coattails of the recent "reality TV" cultural phenomenon, as McNeill (2003) suggests, there seems to be something much more powerful and potentially emancipating at its core: On the one hand, the paradoxically "publicly intimate" writing practices of bloggers efface various aspects of the public/private dichotomy as bloggers now have the potential of exposing intimate thoughts, images, and (perhaps inadvertently) drawing attention to socially risky practices (Goffman, 1959) to a potentially wide readership. On the other hand, these risks tend to be embraced by bloggers and their readers. What this public social risk-taking seems to be showing is that the once domesticated and marginalized voices of media consumers are now being unleashed via the popularized publishing ease of blogs, handing otherwise obscure and silenced individuals tools that also afford users, in Feenberg's

phrase, "margins of manoeuvre" (Feenberg, 1999, p. 113) for content creation and mass-dissemination unanticipated by traditional media, media gatekeepers, and political powerbrokers.

Kahn & Kellner (forthcmoming) view blogs, in light of their self-publishing capabilities and potential mass-reach, as offering new possibilities for extending the public sphere. Indeed, these affordances could be viewed as de Certeauian "tactics" of self-expression that usurp and bypass traditional media gatekeepers' "strategies" of control over mass-mediated content.[65] These user-led blogging tactics of regularly writing about things that are passionate to the blogger and linking to others of like mind in blogging networks are actually showing signs of exerting cultural and political influence. For instance, the affordances of blogs as flexible and powerful vehicles for airing ideas and hosting public debates are empowering a small army of "armchair" commentators (anybody with a computer, an Internet connection, and a willingness to write about topics of concern to others). One such political commentator is Markos Zuniga and his now popular *Daily Kos* watchdog blog (Zuniga, 2004a). Through his well-presented blog site and frequently updated blog posts (sometimes updated several times in one day) which is primarily constructed around well researched and provocative blog posts, Zuniga has

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[65] Certeau (1984) posited that localized social groups practice "tactics" for overcoming the "'strategies' of institutionalized controls" that permeate everyday life (Feenberg, 1999, p. 112, emphasis in original). Inspired by Foucault's analysis of "regimes of truth" and the openings in those regimes that allow "subjugated knowledges" room for resistance (see Chapter 1), these tactical opportunities are to be found in the very dominant codes of the institutional structures containing the upper hand in the socio-political power differential. Oppressed social groups and individuals can thus "react 'tactically'" to the strategies of institutionalized power even while remaining within the structure of the dominant strategy of control (Feenberg, 1999, p. 113). As Feenberg explains: "Tactics thus belong to strategies the way speech belongs to language. The technical code of society is the rule of an exorbitant practice, a syntax which is subject to unintended usages that may subvert the framework it determines" (p. 113).

managed to transform himself from a former US soldier and tech industry worker to a much-linked to and followed blog pundit that is, at the time of this writing, garnering the interest of many US political heavyweights like 2004 presidential hopeful John Kerry and the Democratic Party (Utne, 2003).[66] As a result, Zuniga has gone from a readership of virtually zero to thousands of dedicated readers while he logs millions of pageviews per month, all within the span of a year (Utne, 2003). Indeed, blog pundits like Zuniga resemble to some extent the political pamphleteers of 17th century England or the American Revolution.[67]

Another possibility for the extension of the public sphere via blogging practices could be seen in the use of blogs as organizing tools; there is growing evidence that blogs are also becoming effective organization tools for online *and* offline mobilization. One example of this is the "flash mobs" or "meet mobs" phenomenon that started in New York City in the spring and summer of 2003, quickly spreading throughout the world that same year. In these Situationist-like events, and using lists cobbled together via blogrolls[68] and email lists, flash

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[66] A typical *Daily Kos* post might see between 40 and 100 comments, and sometimes many more.
[67] Two other similar "blog-enabled" obscurity-to-fame examples will serve to further illustrate the de Certeauian possibilities in the blog even further: *The Drudge Report* (Drudge, 2004) and *Talking Points Memo* (Marshall, 2004). With Drudge and his blog-facilitated involvement in the Lewinsky affair, the armchair pundit turned into major journalist—albeit with a biting opinion—and almost brought down President Clinton via his persistent essays and sardonic commentaries throughtout 1998 (Drudge is still writing his regular commentaries on his blog to this day and is now also a syndicated radio commentator). In another more recent example, Trent Lott had to resign as Republican majority leader of the Senate because a relentless blogger—Joshua Marshall of *Talking Points Memo*—got wind of Lott's adulatory comments made at a private function regarding Strom Thurmond's 1948 segregationist campaign for the presidency. Instigated by Marshall's dogged coverage, a buzz quickly spread throughout the blogosphere (the ever-growing network of blogs and interlinked posts and comments to posts) and collectively exposed Lott via tenacious blogosphere-wide discussions that eventually made mainstream news outlets take notice.
[68] Blogrolls are lists of links to other blogs that are frequently visited by the original blogger and are displayed in a privileged space on the blogger's main page ("Blogrolling," 2004). See the next

129

mob organizers would invite a select group of people to congregate at a pre-disclosed location on blog posts and mass-emailed messages. Inevitably, a crowd would gather within hours, go through a few covert but innocuous activities, loiter for a few minutes, then disperse.[69] These "events" became frequent enough to get covered by the mass press (Delio, 2003; Leander, 2003), ultimately even getting the NYPD involved when Manhattan-area store owners began to protest the unwanted and unsolicited attention (Leander, 2003). While the reasons for these "meet ups"aren't exactly known – some call them art, others light social protests, and yet others the activities of the bored online masses – it is indisputable that these blog-organized events are demonstrating the potential that blogs have for being organizational tools. It does not take much to think of other, perhaps more politically radical uses of the blog for mobilization.

Indeed, blogging practices might even be indicating ways of overcoming the overburdening technocracies of Habermas's colonizing "systems" in favour of the more empowering social interactions of the "lifeworld" (Habermas, 1971). In particular, blogs could be theorized as affording ways of extending the public sphere into the private life-world of Internet users and the private sphere of users onto the public domains of mass mediated discourse, facilitating new spaces for mediated social discourse and democratic deliberation. Mortensen & Walker (2002), for example, contend that a new Habermasian "public sphere of political and cultural discourse" (p. 257) is emerging from the blog's public/private tensions. Rather than being voyeuristic or sensationalistic,

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section for more details.
[69] For various examples of flash mobs and their related blogs, see http://www.cheesebikini.com, http://www.flashmob.com, and http://www.coldforged.org.

perhaps these public exhibitions of private thoughts—sometimes mundane

(family blogs), sometimes moving (9/11 bloggers), sometimes inspirational (flash

mobs)—are attempts by bloggers to re-appropriate the public sphere of the web

for their own creative, social, and political ends (Feenberg, 1999). Could

blogging practices exemplified by a *Daily Kos* or the flash mobs phenomenon be

acts by the *"publicum"* to come to "an awareness of itself" (Habermas, 1987, p. 23,

quoted in Mortensen & Walker, 2002, p. 257) through the malleable public

square of the Internet?

As these examples suggest, blogs might not only be conduits for

generalizing the other by extending social networks but might also be alternative

channels for information dissemination, discourse, and organization. In Mead's

terms, the "I" of bloggers seems to be able to extend its reach[70] and ingratiate

itself onto readers, bypassing corporate media gatekeepers through simplified

and accessible mass-mediated self-presentations from bloggers' basements and

dens. Thus, cultural study's "active reader" might be transforming into the

"active content producer."[71] Might this be perhaps vindicating McLuhan's

prophetic claim that "the user is the content" (McLuhan, quoted in Levinson,

1999, p. 39)? If so, not only has blogging made "every man a publisher" but

maybe through the blog, "the user" and his or her life-world concerns is in fact

now also "the content."

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[70] I discuss the extended reach of IMC users further with regards to Schutz's theory of the life-world's "zones of operation" in Chapter 5.
[71] In regards to the ability for the user to now be both consumer and producer via the Internet, see Burnett & Marshall's (2003) "Cultural Production Thesis" (p. 3). For an example of CMC ethnographic research that applies the cultural production thesis theory to Internet-mediated practices, see Ebare's (2004) article "Digital Music and Subculture: Sharing Files, Sharing Styles."

Blogs and Working Out the Self in Public

While McLuhan's prophecy might be weighed down by his "technological determinist" label, the emerging scholarly literature focused on blogging practices seems to agree with Mortensen & Walker's (2002) less provocative but similarly inspired claim that "[the blogger] can seduce, attack, manipulate, rant or expose herself – but most of the time what you find in a weblog is an attempt to say something about what concerns the writer" (p. 258). As blog studies and the actual comments of avid bloggers are revealing (see below), it seems that blogs are firmly situated in bloggers' meaningful and greater life-worlds. Through bloggers' carefully articulated posts, frequent entries, and well crafted self-presentations, Mortensen & Walker assert that bloggers place not only their daily experiences into a wider public context afforded by the asynchronous, mass potential of IMC, but, in the process, also place their own running commentary of their sense of self onto the public arena in what could also be considered a publicized working out of the "me." Mortensen & Walker call this the "thinking by writing" affordance of the blog, theorizing that "weblogs are more than simple tools... [because]...the way we write in a blog reveals something about how we think" (p. 253). As long-time blogger Derek Powlek (2002) evocatively writes:

> I love weblogs because they're yet another way for people to express themselves online. Sure they're full of links. They're also full of lives. Look at the way Meg uploads her train of thought on a daily basis, or Tom tells us about his love life, or Jack tells his stories. These are real people putting their lives online. (p. 6)

Another avid blogger, Steve Goldberg (2004), describes similar feelings:

132

For me, I blog for myself. It helps touch and experiment with my long dormant (and barely existent) creativity. It is an outlet for my angst and for my exuberance. It is a safe place for me to be self expressive. (Jan. 28, 2004)

In addition to blogs being online opportunities for working out the self, in the tension between the public and the private and in their acts of self-writing bloggers not only understand intimately that a reader may be on the other end of their blogging narratives but are also aware that their narratives might have a broader impact in the lives of their readers, and this also affects the way bloggers write on their blogs (Bausch et al., 2002; McNeill, 2003; Paquet, 2002). Goldberg (2004) offers an insightful comment regarding the link between the blogger and his or her audience: "Occasionally,...what I write touches somebody. Sometimes positively, sometimes negatively, but it caused a reaction in somebody else" (Jan. 28, 2004). Notice the tangibly visceral feel to Goldberg's comment. The audience, though anonymous most of the time, is very real to him. He writes, in part, to "touch" them and to speak directly to them. Commonbeauty (2004)[72] writes similarly but more specifically about the personal experience of this assumed audience when blogging:

> The first member of the audience for which I write is myself. But the...host of readers that makes up the rest...are also important because, without them, I might not challenge myself as much as I do.... Some of my readers are masters of the English language, others are remarkable thinking beings, and yet others are sensate to a remarkable degree. Many are all of the above and in writing to them, I feel like I am writing for an audience that deserves a record of my experience. (Jan. 29, 2004)

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[72] "Commonbeauty" is this particular blogger's blogging alias.

The effects of this assumed – or phenomenologically "intended" – audience as articulated by Goldberg and commonbeauty is that, as witnessed in the extreme case of Zuniga and as previously mentioned, the writing on blogs tends to be particularly well-crafted when compared to quickly dashed off emails or chat posts, and the presentations (grammar, narrative flow, look and feel of the site) are often heavily personalized and deftly executed. Further, as in Hine's (2000), Miller & Arnold's (2002), and Wynn & Katz's (1997) examples related to homepage practices (and in yet another reversal of cybertheorists' contentions that self-presentations online are rooted in anonymity and decentredness), bloggers usually always show strong tendencies to, in Goffmanian terms, meticulously manage their self-presentations and to engage in narrative engagements with known and assumed audiences of readers.

Compared to the effusive and raw conversations of online chat rooms, where chatters engage in anonymous self-presentations and often choppy and hectically abbreviated textual dialogues (Romero, 2003; Turkle, 1995), a blog's textual presentations and the "conversations" that happen between bloggers and their readers via the comments to posts functionality are more carefully, if not more thoughtfully, presented. One reason for this is that posts and their subsequent archives are more permanent than fleeting chat dialogues or one-off email messages (Bausch et al. 2002; Paquet, 2002). (For an example of these well-crafted posts and comments to posts, see figure 5, Appendix 3). Generally, these blog dialogues consist of supportive additional commentary to an original post, readers' contextual asides to the post, additions to a key point, extensions of ongoing debates, or perhaps even corrections to the original post. Consequently,

textual conversations in the blogosphere are more like communal essays or

emerging drafts of a group writing project, as witnessed on Stephen VanDyke's

(2004) blog and the subsequent running commentaries stemming from his March

8, 2004 post (see figure 5, Appendix 3), clearly illustrating the emergent discourse

stimulated by VanDyke's original post. These evolutionary textual conversations

also resemble in many ways the practices of self-presentation and

communication via the "written world" of stable online textual environments in

more traditional CMC technologies such as computer conferencing (Feenberg,

1989). As with Feenberg's conferencing interactions, the "other" can be said to

be intended and generalized in the textual conversations of blogs via the

"retrievable forms of discourse" (p. 25) embedded in the "retrievable text" (p. 25)

of blogs' archives; in the "social memories...[as]...mediated memories" (p. 24) that

archiving functionalities afford; and in the community-like formations (p. 25)

that are forged in the networks of interlinked blogs and reader/blogger

interactions that help create Nilsson's (2003) "links of solidarity."

Another interesting and related social practice that is unique to blogging

and further underscores Mead-like social interactions and situated selves is the

custom of "blogrolling" (see figure 3, Appendix 3). Blogrolls are lists of links to

other blogs that are frequently visited by the original blogger and are displayed

in a privileged space on the blogger's main page ("Blogrolling," 2004).

Blogrolling is uniquely different from other types of IMC practices in that the

blogger identifies with a wider community of bloggers as "tattooed," if you will,

or embedded right on the blogger's own blog, rather than from a central

community portal or list or even a webring. While preferred web links lists or

"frequently visited sites" sections have been common on personal websites for some time now (and blogrolls can even be said to be descendents of these lists), blogrolls are different than these earlier links lists in that they tend to be more dynamic and ever-expanding, usually centrally designed into the central navigation of the main blogging page (see figure 3, Appendix 3), and directly associated with a community of like-minded or related bloggers. Thus, as Nilsson (2003) points out, blogrolls are the physical gateways into a blog's related network hubs, linking the blog to other blogs that are, in turn, their own network hubs. The blogosphere can thus also be called a network-of-social-networks within the greater network-of-networks that is the Internet. Using a Meadian lens, blogrolls are also ways for bloggers to identify with, in Nilsson's terms, their "solidarity" networks. As such, blogrolls are also a sign of belonging and acceptance as much as convenient tables of content to link off of from a source blog. They are like badges of group acceptance and membership: To have an extensive blogroll is a sign that the blogger is well read, that he or she has discerning reading tastes, and that the blogger belongs to a select group of fellow bloggers (Paquet, 2003). Inversely, to be on another's blogroll is much more than a simple web marketing tool, it is also a sign that a linked-to blogger has been deemed worthy of belonging on such a privileged list, legitimating him or her as, not only a "good read," but also an exclusive community member together with the others on the blogroll list (2003).

In the practice of blogrolling, we again notice that the cybertheorist's inclination to hail the web as a new world for decentred identity play *as well as* the essentialist's claim that "true" community is not possible via IMC are both

challenged. First, blogroll practices require a blogroll member to have proven

him or herself as having the same interests, be engaging in the same social or

intellectual behaviours, and often to be pursuing the same goals as the blogroll

owner and the other members on the list. Second, the blogroll editor usually

needs to be assured of the beliefs, values, and identities of the blogroll member in

order to ensure the integrity and consistency of the list.[73] Indeed, some bloggers

go so far as to heavily restrict the list to the most proven of blogging comrades,

such as Zuniga's strict blogroll policies (Zuniga, 2004b).[74]

Bloggers as Social Selves

In sum, blogs can be seen as tightly integrated self-performance venues

where personal identities are tightly integrated, albeit in an "edited" way, into

the blogger's non-computational world of flesh-and-blood. While it is true that,

as Feenberg points out in regards to online conferencing interactions, blogs also

witness the loss of some "ordinary conventions and rituals of small group [face-

to-face] communication" due to the reduction of "tacit cues and coded objects"

(p. 35) in the asynchronicity of blogging conversations, flesh-and-blood identities

are, nevertheless, often explicitly referenced and assumed within the blog's very

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[73] These two points also can be seen as affording the blogroll a community-building functionality that can be linked to my discussion of online communities in light of Schutz's theory of the "in-group" in Chapter 6.

[74] The following is an excerpt from Zuniga's (2004b) blogoll and links policy: "As you can no doubt tell, I am extremely stingy on links…. [¶]So how does a site get listed? Be noticed. Make a stir. Don't regurgitate the contents of a news story, but provide perspective or additional insight. Be clever, funny, original. Get away from the default templates. Get away from Blogspot. Create your own identity. Your own domain. Have attitude. Be self-confident. Participate in the comment boards at dKos or MyDD or Atrios or any number of other sites (a great way to demonstrate your writing acumen). Participate in group weblogs like Stand Down or the Political State Report. Don't be obnoxious or feel entitled to a link. Given my site's readership, have a heavy focus on elections and the political process. And while I appreciate any traffic you send my way, I don't care whether you link to me or not. Or how much traffic you send. Like I said already, I don't use my blogroll as a marketing tool" (pars. 1 and 4).

look and feel and emergent narratives. Thus, much can be gleaned concerning the blogger's likes and dislikes, values and mores, group affilitations, and situated identity and personality. As can be seen in all of the sample blogs in Appendix 3, most blogs, for instance, openly document the likes and dislikes and the various roles of the blogger via: 1) the blog's multiple links to other parts of the web within actual posts; 2) in the reading preferences and group affiliations listed on blogrolls; 3) in the running life narratives of the blogger; 4) in the "about me" page; 5) and even through the growing practice of adding personal pictures to posts or to more permanent areas of the blog, as witnessed in the recent practice of "facerolls"[75] (see figure 2, Appendix 3). Further, the reader commenting on blogs often identifies him or herself by the practice of a link back to his or her own blog or by including an email address in the actual metadata of the blog post. In addition, if one were to spend an afternoon perusing the myriad cross-linked networks of conversations in the blogosphere one would quickly see lively (and fully documented) conversations with their inherently Meadian gestures, significant symbols, and paralinguistic cues. As in offline settings, these online textual conversations between bloggers are also dynamic, emergent, recursive, and ever in flux, in many ways similar to how emergent and asynchronous conversations might proceed when writing a string of letters back and forth, with the exception that blogging conversations are always public, archivable, and thus retrievable by both bloggers and readers.

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[75] Facerolls are similar to blogrolls but, rather than text links, facerolls are hyperlinked graphics of actual associated bloggers' mug shots. See Joi Ito's faceroll, for example in Appendix 3, figure 2. For an example of how bloggers display a photo of themselves on their blogs as a personal signature of ownership, see Seb Paquet's blog *Seb's Open Research* (2004), Joshua Marshall's *Talking Points Memo* (2004), and Elizabeth Lawley's *mamamusings* (2004).

Summarizing Mead's Generalized Other for IMC

Mead's theory of the generalized other, supported by recent social interactionist and ethnographic studies and as illustrated in the case of the blog just presented, helps to position aspects of online behaviour as socially situated, performative, and communicative actions that, unlike both cybertheoretic assessments and essentialist critiques, "moves away from positing unidirectional technological influence on online social formations" (Hine, 2000, p. 115). Where cybertheorist thinkers have posited that online self presentations are in many ways categorically different than offline ones, and where essentialists have suggested that community formations are compromised online, under the light of Mead's symbolic interactionist theories and the empirical studies reviewed in this thesis thusfar, I instead propose that online sociability is intricately interrelated with offline social behaviour vis-à-vis group dynamics, careful practices of self-presentations and self-management, inter- and intra-group boundaries, social cohesion, and instances of Goffman's personal "backstage" preparation and careful self-presentation management. In other words, as Correll (1995), Wynn & Katz (1997), Ward (1999), Baym (2000), Hine (2000), Mortensen & Walker (2002), Nardi (2004), Herring et al. (2004), Nilsson (2003), and others have discovered, it seems that these predictable online social practices are more often than not deeply entrenched in offline settings. Rather than the postmodern image of the decentred, fragmented, and constantly shifting subject, the socio-historically-contextualized and projective interactional self of Mead that generalizes the other and self-presents in ways also laid out by Goffman, I argue, also offers further evidence of Feenberg's technological "double aspect"

where the limits of the tools of IMC are appropriated and mitigated by the use-context of the communicational technologies in our everyday lives. Moreover, the case study of the blog vividly illustrated that, in the practices of blogging, others are fully "intended" and "generalized;" the self tends to be in full emergent display in the very self-narratives woven into blogs; and bloggers and readers interact in socially relevant and communicative acts of textual conversations. Further, and as Schutz, Husserl, and Feenberg will further inform in the next chapter, the blogger's "I" (its proactive, world-influencing sense of self) is able to extend its reach out onto the new possibilities for the public sphere forged by the ever-growing network of blogs and interlinked posts and comments to posts known as the "blogosphere." This is provoking communication researchers like Kahn & Kellner (forthcoming) and Mortensen & Walker (2002) to wonder if the blog could not only be reinvigorating Habermas's (1987) vision for the public sphere, but also breaking valuable ground for Habermas's notions of "interactional" and "communicative actions" into the sphere of intersubjectivity he termed the "lifeworld." Could blogs, for example, be helping to overcome the overarching tendencies of the sphere of the "system" of "steering media" (Habermas, 1989)? That is, in the social and textual interactions being witnessed on the blogosphere, blogging practices could be seen as offering a possible way through the oppressive monopolization and the Marcusean sublimation of the cultural, political, and public spheres by the ruling technical systems that command and control us (Habermas, 1971)? These are questions that have yet to be fully explored amongst blog scholars. [76]

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[76] Having asked this, Habermas has apparently never suggested that such possibilities exist for

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If we return to our social-world canvas, Mead's social interaction theory of

the generalized other can begin to fill in our metaphorical portrait with social

interactional contours, suggesting the fourth postulate of the interactional self:

- *Postulate 4: The interactional self emerges within a social context by projecting itself onto others and also being projected upon through social and symbolic interactions.*

In our emerging look at the interactional self, I next turn to Schutz's

sociological adaptation of Husserl's phenomenological world-view, encountering

an intersubjectively constituted being that can be viewed as dimensionalizing

Mead's generalized other and adding further colours and contours to

Heidegger's "Being-in-the-world" for the interactional self, revealing fresh

theoretical possibilities for re-interpreting online intersubjectivity and

community.

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the Internet as a potential new space for communicative interactions or as a new public sphere (Kellner, n.d.). (Indeed, according to comments in the Habermas listserv, he apparently doesn't even use email (Perzynski, n.d.)!). As Brake (2003) reported in his blog in the spring 2003, Habermas told Brake in a brief conversation that Brake had with the professor that he (Habermas) "hadn't written anything specifically about the new media and that he felt its impacts were ambiguous. He expressed concern about the possible fragmentation of the public sphere that comes when the Internet brings interest groups together" (Jan. 28, 2003). Needless to say, I disagree with Habermas on this point. Scholars such as Feenberg (1999) and Kellner (n.d.; Kahn & Kellner, forthcoming) point out that not only has Habermas undertheorized new media technologies, but he has also mostly missed that new possibilities for the public sphere via the Internet do indeed exist, as my countless examples in this thesis show.

Chapter 5:
Schutz's Theory of Intersubjectivity and the Self:
The Roots of a Social Phenomenology
for Internet-Mediated Communication

> "In this universe of the experiencing life...I find my entire...life-world which surrounds me, a life-world to which also belong my life with others and its pertinent community-forming processes, which actively and passively shape this life-world into a social world."

> ~Alfred Schutz, 1962, "Phenomenology and the Social Sciences," in *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, p. 123

According to Dourish (2001), Alfred Schutz's greatest contribution to social science was "to extend phenomenology beyond the individual to encompass the social world" (p. 110) as he looked at "the way actors create social reality" within the constraints of "socially determined action patterns" (Ritzer, 2000, p. 412). Schutz's is a sociological phenomenology that goes outward from Husserl's "transcendental ego" (Ritzer, 2000) to look at how social actors live intersubjectively within the "life-world" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 3).

Specifically, Schutz's phenomenological sociology is centred on the question of how individuals interpret social actions as meaningful in the life-world and how this everyday, common-sense, and intersubjective world is constituted (Ritzer, 2000a; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973). For Schutz, the structures of the life-world were made up of a rich tapestry of sociological and phenomenological human actions, interactions, motivations, and experiences that disclosed what it fundamentally means to be a human being with other

human beings. Because of this, I argue that Schutz's socio-phenomenological contours, complementing Mead's generalized other, are very relevant to IMC research; his theories can be seen as adding a rich dimensional nature to Mead's symbolically interactant self and Heidegger's hermeneutic *Dasein*. [77]

In order to get a more complete sense of how Schutz's social theory adds deep contours and shading to the conceptual portrait of the interactional self for IMC, in this chapter I first turn to a few key foundational points in his social phenomenological theories of the life-world. I then show how Schutzian sociability might be evidenced in IMC settings via social network theory's concept of "strength in weak ties," informing the theory of community presented in Chapter 6. In the remainder of this chapter I spend time addressing in some detail a few of the phenomenological concepts underlying the experiences of the self and "other" in IMC vis-à-vis the notions of apperception, time consciousness, extended bodies and extended spaces, all serving as a phenomenological backgrounder for the next chapter and for my concluding remarks concerning the completed portrait of the interactional self at the end of the thesis.

The Life-World

While Husserl (1970) conceived of the "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*) as the "pregiven" world of the "natural attitude" (Husserl, 1970, pp. 103-189), it was not until Schutz's "constitutive" sociological phenomenology that the life-world

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[77] Surprisingly, with the exception of Bakardjieva (2000) and Smith & Bakardjieva (2001), Schutz's rich theory of the intersubjective life-world remains underutilized in social science and communications research looking into IMC. Hine (1999) also makes use of Schutz in her book *Virtual Ethnography* but in a cursory manner, while Wynn & Katz (1997) also briefly suggest the possibilities for IMC research in Schutz's work.

was articulated sociologically (Wagner, 1970) as the realm of everyday actions, orientations, and projections where our "common, communicative, surrounding world is constituted" intersubjectively (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 3). For Schutz, it is in the common social action that takes place between individuals' life-worlds where all direct experiences of other humans occur (Wagner, 1970, p. 14) (see figure 1, Appendix 1). The life-world is thus the "fundamental and paramount reality" (Schutz & Luckman, 1973, p. 3) and the sphere of the experiencing subject living with other experiencing subjects that gives "common-sense" meaning to our actions, practices, and encounters as interpreted using meaningful signs, symbols, and language in a "universe of signification" (Schutz, 1970, p. 133). Fundamentally, the life-world is contextually experienced in accordance with one's socio-biographical circumstances and "reach of action in [particular] situation[s]" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 133). Moreover, in the life-world, both the interpretation and carrying out of these "actions" are informed by an emerging set of "typifications" and situational "recipes" that help the experiencing self make sense of others and the world. These typifications and recipes for action are, in turn, stored by the experiencing individual as an ever expanding "stock of knowledge" (Schutz, 1962, p. 226). Situated as the life-world is within the natural attitude, we also assume within this natural attitude that what is common-sense to us in our life-world is common-sense to our "fellow men" in theirs (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 4). We thus, in everyday life, suspend doubt of the common-sense assumptions within our own and each other's life-worlds, our life-world thus "remaining unproblematic until further notice" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 4).

Everyday life is therefore lived directly in the life-world, is interpreted by our accumulated stocks of knowledge, and is experienced through the life-world's mitigation. While it might appear from a cursory reading of Schutz that there is only one life-world, this is not the case; each individual has his or her own life-world with its own spatial and temporal horizons of experience. However, each life-world also overlaps with other life-worlds to form the realm of social life in *a world of life-worlds*, so to speak (see figure 1, Appendix 1). Ritzer (2000) interprets Schutz to mean here that "others belong to our life-world and we belong to the life-worlds of others" (p. 419), each individual life-world, in turn, anchored culturally and historically to each experiencing subjects' socio-biographies which, when melded together, give unique personalities to the various groups individuals form (Schutz, 1970, p. 84).[78] Collectively, these infinitely interlinked life-worlds make up our common social and cultural world that is connected to a past of "predecessors" and shapes the present within the realm of our "contemporaries" and "consociates," which will, in turn, shape the future world of our "successors" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, pp. 61-92). I have made an attempt to illustrate this world of overlapping life-worlds in figure 1 in Appendix 1 and will be referring to it throughout the ensuing analysis.

While to Schutz the world was intersubjectively constituted, the life-world is, first and foremost, experienced from a personal perspective as we individually gain understanding of our own life-worlds through our private, socio-biographically attained "stock of knowledge" (Schutz & Luckman, 1973, p. 111).[79]

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[78] I.e., see my discussion of the in-group in Chapter 6.
[79] The "situation-relatedness of the stock of knowledge" is its "biographical character" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 111). Schutz further theorizes that "[e]very present situation is, in addition,

The stock of knowledge is the sum total of the accumulated experiences acquired throughout one's life, supplying the life-world with meaning and order and subsequently providing us with the "'reference schema' necessary for our explanation of the world" (p. 7). Further, the stock of knowledge is enhanced intersubjectively before, during, and after every encounter as we add to "the sequence of situations during the course of life" (p. 111). In turn, the objects and events that confront us in the life-world are placed into a set of situational "recipes" and "typifications" that subdivide our reference schema into workable sets of generalizations we can work off of in interactions with others (Schutz & Luckman, 1973, pp. 229-235), similar to (although functionally different than) the socializing role of Mead's concept of the "generalized other." Language, for example, is for Schutz a method of typifying that gives us "linguistic types" (Ritzer, 2000, p. 418); through language, we continue to socio-culturally acquire a "store of typifications" throughout our lives (p. 418). Consequently, by interpreting one's own past experiences rooted in social interactions and saved within one's typified reference schema through, for example, linguistic types, individuals define their situation and choose how to act towards objects or others. And so, through each encounter with others – in varying degrees of engagement for every encounter – the stock of knowledge grows and the life-world continuously, concomitantly, and contingently changes, adding to our "common experiences" (common sense) and the interactional self's interpretive and intersubjectively acquired schemas.

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biographically articulated within its 'known' limits…. In this sense," concludes Schutz, " the biographical character of the present situation forms an element of my stock of knowledge" (p. 111; also see pp. 90-131 and Wagner, 1983, p. 289).

For Schutz, the *acting self* – the Being-in-the-world that changes and moulds its world – is inherently social. Further, the acts of apprehending the things of the world, anticipating a future, and experiencing others within the sedimented reality of everyday life see the interactional self, as with Mead, projecting onto others as others and things project upon it. To Mead's generalized other, Schutz can be seen to add a more complete theory of the intersubjectivity of the life-world. As just mentioned, for Schutz interactant reciprocity occurs in shared, intersubjectively attenuated and overlapping life-worlds in a world of life-worlds (see Appendix 1). These interacting, intersubjective selves are thus also spatially, biographically, and historically interconnected. As Moustakas (1994) describes it, the intersubjectively entrenched self interacts with the social world "in a process in which I present myself to you and you present yourself to me...in an interchange of perceptions, feelings, ideas, and judgments regarding the nature of reality" (p. 57). That is, for Schutz, social interactions occur within "degrees of *intimacy* and *anonymity*" (Schutz, 1962, p. 134, emphasis in original) that he also termed "*gradations of immediacy*" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 65, emphasis added).[80] In Schutz's own words: "I experience men ...according to various levels of proximity, depth, and anonymity in lived experience" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 69). In other words and as social network theory also suggests, all human interactions can be said to happen within *dimensions of sociability* that begin from each individual's "subjective, spontaneously flowing *stream of experience* in which the individual

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[80] These "gradations of immediacy" are mitigated by the "intentionality to act" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 59). Ritzer (2000) rephrases this social spectrum as "degree[s] of immediacy" (p. 422).

lives and which…carries with it spontaneous linkages, memory traces, etc., of other, prior, experiences" (Schutz, 1970, p. 318, emphasis in original).[81] As I show in upcoming sections and in the next chapter, these concepts prove to be fruitful for rethinking the socially contingent place of the interactional self in IMC settings and for helping to theorize how and why "strength in weak ties" and "media multiplexity" occur in IMC.

Media Multiplexity, Intersubjectivity, and IMC

I believe that Schutz's notion of the life-world helps us further envision the varied hues and textures of the interactional self, helping us understand that IMC is not a separate virtual reality but part of our multi-dimensional and situated social world of everyday life. Indeed, Bakardjieva's (2000) work on the Internet and everyday life shows how well Schutz's theory of a multi-dimensional, intersubjective life-world transfers to the analysis of online social interaction, adding socio-phenomenological force to the position that interactions online are socially entrenched deep in our interconnected life-worlds (Bakardjieva, 2000; Smith & Bakardjieva, 2001). Schutzian theories of the intersubjective life-world especially make sense in IMC when, as Wellman & Gulia (1999) remind us in their well-known paper "Net-Surfers Don't Ride Alone: Virtual Communities as Communities":

> [P]eople do not neatly divide their worlds into two discrete sets: people seen in-person and people contacted online. Rather, many community ties connect offline as well as online. It is the relationship that is the important thing, and not the communication

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[81] Schutz's references to the experiencing ego's "stream of experience" is heavily indebted to Husserl (see, for example, Husserl 1913/1931, p. 143).

medium.... [T]he development of multiplexity can involve the conversation of relationships that only operate online to ones that include in-person and telephonic encounters. Just as community ties that began in-person can be sustained through email, online ties can be reinforced and broadened though in-person meetings. (p. 349)

As such, Wellman's (1999) social network theory can be used to illustrate a Schutzian view of online sociability that sees users living in worlds of overlapping life-worlds within dimensions – or gradations – of sociability, online or off, and, as I will touch on shortly, using media "multiplexly" in a plethora of configurations and concatenations within these overlapping life-world situations.

While Wellman uses a more positivist approach in his methods than that envisioned by Schutz, I believe Wellman's research findings nevertheless validate Schutz's concept of the "degrees of intimacy" found within overlapping life-worlds (see Chapter 6); both theorists have compatible conclusions: Wellman & Gulia (1999), for example, state that "evidence available suggests that the ties people develop and maintain in cyberspace are much like most of their 'real-life' community ties: intermittent, specialized, and varying in strength" (p. 353). If we look at Wellman's online social network theory with a Schutzian eye, online interaction can be said to support interactions situated within a spectrum of sociability (that is, of interconnecting life-worlds) somewhere between *narrow, special interest relations* containing low entry barriers, much anonymity, and low "degrees of intimacy" (such as the sociability found on FAQ sites, expert forums, online purchases, some online live chats, interactive games, etc.) and *broad, multiplex relations* having high entry barriers and deeply intertwined degrees of intimacy needing fully divulged identities (such as family websites and blogs;

emailing or ICQing family oversees (Bakardjieva, 2000), and online support

groups (Correll, 1995; Ward, 1999)). Wellman (1999) designates the former types

of social networks primarily special interest and "narrow" affinity-based

relations usually characterized by specialized, focused, and interest-based

interactions requiring low barriers for entry and weaker emotional investment,

thus also also called the "weak ties" theory of interaction by social network

theorists (Granovetter, 1982). The latter types of interpersonal networks are

made up of more broadly multiplex[82] and close-knit relationships requiring a

deep investment of time and stronger emotional bonds that have high barriers

for entry, inversely called "strong ties." While Wellman & Gulia (1999) suggest

that IMC supports both types of social networks (p. 346), they go on to explain

that solely IMC-based relations that express themselves online on the whole are

proving to be mostly the former type of weaker relationship, albeit with certain

levels of intimacy that the authors term "intimate secondary relationships:

informal, frequent, and supportive community ties that nevertheless operate

only in one specialized domain" (p. 347). The researchers ultimately show that

the structures of IMC are particularly well-suited for these types of weaker but

still "intimate secondary relationships," a phenomenon also known amongst

social network theorists as "the strength of weak ties" (Granovetter, 1982;

Haythornthwaite, 2003; Wellman, 1999).

Explaining the concept of "the strength of weak ties" for online social

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[82] According to social network theory, strongly "multiplex" relationships are made up of multiple layers and dimensions of social bonds that carry deep emotional commitments and parlay long-term socio-psychological support for an individual and group, meeting a multiplicity of deeply invested psychological needs (Wellman, 1999). Weaker relationships, in turn, are less multiplex and more uni-dimensional in nature.

settings using Granovetter's (1982) seminal social network theory paper, "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited," Ito (2003) offers some powerful examples of these narrower types of social ties online using his personal and professional experiences with blogs and complementary IMC technologies. In his blogging and professional online work experiences Ito is finding that weaker secondary ties are the norm for him.[83] Ito especially finds that his interactions with other bloggers with focused common interests, his career connections, and his collaborative online projects are all well supported through the blogging and supplemental IMC technologies he uses. This is the case, Ito argues, because "social software" technologies that enable online asynchronous interactions and conversations help to also disclose key aspects of interactants' backgrounds, identities, and personalities that, used in unison, facilitate accomplishing the common goals and projects of all participants (for similar conclusions, see Feenberg, 1989; concerning social software, see Wershler-Henry, 2004). Such social software could include conferencing systems, blog postings, and email. These social software technologies are especially well suited for affording and sustaining the varying degrees of interaction that individuals experience in everyday life, especially when combined with more synchronous technologies such as IRC ("internet relay chat," also known as "instant messaging" (IM)), and even the telephone (and now online IP-based telephony such as Skype ("Skype.com," 2004)). As Ito explains, combinatorial uses of IMC

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[83] As of the June 2004, Joichi Ito was one of the world's most linked to and interviewed bloggers, considered amongst the "A-List" in the blogging community and attracting a wide readership due to his insightful and accessible writing on the social impacts of communication technology. He is currently CEO of www.neotany.com and has a leadership role with the blog tracking service www.technorati.com.

technologies allow networks of weak ties to transcend the constraints of deeply-invested relations (which take time) and geographic boundaries (which are confined by space) while offering each interactant enough information of the other for all participants to feel confident that everyone is who they claim to be based on the required personal backgrounds needed for the communicational task at hand in order for the interchange can take place with legitimacy, accuracy, and the proper level of mutual support.

Ito, for instance, has capitalized on the affordances of blogs for idea exchanges (e.g., Ito, 2004b; Pearson, 2003), distributed publishing (e.g.: Ito, 2004a), and even for hiring employees (Ito, 2003). Writing about his recent hiring experiences using IRC and blogging in a brief essay on his personal blog, Ito evocatively illustrates this "strength in weak ties" dynamic via his own communicational experiences with potential hires. In the essay he elaborates on how his hiring process was facilitated by the IMC technologies both he and his potential employees saw as being most fitting (or, "equipmentally fit," in Heideggerian terms) for the hiring task at hand. I will let Ito explain this dynamic in his own words:

> What I would like to assert is that social software can help people with their self-esteem and can also help you find others who can find your assets and interests more valuable and place people in jobs where one can have "character"....
>
> What I can see emerging [in blogs and social software] is a way to amplify the strength of weak ties. (I knew this before, but it's becoming more crisp to me now.) IRC allows me to see the style and personality of many of the people online. Blogs help me see what their interests are and focus is. LinkedIn [an online professional networking tool] provides a professional context for referrals. I think that supporting the process of developing your assets and character and finding a job that best suits you will be one

of the single most important benefits of social software.... [I have]...realized that social software may be most important in addressing...finding the job that brings home the bacon....

I recently hired two people who were IRC regulars. I felt very comfortable after "getting to know them" over the last few months on IRC. Of course face to face meetings and interviews were essential, but the time spent with them on IRC really added to my ability to judge their character. I realize now that I am actively recruiting from my network of weak ties on the Net and also using the Net to meet interesting people to connect with others who might be good collaborators for those interesting people. The Net has always been a big part of my arsenal of networking tools, but I think it's reaching a whole new level. (Aug. 16, 2003)

It is revealing to see that Ito does not just use one technology but rather applies a combination of technologies to carry out the communicational task at hand which, in this case, was to hire employees. This is called "media-multiplexity" by social network theorists (Haythornthwaite, 2003; Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002) and is the notion that "[f]requent contact via one [communication tool] is associated with frequent contact via other means" (Wellman et al., 2003, sec. 8). In support of Ito's experiences, Wellman et al. (2003) are finding that Internet sociability in particular shows strong tendencies towards this media-multiplexity phenomenon, or what they also call the theory of "the more the more" (sec. 8). The Internet, the authors found, extends the number of social contacts in the networks of Internet users, online and off. As such, "[h]eavy Internet users have a greater overall volume of contact with community members because Internet use supplements telephone and face-to-face contact. It does not displace it" (sec. 8). Further, and in a partial tip of the hat to Poster's 2001 claim that the Internet brings with it new dimensions to social realities (though not as totally as Poster and other cybertheorists suggest),

Wellman et al. contend that "the more the more" reality of Internet sociability must therefore also be seen to extend our social possibilities: "It is probable [therefore]," the authors conclude, "that people not only have more relationships than in pre-Internet times, they are in more frequent contact with community members" (sec. 8). There is a caveat to this conclusion, however: For Wellman et al., the new extensions of our social circles afforded by the Internet do not necessarily create a new communicational and social paradigm, as the cybertheorists claim, but are instead mostly new extensions of our old social structures—that is, they are new ways of doing old things. On the whole, we communicate online with those that we've always been communicating with: known social networks of kith and kin in addition to more instrumental weaker relations. This is, additionally, also in direct contradiction to Dreyfus's (2001), Borgmann's (1999), and other essentialists' fears that "real" community is not possible on "less authentic," "less risky" online interfaces (see Chapter 6). On the contrary, media-multiplexity studies such as Wellman et al.'s are suggesting that those that use the Internet frequently to connect and communicate are also likely to talk face-to-face and to generally support already established community formations (Haythornthwaite, 2003; Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002).

Both essentialists and cybertheorists often overlook the fact that the online is not engaged with independently of the offline. On the contrary, as Hogan (2003) and Matei & Ball-Rokeach (2003) have recently reported, and in support of Wellman's pioneering work in Internet social network studies, higher levels of interaction in offline communities correlate with higher levels of interaction in online ones and vice-versa. Hogan (2003), for instance, found that heavy users of

154

IMC technologies tend to "talk more in person and by telephone" (sec. 1) while Matei & Ball-Rokeach (2003) concluded that "strong anchoring to offline social and cultural groups links cyberspace to people's local communities" (p. 552).

When looked at more broadly from a point-of-view that attempts to factor in the complex nuances of everyday life, social network researchers are showing that social scientists cannot isolate IMC-based sociability from the greater context of users' life-worlds. Ito's description of how his media-muliplexity includes face-to-face interactions when the situation deems it appropriate, together with emerging media-multiplexity research, supports one of my thesis's main proposals: that online and offline social settings and media uses are intimately intertwined. Indeed, media-multiplexity research also hints at Heidegger's theory of equipmentality, where tools are chosen according to their "in-order-to" fitness (see Chapter 3). Moreover, social network theory's related "strength in weak ties" hypothesis and Ito's hiring scenario also underscore a major anchor point in my thesis that connects it with Feenberg's (1999; 2003) dyadic "instrumentalization" model for human use-technology relations that I described in Chapter 2: Like Feenberg theorized for human-technology relations as a whole, IMC technologies are both shaped by and shape users. On the one hand, IMC is shaping online and offline social networks by extending users' social and geographic reach while selectively framing the particular performative interactions mediated through the IMC tools used, compelling users to adapt to the affordances of the IMC technologies at hand. On the other hand (and at the same time), users are "creatively appropriating," changing, and constantly redefining the IMC applications of choice by their very life-world realities and

use-contexts, also bringing the affordances of the technologies into account to meet user's own social ends.

Schutz's "Working" and "Partial" Self and IMC

Schutz's intersubjective self has not only direct lineage to Husserl, but also to Mead's and James's dialectical conceptualizations of the socially contingent "I" and "me" (Schutz, 1962, p. 216). With Schutz, similar to Mead's and James's I/me framework, the self emerges explicitly as a dialectic between the *"working self"* and the *"partial self"* (Schutz, 1962, p. 216, emphasis added). The *"working self"* "experiences itself as the originator of…ongoing actions…as an undivided self" (p. 216) which, similar to Mead's and James's "I," acts out onto the outer world. What Schutz adds to the Jamesian/Meadian "I" is an explicit action theory encapsulated in the notion of a future-oriented "project" (Schutz, 1962, p. 24) that is characterized, as Barber (2002) explains, "by the intention to bring about…[a]…projected state of affairs" (sec. 2). At the same time, the self has a more passive, socially determined aspect to it: *"the partial self"* (Schutz, 1962, p. 216, emphasis added). Like James's and Mead's "me," the partial self is the reflective "taker of a role" accessed through circumspection and reflection (Schutz, 1962, p. 216). The partial self is the passive part of the self, recollecting "performed past acts" from its stock of knowledge by referring "to a system of correlated acts to which it belongs" (p. 216). Barber (2002) explains that Schutz associates the partial self with "because-motives," an existential concept that contrasts with "in-order-to-motives." "Because-motives" are where, "after completing one's actions, one correlates, as an observer of oneself, the choice of the project with its historical determinates" (sec. 2).

Schutz's self is therefore a self rooted simultaneously in agency and action (the working self) *and* reflection and recollection (the partial self). Moreover, as with Heidegger's practical encounters and Mead's "manipulatory phase," to Schutz the world is one of "well circumscribed objects" (Schutz, 1962, p. 208) encountered through "eminently practical interest" (p. 208). We "gear into" the world (p. 209) and both change and are changed by it. This world, like Heidegger's practical encounters, is overseen by a "pragmatic motive that governs our natural attitude toward the world of daily life" (p. 209). But there is a tension in the way we encounter the world: While we transform the objects in it – thus giving agency to our plans, purposes, and actions – these transformations are always mitigated by the actual world we live within as it resists our efforts to change it. As Schutz explains:

> Our bodily movements...gear, so to speak, into the world, modifying or changing its objects and their mutual relationships. On the other hand, these objects offer resistance to our acts which we have either to overcome or to which we have to yield.... World, in this sense, is something that we have to modify by our actions or that modifies our actions. (p. 209)

Critically for Schutz, this involvement with the world is not solitary. Unlike Heidegger's *Dasein*, Schutz explicitly adds intersubjectivity to this worldly encounter: "The world is from the outset not a private world but an intersubjective world, common to all of us" (p. 208). We live with others. We are social creatures. We actively pursue worldly transformation "with our fellow men " (p. 209). We cannot avoid this. Thus, as the world changes *us* and *we* it, the "I" and "me" must become, as Sartre suggested in a different occasion, "us"

and "we."[84] For Schutz, this is to be found in his concept of "work." This instersubjective world of everyday life is "the scene" (p. 209) where working, actions, and interactions happen. It is where we engage in our purposeful pursuits with others. But what exactly did he mean by "work" and how does it tie into the interactional self and our experiences of the other?

Schutz's "work" and "working acts" are at the core of how the world can be engaged with and changed in "the here and now" and how the self is realized as a "total self": "the working self" (p. 216). Further, it is in working acts that the self communicates with others. Work is "purposive action" which Schutz also calls "performances" (p. 211). A performance has roots in planning, in projecting a future state; it is based on a "preconceived project" (p. 211) and is rooted in Husserl's "pretensions" and "anticipations" (p. 216).[85] Moreover, our actions and performances are able to be experienced by another via our "bodily movements" (p. 212). We engage in work, change and are changed by work in the world, and share this work with others. To Schutz, then, work

> is action in the outer world, based upon a project and characterized by the intention to bring about the projected state of affairs by bodily movements. Among all the described forms of spontaneity that of working is the most important one for the constitution of the reality of the world of daily life...the wide awake self integrates in its working an by its working its present, past and future into a specific dimension of time; it realizes itself as a totality in its working acts; it communicates with Others through working acts; it organizes the different spatial perspectives of the world of daily life through working acts. (p. 212)

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[84] See in particular Sartre, 1964, pp. 535-537.

[85] Husserl's "pretensions" and "anticipations" are part of his theory of time. For the links between Schutz's concepts of "working acts" with Husserl's notion of "phenomenological time," which is, in turn, related to Bergson's concept of *durée*, see Schutz, 1962, pp. 215-216. Also see this chapter's next section.

Schutz, therefore, informs us that the interactional self always operates within life-worlds consisting of alternating modes of "gearing into the world": We work into and are worked over by the world. Online, I argue, this is no different.

Feenberg (1989; 1995b), Bakardjieva (2000), Hine (2000), and Baym (2000), for example, have all shown how the offline social situation and socio-biographies of Internet users are closely tied to online behaviours in alternating states of active and reactive interplay with others as situated within the complexities of everyday life and revealed "worlds" that are "geared into" online. In this same spirit, Chee & Vieta (2004), for example, assert that similar online/offline effacements, "working" actions, and social interactions occur within the gaming world of EverQuest, finding that the "fantasy" game worlds of players were actually worlds that in many ways formed a part of the gamer's greater life-world in complexly interconnected ways.[86] On various EverQuest "realms" (online worlds), for example, EverQuest gamers perform, work, and develop future-oriented projects with each other via online and offline communities discussing various aspects of EverQuest life, sharing player-written stories, interacting in chat rooms, exchanging player bios, and even co-creating game-inspired art (Chee & Vieta, 2004, p. 4). Shared projects, therapeutic

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[86] EverQuest is the most popular of the online role-playing games known as Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, or "MMPORGs" for short (see Chee & Vieta (2004) for more details). Chee & Vieta (2004) report on primary ethnographic fieldwork carried out by one of the authors, Florence Chee, from "inside" the EverQuest community. On a primary level, the work consists of participant observation of gaming avatars from within the EverQuest world where Chee used her EverQuest avatar to engage with other gamers and the online gaming environment of EverQuest. The authors also report on in-depth interviews of three avid EverQuest gamers concerning their experiences of becoming members of the EverQuest community and online role-playing gaming in general. The authors then theorize their findings using the sociological phenomenology of Alfred Schutz (1962; 1970; 1973). A related paper based on this study is slated to become a chapter in a reader on online games tentatively title *Gaming Cultures Reader* and scheduled to be published sometime in 2005 (Chee, Smith, & Vieta, forthcoming).

involvements,[87] and offline interactions as inspired by online ones in EverQuest are all witnessed in Chee & Vieta's ethnographic and long interview-based look at the online and offline lives of various EverQuest players. Not only do EverQuesters need to forge social bonds and networks (referred to as "joining a guild" and "grouping" with others) within the game's world for ultimate success (the acquisition of social and material wealth), but long-lasting social bonds often subsequently form directly in the gaming environment *and* between EverQuest-related social networks offline (2004).

Chee & Vieta's empirical evidence, therefore, shows that the EverQuest world is a Schutzian world of work; just like the world of flesh-and-blood engages the self with the other and the things of the world by each interactant's "gearing into" the world, so too do EverQuesters engage with others and "gear into" the things of the world on EverQuest and its communally-created realities. In support of Chee & Vieta, Castronova (2001) also found worlds of work on multiplayer games like EverQuest: "Avatars in virtual worlds must work to do anything interesting at all" (p. 16), Castronova writes. Chee & Vieta encountered similar working selves and "worked over" worlds on EverQuest, reporting that gamers' avatars were witnessed running errands, working collaboratively, building their surrounding life-world structures, and even engaging in "free market" exchanges of EverQuestian goods and services (Chee & Vieta, 2004). Drawing from the writings of Schutz and Goffman and expanding on Argyle, Furnham, & Graham's (1981) symbolic interactional work, Hine (2000) suggests

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[87] I.e., some players claim that interactions on EverQuest help resolve personal issues and stresses.

that online social groupings such as EverQuest's communities can also be thought of as groups of individuals engaged in active "performances oriented towards practical understandings of behaviour appropriate to particular social spaces" (p. 109). As Argyle et al. (1981) assert in discussing symbolic interactions in everyday social situations: "situations are not passively there; they are actively perceived and negotiated" (paraphrased in Hine, 2000, p. 109). Hine found similar active performances in the newsgroups she investigated (also see Chapter 4). The "social spaces" of EverQuest, for example, happen to be a combination of the player's offline situation and players' "work" on the EverQuestian computational worlds (Chee & Vieta, 2004). On EverQuest, social performances are indeed situationally bound within the constraints of the EverQuest realm. But the social networks engaged in, each member's "working" self, and the boundaries and structures of players' non-computational spaces also inform players' social performances. As Hine argues generally for most online settings, Chee & Vieta (2004) also show that the same types of socio-phenomenological structures, working and partial selves, performances, and social cues, hold in EverQuest, as well.[88] I discuss these performative dimensions of EverQuest further in Chapter 6.

I believe that Schutz's dialectical theory of the working self and partial self continues to fill in the details of the interactional self on our social world canvas

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[88] When the social formations of EverQuest are analyzed using Schutz's interaction theory of community (see Chapter 6), Chee & Vieta (2004) learned that the social performances they witnessed within the land of Norrath (an EverQuest "world"), for example, contained social groupings of gamer's avatars existing in the same locality and following codes of conduct which can be implicit or explicit. According to my definition of community in Chapter 6, the people associated with sustaining these avatar relationships would definitely qualify as a valid community (see Chee & Vieta, 2004), especially because the gamers, when interviewed, did not outwardly differentiate their non-computational embodied self from the computational self of the avatar—on the whole they spoke of both in the first person.

for the self online. Not only do Schutz's theories of action-oriented performances through working selves situate online activities within the working interstices of everyday life, it can also be said that online communicative environments are full of evidence of embodied selves leaving traces of their actions on the world, pointing to the possibility of the types of "bodily movements" integral to "the intention to bring about the projected state of affairs" of working selves that Schutz introduced this section with. Next, I discuss these phenomenological embodiments and extensions in regards to IMC practices as yet more evidence that, online as in off, the interactional self is situated in everyday spaces as lived in everyday life.

Phenomenological Extensions, Embodiment, and IMC

Before embarking on a full discussion of how we are already always embodied online and how, at the same time, IMC technologies phenomenologically extend our spheres of reach, I need to lay out briefly the phenomenological theory of extensions and embodiment grounded in the pioneering work of Edmund Husserl. In particular, we need to understand phenomenological concepts of time, the role of "retrospection" in our engagements with the world, and Husserl's notions of "apperception" and "appresentations." These are pivotal concepts for rethinking the interpretative disposition of the interactional self in online social settings.

Setting the Phenomenological Stage

Borrowing from Husserl's notion of "time consciousness" (Husserl, 1913/1932, pp. 234-244), Schutz (1962) theorizes that working actions are

experienced "in simultaneity...as a series of events in *outer* and in *inner* time, unifying both dimensions into a single flux which shall be called the *vivid present*...an intersection of *durée* and cosmic time" (p. 216, emphasis in original). That is, the working self engages with and changes the world in the "vivid present" – in the experiential "here and how" – *but* as informed by past recollections and future expectations. On the one hand, events that happen in space and time and that can be objectively measured by things like chronometers and clocks and can be experienced by a group of people at once – outer time – Schutz (1962) also calls "spatial time" (p. 215), which is concordant with Husserl's (1913/1931) "cosmic time" (p. 234). On the other hand, "inner time" (called *"durée"* by Bergson (quoted in Schutz, 1962, p. 215) and "phenomenological time" by Husserl (1913/1931, p. 234)), is experienced from our "stream of consciousness," which is the inner world of our thoughts constantly fluctuating between the meaning-bestowing and interpreted past, our anticipations of the future, and our present engagements in the "here and now" (the vivid present).[89] It is in the inner time, or *durée*, of our stream of consciousness where experiences are linked "with the past in *recollections* and *retentions* and with the future by *protensions* and *anticipations*" (Schutz, 1962, pp. 215-216, emphasis added). To Schutz, the performances of our embodied actions on the world evidence the movement from *durée* to spatial time (p. 216). And, as Husserl also believed, these existential actions in and upon the world are informed by the meanings present in the phenomenological recollections of our

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[89] Schutz's "stream of consciousness" is identical to Husserl's (1913/1931) "stream of experience" (p. 140)

past experiences: Acts are meaningful in retrospection as "well circumscribed experiences" within a reflective attitude (Schutz, 1962, p. 210). "[A]ction," Schutz further explains, "is always based upon a preconceived project, and it is this reference to the preceding project that makes both the acting and the act meaningful" (p. 214). This adds a hermeneutic dimension to Schutz's present and future-oriented actions. As hermeneutists know, we interpret what we experience in the present and the direction of our future actions and goals based on experiences of the past (Schwandt, 2000) and, as Schutz would add, by drawing on our "stocks of knowledge." That is, both the performing (present tense) and, in Heideggerian terms, the "towards-which" and "for-the-sake-of-which" of future-directed activites (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 116), are meaningfully-rooted in already experienced and performed (past tense) activities. As was the case for Heidegger's *Dasein*, actions (or for Heidegger, our "comportment" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 94)) are always directed towards a future projected state of affairs. According to Schutz, then: "In projecting, I look at my act in the Future Perfect Tense" (Schutz, 1962, p. 215).[90]

Thus, it can be said that *the working self* changes, moulds, and acts in the present, while *the passive self* reflects and recreates experiences of the past retrospectively to inform and give meaning to future projects that guide our

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[90] Heidegger's "comportment" is less "intentionalistic" in his concept of the "toward-which" (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 94) than Schutz's intentional future-oriented projects in the sense that, for Heidegger, the future direction in our concernful ways of engaging with the world are not necessarily immediately goal-oriented but more simply the way we engage with things in their readiness-to-hand and as part of "skillful coping" (p. 93) within their equipmental complex. There are, nevertheless, similar existential echoes in Schutz's notion of the project. As Dreyfus writes of Heidegger's notion of comportment, so, I believe, is it the case for Schutz: "We make sense of our own comportment or the comportment of others," Dreyfus (1991, p. 94) paraphrases Heidegger, "in terms of such directedness towards long-range and proximal ends" (p. 94). I believe Schutz to be saying a similar thing here.

present actions. In the vivid present the working self acts on and changes the world and is always an undivided and total self in a world of open anticipations. Reminding us of Heidegger's unsettled *Dasein*, however, and as it is for the pragmatist self of Mead, James, and Dewey (Schutz, 1962, p. 214), the working self cannot act perpetually in the vivid present. Often, it is forced to break from the unity of the vivid present to enter into a contemplative engagement with the partial memories of the past in order to bring meaning to bear on our actions and, thus, in order to appropriately fulfil our projected intentions. In doing so, the working self "turns back" reflectively in order to interpret the meaning of the act, bringing our actions, the actions of others, and our world "into view" (p. 214). Cybertheorists' views of the decentred self online might miss this if they were to critique phenomenology as yet another modernist explanation of the world. While postmodern views of the decentred subject is influenced by a past (a social biography) (see Chapter 1), the fragmented and decentred subject of cybertheorists as put forward by Turkle (1995) and A. R. Stone (1995) ruptures itself from the past in its focus on the will to the virtual, thus effectively negating a past for the self to refer to. To an uprooted self removed from a past and free to reinvent itself in the computations of cyberspace, as with Turkle's cyberselves, historical rootedness is necessarily torn asunder and the self is thus left to free-float in the ephemeral ambiance of the present moment (and the "ons" and "offs" of the network). In the reflective attitude of the phenomenological self, however, the past gives meaning to the present and the future while, at the same time, acknowledging the uncertainties and contingencies of the present and the future and the social situatedeness of the "here and now" of the stream-of-experience.

That is, in Schutz's terms, as the self dips into its stocks of knowledge, typifications, and recipes for action, the self's "unity" in the here and now "goes to pieces" (p. 216) – in effect fracturing itself. As it turns out, the phenomenological self isn't a completely unitary, total, and centred self (the self of Descartes). It too is, like the postmodern self and as Heidegger tells us, "unsettled." However, rather than possessing the freed and untethered fragmentation of the postmodern self, the phenomenological self is the inverse: it is only a sense of a unified self in the present acts of Heideggerian coping and concern (see Chapter 3) and in the natural attitude of Schutz's notion of work which, subsequently for Schutz, becomes a "partial" self in the reflective moments of "*modo praeterito*" meaning seeking and role taking (Schutz, 1962, p. 216).

But, as Husserl also informed Schutz (see Schutz, 1962, pp. 207-259), it is precisely in the partial self's mode of reflection that the entire unity of the experience can begin to be reclaimed, where the actual incompleteness of phenomenological appearings in lived experience is brought to the awareness of the experiencing person, and where that individual can reconstruct these lived experiences into the possibility of meaningful unities. In Husserl's words:

> [A]n experience is not...perceived in its completeness, it cannot be grasped adequately in its full unity. It is essentially something that flows, and starting from the present moment we can swim after it, our gaze reflectively turned towards it, whilst the stretches we leave in our wake are lost to our perception. Only in the form of retention or in the form of retrospective remembrance have we any consciousness of what has immediately flowed past us. And in the last resort the whole stream of my experience is a unity of experience, of which it is in principle impossible 'swimming with it' to obtain a complete perceptual grasp. (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. 140)

For Husserl and all subsequent phenomenologies including Schutz's sociological version, then, things are understood to be "apprehended" in degrees of ambiguity and clearness: "Apprehension of the essence," Husserl (1913/1931, p. 194) also wrote, "has accordingly its own grades of clearness" (194). This spectrum of clarity ranges from the "zero limit" of a newly given thing as immediately apprehended, which "is obscurity," on up to the "full clearness" which is the "unity-limit" of something grasped in reflective intuition (p. 194). But to get to the full meaning of the experience of a thing or an act or even an "other" – to its "unity-limit" in reflection – the working self must become a partial self to "reconstruct," so to speak, or reconstitute the fragmentary "modes of appearing" (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. 137) of that thing or act experienced. And that phenomenological reconstruction is necessarily done in recollection.[91] It is in

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[91] While Husserl (1913/1931) claimed that properly carrying out this reflection was difficult and needed much practice (p. 181), Schutz seems to allow for a more accessible reflective disposition for phenomenology. Husserl believed that proper reflection that gets at the "pure transcendence" of the experiences of phenomena is to be done in the rarified and philosophical stance of the phenomenological *epoché,* where the "natural standpoint" and common-sense attitudes are to be suspended or bracketed out (Husserl, 1913/1931, pp. 107-111). To get there, he prescribed various steps that have come to be known as his "phenomenological reductions" (pp. 171-184). Bringing Husserl's philosophy back down to ground level, Schutz's phenomenology of the natural attitude (the major part of Schutz's socio-phenomenological interests (see Ihde, 1977, pp. 143-147)) seems to suggest that the working/partial self practices this projective/reflective dyad constantly as a normal state of existential life, if in an ad hoc manner. That is, for Schutz, looking back at our "stock of knowledge" in order to inform present actions and future projects is the natural disposition of being human and core to all meaningful human experience. Nevertheless, whether as in Husserl's "new science...of phenomena" (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. 41) or Schutz's more "everyman" version, phenomenological theory assumes that all appearances, whether mediated or not, are always imperfect and never an instance of the complete thing as it "immanently" is (pp. 139, 179). A thing is only immanent to its own thingness, claimed Husserl, which, in its immanence, always remains outside the experiencing subject's complete reach (p. 139). Only *aspects,* or *perspectives,* of the experienced things "thingness" are experientially reachable at any given moment. Additionally, while accumulated past experiences of things build on each other to form more complete and commulative ideas of the thing, its totality as a thing is never experienced at once, especially existentially, only in states of reflection and in the fleeting retensions and protensions of "the stream of consciousness" of the here and now (Husserl 1913/1931, p. 140; Schutz, 1962, pp. 208-259). The transcendent aspects of the thing

this reflective attitude – also called the "phenomenological attitude" – where the working self fragments, in a sense, into the multivariable recollections of the past in the partial self's attempt to reconstitute the unity of the experience.

So, indeed, there is fragmentation in the phenomenological self as well, but not in the same implosive sense that postmodernists believe. The phenomenologically fragmentary self is rather more like the Heideggerian inverse discussed in Chapter 3, affected by the unity-searching but forever unsettled *Dasein* living in its thrownness; the limitations imposed on *Dasein* by the world; and the situational contexts, skills, and the socio-biographical knowledge possessed by the human being in its everyday realities. Like Heidegger's *Dasein*, Schutz's working/partial self faces the reality of a world that also resists and pushes back. In its thrownness, the working/partial self sometimes lives up to the interpretive challenge and its projective potential and gears into the world, sometimes it doesn't, and sometimes it just lets the world be. As with *Dasein*'s "thrown possibility" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 182), the working/partial aspects of the interactional self, together with its thrownness, can be said to ensnare the possible.

As I will show in the next section, the phenomenological disposition of the self proves to be an important area of the phenomenological pallete for further interpreting the contours and perspective of the still emerging portrait of the

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experienced in the stream of consciousness (or "stream of experience") and the layers of the thing that are open to our awareness are always partial, infinitely multi-layered, and always in flux: in Husserl's language, a thing "is given through perspectives, it has its changing forms of appearance" (p. 139). For example, things always partially appear to the experiencer: the tree is never the entire thingness of the tree for me, the experiencer of the tree at the moment of experience, but is always existentially a side or angle or perspective of it. All phenomenological appearances, therefore, are "perspectival" and *contingent on the perspective* of the subject doing the perceiving or, better said, contingent on the "experiencer."

interactional self in IMC. I also believe that a phenomenological approach gives the social researcher powerful interpretive textures from which to begin to theorize mediated existence. The phenomenological theory of experience just laid out allows Internet researchers to pose the following questions: How do online interactants phenomenologically confirm that the others they encounter through the pixels, the texts, the online presentations, and the screens of the network are who they say they are—that these presentations are those of other situated selves too? Further, how do interactants grasp the embodiment and situatedness of the other through the textual traces they leave behind on the network? In what follows I offer two interlocking ways that this embodiment is phenomenologically revealed online—as "extended bodies" and "extended spaces." I interpret these Internet-mediated phenomenological extensions of self onto the world with assistance from Husserl, Schutz, and Feenberg.

Extended Bodies: Textual Residues of the Self and the Other Online

I believe both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology of perception can particularly help us understand how the interactional self phenomenologically "intends" the other as, ultimately, an embodied other in the mostly textual environments of the Internet. This is rooted in the phenomenological concept of "apperception." The analyses in this section are also broadly rooted in the notion, as mention in Chapter 2, that technology is hermeneutically interpretable—that technology is like language or, as cultural studies has taught us through the pioneering work of Raymond Williams, that

technology can be interpreted as a text (Bakardjieva, 2000, p. 31).[92] As such, this

section takes on a linguistic spirit in the following analyses of the authors and the

readers of online texts.

As I mentioned in the previous section, while sensual perception is

certainly one way of experiencing the things of the world, it is not the only way,

Husserl showed. Things are "given" to and "apprehended" by the experiencer

in various "modes of appearing" (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. 137) and in various

phases of obscurity and clearness (pp. 193-198), as I have already discussed.

Husserl's concept of intentionality also includes experiences given solely in

recollection, fantasy, by allusion, in anticipation, etc. Moreover, things and

others – embodied or otherwise – can be experienced and yet not sensually

perceived. Husserl (1913/1931) called these experiences "apperceptions" (p.

165). Apperceptions are things given to us as an "appresentation," defined by

Schutz (1970) as "an actual experience which refers to another experience not

perceptionally given" (p. 316). In other words, apperceptions are things

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[92] In Feenberg's (1995c) discussion of the theory of the "double aspect" of technology (see Chapter 2), Feenberg links the interplay between the "function or meaning" of technological appropriations and the uses of the technology to the possibilities of the tool being literally transformed by the "social meaning" and the hermeneutic interpretations users give to the technical (in the SCOT tradition). For support, Feenberg also equates technology to language, pointing to Baudrillard's study of "systems of objects" as a way to understand the linguistic structures technology. "Baudrillard's approach," writes Feenberg (1999, p. 85), "opens technology to quasi literary analysis. Indeed, technologies are subject to interpretation in much the same way as texts, works of art, and actions" (p. 85). The work of Ricoeur (1979; 1991) and Latour (1993) also offer valuable insights for a linguistics of technology. Further to the linguistic elements of technology, this time as informed by the work of Latour, Feenberg points that "Latour argues that just as authors and readers meet on the printed page, so the builders and users of machines are joined in the application. Machines are comparable to texts because they too inscribe a 'story,' i.e., a prescribed sequence of events which the user initiates and undergoes" (p. 114), emphasis in original). "This analogy," continues Feenerg, "then authorizes a *semiotics of technology* drawing on concepts developed in linguistics" (p. 115, emphasis added). These concepts are expressed in Latour's notions of a "shifting out" or "delegating" function of the technical to humans and nonhumans via a technology's design and the "syntagmatic" and "paradigmatic" elements of "sociotechnical networks" (p. 115).

apprehended in the "stream of experience" but not "something that appears

perspectively" before us in an objectively sensorial way, explains Husserl

(1913/1931, p. 165).[93] It is an apprehension that grasps an object in fantasy,

fancy, or memory. To access these experiences, however, the experiencer pauses

and reaches back in reflection. Schutz (1970) clarifies this by suggesting that

apperceived things are rooted in "previously acquired knowledge" of the object

being intended (p. 316). Apperception, as I will show, is a pivotal

phenomenological theory for understanding embodiment online.

Apperception can help us see that online traces of working selves are

everywhere online and include written texts; email addresses; graphics of all

kinds; actual pictures and images of users' non-computational spaces, things

they possess, and friends and family (as in the case of facerolls, for example, in

Chapter 4); textual and pictorial accounts of a user's last trip; websites they have

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[93] Technically, in phenomenological theory apperception, while central to recollections, is also present in perceptual acts (Husserl, 1913/1931). When, for example, the thing "clock" is given to us in sensorial perception parts of it are immediately experienced, such as the face of the clock, the hands pointing to numbers behind a clear plastic screen, and the second-hand as it moves rigidly past each number and notch. We also see the clock encased in a white metal body with maybe three or four small metallic stands or feet that keep it propped upright. In this perceptual experience of the clock we see it from one perspective, its front, perhaps on our desk. But we also "apperceive" the back of it as an aspect of it that falls away from our immediate perspective. Based on past experiences of the clock, we "apperceive" the dials and knobs on the backside of the clock without having to sensorially grasp its back immediately. In fact, we phenomenologically apperceive that the back of the clock also continues with the same dimensions, texture, and colour perceived on its front without having to actually perceptually "see" its back. Appercieving the clock's backside is a more "passive" grasping of the clock's givenness to us as its transcendence fades into various levels of obscurity from any given perspective. According to Husserl, we can never know the complete "immanence" of a thing; only the thing can know its immanence in its "thingness" (Husserl, 1913/1931, pp. 128-146). We can, however, know a things transcendent qualities and through various phenomenological steps come to know a thing completely enough to understand its meaning. The "meaning" of the clock, therefore, is known by piecing together various experiences of it, each previous experience building on present experiences to form a more complete understanding of the clock, how it works, and how it can operate within our life-world. This process of coming to know something from our accumulated experiences of it Husserl called "synthetic consciousness" (p. 130) or "passive genesis" (Husserl, quoted in Vandevelde, 1996, p. 11), what other phenomenologists have termed "passive synthesis" (Vandevelde, 1996, pp. 11, 16).

developed and maintain; papers written and published; lists they are mentioned on and that are published online (such as faculty lists, blogrolls, or team rosters); etc. Even the network infrastructure and the programming codes of the myriad software packages and applications that run the network are traces of embodied Beings acting and interacting and working and reflecting on the world online. Somebody, after all, had to put the network together and program the software that runs it and runs on it. As reported by Chee & Vieta (2004), for instance, there was evidence of "embodied" social performances embedded within the avatars, the EverQuest worlds' environments, and the online texts forged by the gamer via their avatars (also see Chapter 6). As both phenomenology and poststructural theory inform us, these texts could be thought of as online "residues" or "traces" (Poster, 2001, p. 78) of embodied selves. Phenomenology specifically informs the Internet researcher that these traces of embodied selves are "apperceived" by others (readers) via these residual texts (Feenberg, 2004). As I will theoretically and empirically show in the rest of this chapter and in Chapter 6, these texts are traces of the action-oriented performances of working selves gearing into the world online.

Appealing to the phenomenology of both Husserl and Sartre, Feenberg (2004) associates these residues and traces left behind by Internet users as *signs* of embodied selves. They are, according to Feenberg, traces of the "extended body" (p. 104). As such, for Feenberg, online texts show evidence of a "body that uses instruments rather than being their object" (p. 104). This is one more phenomenologically reductive step from the strategy Merleau-Ponty (1962/2003) used in his famous illustration of the a blind man's cane as being an extension of

the blind man's sensorial reach: In Feenberg's further reduction, *the cane also reveals the cane user* – the blind man – as blind.[94] In Heideggerian terms, the cane and the way the blind man uses the cane *discloses him* as a blind user of canes. At the same time, the cane also reveals the world to the cane user. This two-sided revelation of the blind man's extended body implies appresentational consequences for both the blind man and the blind man's audience (the other). As Feenberg explains: "[h]is body is extended not only in the *active dimension* [the cane as the perceptual extension of the blind man's arm and as a surrogate organ of sight] but also in the *passive dimension* of [the body's] own objectivity" (p. 105, emphasis added). That is, the blind man's body is extended in two ways: It is *actively extended* in Merleau-Ponty's (1962/2003), McLuhan's (1964/1994), and Ihde's (2002) notions of technologically-mediated perceptual extensions of

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[94] Merleau-Ponty, as Ihde (2002) explains, writes about the extensions of our bodies in the technical objects that extend our bodily reach out onto the world as "going beyond one's bodily limits" (p. 6) such as when one uses canes, glasses, hammers, and any type of mediated communication. In an earlier book Ihde (1990) calls this type of embodied technological situation "embodiment relations" with a technology, or "technics embodied" (p. 72). Even when we lose awareness of the technology in our pragmatic and concernful engagements with things ready-to-hand (and, indeed, especially when we do so), Idhe explains, we are in an embodied relation with that technology: It is, as laid out in Heidegger's phenomenology of equipment and Merleau-Ponty's technological relations to the world, technology as subjectively assimilated by our corporeal being. In this case, the body and the embodied tool, like other mediational tools of worldly encounter, become ready-to-hand, absenting themselves from awareness as other things are simultaneously made present by their assistance and, at the same time, their absencing. Technologies facilitating this type of relation to the world, according to Ihde, include things such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, telephones, a blind-person's cane, etc. In these mediational uses of technology, the world becomes known (is revealed) to the experiencing self via the embodied extension afforded by the technology. Thus embodied, the technology extends the sensory perceptions and reach of the user out into the world as the very technology fades from awareness and the thing perceived, via the technology's mediation, enters the core area of awareness. In the case of communication technologies such as the phone, email, text messaging, etc., the other at the receiving end at the same time interprets our presencing to them as embodied via a hermeneutic "reading" of, for example, the voice of the phone or the text of the email as an extension of the sender. As experiencers of others' bodily extensions, we also constantly interpret the other through a hermeneutic reading of the technologies they use to directly or indirectly communicate to us (i.e, "we cannot not communicate"). As such, phenomenologists like Feenberg (2004) would say that while technology reveals new worlds to the experiencer, it also reveals the user of the technology as someone who uses, bears, and in various ways distinguishes him or herself based on both *how* and *that* the technology is used. Here, Feenberg extends this bodily engagement with the world and hermeneutic readings of the other to online texts.

bodily things such as limbs (prosthetics, building tools), sight (eyeglasses, telescopes), memory (books, lists, databases), etc. It is also *passively extended* in the way the other responds back to the blind man by the revelation of the blindness of the blind man through the meaning of the cane as a compensatory tool used by the blind. This has implications for both the blind man and others that experience him. Feenberg explains:

> Those around him recognize his blindness and are generally helpful. The blind man knows this is happening and has a non-specific awareness of the helpfulness of those who perceive him as blind because of his cane. (p. 105)

In other words, the cane as the extension of the blind man's active body (arms, eyesight), not only reveals the world to the blind man but also distinguishes the blind man to both himself and others as a "body that acts through a technical mediation" (p. 105). As such, the blind man is passively disclosed "as a body that signifies itself through that mediation" (p. 105). Additionally, in the passive extension, the blind man is an object to himself as in "I, the blind man who attracts the others gaze because of my cane" as well as being an object of the gaze of the other.

This phenomenological dynamic, claims Feenberg, is no different when it concerns bodily extensions through online texts. Like the blind man's cane, the extended self on the Internet is "signaled" to the other (and the self) through the textual mediation. This textual mediation can include the emerging personal narratives of blogs, email messages, graphics, the look and feel of one's website, the links one points to on one's blog, etc. As Ihde (1983; 1990) has articulately pointed out, mediated communication and its texts actively extend the

perceptual reach of the self onto the world. But they also passively signal, Feenberg adds, various aspects of the embodied self that has created these online residues. Does the website have sparse white space or is it cluttered with links, pictures, and colours? Cluttered? Then perhaps the reader hermeneutically interprets the web site owner to be a web neophyte because she doesn't understand the basic elements of designing for the web, or maybe that she is a complex and busy person. Is the spelling and grammar on a person's email riddled with errors? Yes? Then maybe the writer was in a hurry, or perhaps he lacks an education, or maybe he's just sloppy and doesn't care. Perhaps we encounter a blog written by an articulate blogger that regularly links to, via her blogroll and the links in her posts, scholarly bloggers researching Internet behaviours. Then maybe she too is an Internet ethnographer or psychologist or perhaps a graduate student interested in online behaviour. If we know additional information of the person behind the text from our recollected reservoir of previous experiences of that person perhaps we can more completely compensate – or fill in – the embodiment of the author from the lower-bandwidth of the online text. In these scenarios, the compensatory recollections signified to the text's reader by the perception of the material text appearing before the reader's gaze means that the reader also "apperceives" other aspects of the text not denotatively written into the message of the online text. These are compensatory steps the reader takes to fill in the "gaps" in the text – the passive aspects of the text that are signaled by the cluttered web site, or the sloppy email, or the links off of a blog (or the blind man's cane). We know, for example, that a man walking down the street with a cane tapping on the ground extended in

front of the person means, in part, that the person is blind because we have

previous experiences of blind people using canes to get around. In the case of

online passive extensions, the other – the reader, the experiencer of the text –

connotatively "reads" what is both present *and* missing from the denotative

elements of the message based on the reader's stocks of knowledge of the author

behind the message – as referenced by the message – or based on the

apperceiver's previous experiences of a similar type of email or web site.

Feenberg (2004) elaborates on this active/passive phenomenological

dynamic online using the examples of email and online conferencing software:

> On the Internet we experience our self as exposed to the gaze....
> [Thus, while] our physical body is invisible...our presence is [also]
> signaled and our objectivity established through signs. In this case
> the signs are intentional and complex and consist in written
> messages. (p. 106)

For Feenberg, this is more than merely a metaphor (p. 106). Rather, the extended

body of the online text is evidence of the actual lived experience of persons

engaging with the world in situated life through the mediation of IMC

technologies. That is, the text one leaves behind online is evidence to the reader

of that text that an "other" – an embodied self – exists. We write to others and

manipulate things online mostly through textual acts. These acts, as such, are

embodied acts; that we leave residues of these acts in the "texts we weave"

online (Feenberg, 1989) is evidence of a writer's presence; the texts we leave

behind can be said to be crumbs, traces of these acts that lead back to an

embodied other. And, as the hiker retraces his steps back to camp by following

key markers left on the trail, the online reader retraces the steps left behind by

the online writer in order to appresentationally form an understanding of the

other that left the traces:

> [P]henomenologically considered, the point is not the objective
> thinghood of our physical self but what we live in the first person
> as our self in situation. [While]...mediated human contact is
> always measured against full bodily co-presence, however, the
> consequences of this situation is not simply a feeling of loss but
> evokes compensatory efforts to fill in the gaps, to enrich the
> 'monosensory dimension' made available technically. (Feenberg,
> 2004, p. 106)[95]

These phenomenologically *compensatory efforts* are, while perhaps

accentuated in IMC because of the variability of the message bandwidth afforded

by Internet communication media, not unique to the Internet. They are

intrinsically present in any mediated act such as using a phone, or telegraph, or

even in the more passive acts of watching TV or listening to the radio. And,

phenomenologically compensatory efforts are also as present when reading

online texts as when reading offline ones. Indeed, as Chandler (2002) points out,

Derrida has spent much of his career addressing the connections between

embodied speech and residual texts and critiquing the traditional Platonic

privileging of speech over text. To Derrida, the author is simultaneously

revealed in the text, lost to the text, and the text is interpreted by the reader in a

way that recreates the text from the original intensions of its author, although the

author never quite "leaves" the text completely. McLuhan also spent time

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[95] Feenberg's notions of passive bodies and compensatory efforts are ultimately rooted in
Husserl's theories of apperceptions and signs. "[In t]he presentation of a symbol in the form of
an image or meaning," wrote Husserl (1913/1931, p. 136), "...we intuit something, in the
consciousness that it copies something else or indicates its meaning; and though we already have
the one in the field of intuition, we are not directed towards it, but through the medium of a
secondary apprehension are directed towards the other, that which is copied or indicated. There
is nothing in all of this in perception, as little as in plain recollection or fancy" (p. 136).

addressing the place of the self and the author in texts and has similar theories (Levinson, 1999, pp. 39-41). Explaining McLuhan's aphorism that the "user is the content," especially in electronic mediations, Levinson (1999) writes that in "online writing...users become content in the lines of text they create" (p. 39). We both send ourselves through the text and are then phenomenologically "apprehended" (received, read, interpreted) by the other both as active and passive bodies in the text. When the reader is apprehending the digital text that signals the embodied other sent through it, the reader, as Derrida would agree, interprets the text and, thus, also its author. The absence of the active embodiment of the author is turned into a passive presence – the author becomes a trace – by the very interpretation of the text by the reader. As McLuhan learned from the literary criticism of his Cambridge professor I.A. Richards, "the meaning of a text reside[s] not in its author's intentions but its reader's legitimate...interpretations" (Levinson, 1999, p. 39). In phenomenological terms, and in agreement with Feenberg's "passive dimension" thesis, the text "gives" another to us but in ways that are dependent on the interpretation of the text and the stocks of knowledge available to the reader. This givenness of the other to the reader is perhaps sometimes more "obscured" or "shaded" than face-to-face or other mediated encounters, perhaps at other times it is clearer, depending on the technology used, how the message has been written, and what the reader knows of the messages' topic and its author.

Thus, as Feenberg suggests in the case of Internet embodiment, the embodied self that creates online texts is, to a large extent, passively "apperceived" by the reader, often to a greater degree than in face-to-face

settings. At times the "written self" discloses certain aspects of the writer otherwise obscured by the face-to-face interaction. However, we hermeneutically "read" the author's crafted words in a more passive dimension than the fleeting and more actively given and emerging ideas of face-to-face discourse. As readers we understand, if only intuitively, that the "written self" is, at the same time, an "edited" disclosure much more worked over than would be the case in the quintessentially unmediated situation of face-to-face interactions and its paralinguistic cues. This written self, therefore, requires more interpretative compensation by the other/reader. In online texts, the reader knows, at minimum, that the writer had to have taken the time to think about the text, compose it, and perhaps edit the text and, equally, that time is needed to interpret the message therein. The embodied other is, in these cases, reflectively "reconstructed" by the reader as the writer's embodied presence is given to the reader in a passive dimension. Face-to-face encounters, however, are more instant, more unmediated, a rawer, unedited version of the self where interpretation of the other's intentions and of the other's embodiment is encountered much more actively. In both encounters – face-to-face and textual – there is, however, evidence of embodied selves communicating to other intentionalized embodied selves in the communication texts they each weave where the compensatory level of the interpretation is contingent on the communicational situation at hand and the experiences that each interactant brings to the table.

With this phenomenological foundation of passively embodied presencing in communicative acts, the case for embodiment in the digital text can be

summed up in the following way: The online text created by me, the author –
like any text I write – shows "traces" of me, of my embodiment. In Meadian
terms, it is a left-over of my active "I." In Schutzian terms, it is a residue of my
"working self." That is, the digital text is evidence of an embodied self that
imposes its will and its projects onto the world via the textual actions afforded by
digital interfaces and packet-switched asynchronicity. Indeed, the digital text is
not only evidence of me, the writer's, thoughts and ideas but is, as the cane was
for the bind man, evidence of my full wordly embodiment. Passively, as the cane
reveals the blind man as blind to both the blind man and the world, the online
texts I leave behind reveal aspects of my embodiment and aspects of my self but
as possessed by the gaze of the other and my understanding that the other might
be possessing my textual residues through this gaze. Further, my online textual
traces are evidence of the effort and the equipmental totality of the
communicative act: of the *zuhanden* and *vorhanden* I experienced in the act of
writing and, for example, in the physicality in the pressing of the keys of my
laptop; of the *equipmentality* of the writing tools I use that sit on my desk in my
den surrounded by coffee mugs, books, papers, chairs, shelves, walls, etc.; and of
all of the projecting, planning, coping, and working in the act of publishing my
thoughts via my blog or in crafting an email and sending it to a potential
university I would like to attend. From the planning to the minutiae of steps
taken in the in-order-to and the for-the-sake of-which and the towards-which of
projecting textual actions onto the world, the online text is simultaneously an
extension of my embodiment and *evidence* of my embodiment.

These are further testaments that online, in an extension of Schutz's face-to-face interactions, we not only perform and act on the world but that we also leave traces of our performances open for others to interpret in that world, thus co-constructing the world intersubjectively.

Extended Spaces: Worlds Within Reach and IMC

One can also use Schutz's notion of "work" to safely say that all IMC texts leave traces of interactions between working and partial selves. (This also complements Feenberg's analysis of the extended body, as will be made clear shortly.) While some types of interactions leave brief or fleeting traces, as in more synchronous forms of communication such as chatting or Internet-enabled phone calls (voice over IP, or VOIP), other traces remain archived longer, such as in asynchronous communication (email, blogs, wikis, conferencing systems, etc.). In Schutzian terms, these traces can be said to be residual evidences of how IMC extends the life-world's "zones of operations" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 41) which, borrowing from Mead, he also called "the manipulatory sphere of the communicator" (Schutz, 1970, p. 203). These zones extend the spatial limits of "the world within my actual reach" (Schutz, 1962, p. 224) (which belongs in the "present tense" (p. 224)) into new possibilities for "a world within restorable reach" (p. 224) (brought back from the past) and into a "world within attainable reach" (p. 225) (the world not previously within reach but which is attainable after imagining it and projecting it).[96] Thus, by extending the Schutzian world to the world online IMC technologies can be said to possibilize new ways of either

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[96] As Barber (2002) explains, the world within attainable reach is in "a future perfect tense" (sec. 2).

restoring things and others previously within reach but subsequently lost, or

bringing things and others otherwise unattainable from the perspective of our

unmediated "zero system of coordinates" (p. 224) into attainable reach in the

"here and now." Also pointing back to Feenberg's extended bodies, Schutz

(1970) seems to be thinking of the same types of more passively mediated zones

of operation afforded by IMC technologies when he states that

> [it] is not necessary that the interpreter's world within his reach overlap spatially the manipulatory sphere of the communicator (telephone, television), nor that the production of the sign occur simultaneously with its interpretation (Egyptian papyrus, monuments), nor that the same physical object or event used by the communicator as carrier of the communication be apprehended by the interpreter. (p. 203)

As is clear from the previous passage, there is room for technical mediation in

Schutzian socio-phenomenological theory in the notion of the manipulatory

sphere.

Combining Schutz's action theories and, in particular, his concept of the

"zones of operation" with virtual ethnography and a critical constructivist

phenomenology of everyday life, Bakardjieva (2000) and Smith & Bakardjieva

(2001), for example, capitalize on Schutz's theory of "actual," "restorable," and

"attainable reach," using the concepts to, in part, convincingly assess the "spatial,

temporal, and social arrangements" of IMC technology for "particular action

contexts" in the everyday life-world of Internet users (Bakardjieva, 2000, p. 51).

Smith & Bakardjieva (2001) found that an understanding of the dimensional

character of online social behaviours intimately situated within users' complete

life circumstances are empowering user groups such as immigrant diasporas to

appropriate IMC technologies for sustaining otherwise compromised cultural,

social, and familial ties overseas. They also found that these same immigrant users also assert their sense of self-worth and belonging within the extensions of the life-world afforded by IMC. The communication scholars ultimately found that, in Feenberg's (1999) terms, individuals in these diasporas "creatively appropriated" IMC technologies within their everyday life-worlds in order to reclaim "their original states and cultures," bringing them to "'restorable' and 'attainable' reach" (Smith & Bakardjieva, 2001, p. 74).[97] By creatively appropriating IMC into the contours of their everyday lives otherwise marginalized groups discovered new ways to meaningfully configure their IMC scenarios to fit the localized needs of their unique life-world situations. Feenberg & Bakardjieva (2002) link these reconfigured communication technologies to the "dormant affordances" that lie available but untapped within the very technical code and received designs of the Internet's applications, awaiting "discovery and incorporation into new community-building practices" (Feenberg & Bakardjieva, 2002, sec. 1).[98]

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[97] It is accepted among critical theories of technology that certain technologies are more open to creative assimilation and interpretation by users than others. As both Feenberg (1999, p. 85; also see 1991, 1995, 2002) and Bakardjieva (2000, p. 21) have shown, the Internet, the PC, and the communication-facilitating technologies that rely on them are highly interpretable social technologies when compared to other, more "closed" technologies such as eye-glasses, washing machines, and insulation, for example. This is so because IMC and PCs have been designed with an open architecture in mind (Rowland, 1999) and, thus, their programming codes and the applications they run on are highly permeable to tinkering and personalization by users (that is, aspects of these technologies have not been "closed" in their "technical codes" yet). Feenberg (1995a) has shown, for example, how this technical openness encouraged inventive user appropriations of the French government-sponsored Minitel in ways unintended by its bureaucrat implementors (1995a).

[98] As Feenberg & Bakardjieva (2002) point out: "Empirical studies show that in practice, interacting users appropriate the technology as members of particular collectivities with particular goals in mind. In that context, they manage to discover and enact new *affordances* not always perceivable through abstract deduction from the obvious technical features of a system" (p. 7, emphasis added).

Smith & Bakardjieva (2001) term these new, localized uses of IMC "little behaviour genres" (p. 80). These behaviour genres could be viewed in Schutzian terms as new "zones of operation" afforded by IMC. As the authors report, these behaviour genres also include participating in online support groups, political organizing, connecting with interest groups, and communicating with institutions on users' own terms. While they acknowledged that these online activities have been discussed extensively in the Internet studies literature, their use of Schutzian action theory to explain these behaviours allow Smith & Bakardjieva to innovatively link them to users' "social-biographical situations" (p. 80), vividly showing how IMC technologies can empower "boxed in" (p. 80) ordinary people to transcend certain limitations of their situations and overcome structural and institutional barriers to interpersonal and inter-group communication by extending their zones of reach. In so doing, the authors also show how IMC can sustain contextualized user needs and users' reappropriations and redesigns within their domestic and social settings without having to resort to the deterministic claims of pessimistic essentialist theorists such as Borgmann, Dreyfus, and Slouka or, I would argue, the equally deterministic but overly buoyant claims for social transformation and freedom of cybertheorists such as Poster, Turkle, and A. R. Stone. Both camps place too much determination on the technical structurations of the network for the calibre of communication and its innovative impacts on socio-cultural reality while "overriding the cultural ethos handed down from the past" (Feenberg & Bakardjieva, 2002, sec. 4), a cultural ethos that is recognized in Smith & Bakardjieva's "little behaviour genres," for example. Specifically, Smith &

Bakardjieva and Feenberg & Bakardjieva show how a critical constructivist approach with a hermeneutic and phenomenological sensitivity sees a way through the deterministic dilemma faced by both the cybertheorists' position and the overly-cautious essentialist school.

Supported by the empirical evidence in the works of Bakardjieva (2000), Smith & Bakardjieva (2001), Feenberg & Bakarjdieva (2002), Mynatt et al. (1998), Baym (2000), Wynn & Katz (1997), and others, I believe that Schutz's theory of the "zones of operation" within the multi-faceted and overlapping life-worlds of social interactants offers strong theoretical correctives for balancing the human/technology and life-world/instrumentality equations, providing deeper subject-centred, descriptive, and experiential insights into the meanings embedded in the use-contexts of IMC. This will be further elaborated in the next chapter where I conduct further analysis using Schutz's sociological phenomenology for revisiting online communities and anonymity and fantasy play.

Summarizing Schutz's Theories of Intersubjectivity and the Self for IMC

Using Schutz's own terms then, we can thus claim the following for online interactional and communicative performances: Online interactions are, as in offline ones, "working acts." Their online textual traces via bits-and-bytes displayed on the pixels of interactants' screens show evidence of "bodily movements" and embodied presences engaging in mutual "projects" between action-oriented yet reflective intersubjective selves. In Schutzian terms then, online communicative performances are "purposive actions" rooted in

"preconceived projects" with "intentions to *transform*" the "*forethought[s]*" of interactants "into an *aim* and a *project* into a *purpose*" (Schutz, p. 212, emphasis added). These purposive actions are carried out within the world of life-worlds, which both modifies and is pragmatically modified by intersubjective actions and interactions. I believe this "interactional theory" for online human activity goes far in both demystifying the more deterministic views of IMC and, in Feenberg's Heideggerian-inspired words, "reworlding" the communicational activities of IMC by engraining them into the already multi-dimensional reality of the lived experiences of an agency-empowered subject firmly rooted in his or her interactional (and increasingly technologically-mediated) life-world. Moreover, Schutz's socio-phenomenological self of work and action is also pivotal for his theory of community and for rethinking the "virtual community" debate, as I lay out in the next chapter.

Again when we bring Schutz back to our social-world canvas, then, Schutz's intersubjective theory of the extended self helps us arrive at the fifth postulate of the interactional self:

- *Postulate 5: The interactional self encounters others through intersubjectively overlapping life-worlds and within varying degrees of bodily and spatial extensions.*

Chapter 6:
Schutz's Theory of Intersubjectivity and the Other:
Dimensions of Sociability and Online Communities

> "I speak of another person as within reach of my direct experience
> when he shares with me a community of space and a community of
> time. He shares a community of space with me when he is present
> in my person and I am aware of him as such.... He shares a
> community of time with me when his experience is flowing side by
> side with mine, when I can at any moment look over and grasp his
> thoughts as they come into being, in other words, when we are
> growing older together."
>
> ~Alfred Schutz, 1970, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*,
> pp. 184-185

Schutz's theory of the intersubjective world of life-worlds introduced in

the last chapter also grounds his theory of the self in relation to the other. As

such, it is at the root of his theory of community. In this chapter, I present this

Schutzian theory of the other and intersubjectivity with regards to online

communities by, first, expanding on his dimensions of sociability ("gradations of

immediacy") introduced in the last chapter and, second, laying out his concept of

the "in-group." I subsequently show how these concepts can help us begin to

theorize online community, anonymity, and fantasy from a socio-

phenomenological perspective.

Schutz's Dimensions of Sociability

For Schutz, the intersubjective world of life-worlds is in practice a

dimension of sociability occurring within a spectrum of social interactions

spanning from, at one end, anonymous "They orientation[s]" (*Mitwelt*) (Schutz,

1970, p. 322) – the world of "contemporaries" where people are not experienced directly – to, at the other end, various dimensions of intimacy in "We-relationship[s]" (*Umwelt*) (p. 323) – the world of face-to-face contacts, or "consociates." In a "They orientation" one is aware of the possibility of the other but is not in direct contact with the other. It is the typification of people into socially and culturally known archetypes and categories. This is the orientation we have when we are aware of strangers known to us only by inference but with whom we do not immediately interact with (Schutz, 1962, p. 134). Once there is any kind of consideration of the possibility of an "other" as a person able to be engaged with intersubjectively in mutual interactions the "They orientation" transforms into a "Thou orientation" (p. 323). To send the point home, Schutz directly quotes Hegel to illustrate this moment of transformation from the They to the Thou orientation: "[Hegel] assumes from the outset a reciprocal relationship, which he defines as the 'seizure of the Self of one in the Self of the Other'" (p. 185).[99] As with Mead, Schutz too believed that "the existence of the Other is the condition for the 'seizure of the Self by itself" (p. 188).

Once in the Thou orientation, the possibility of intimacy is set. To have a "We-relationship," Schutz theorized, moves one up the ladder of sociality within the Thou-orientation, opening one up to the full spectrum of social possibilities: It is "[t]he relationship which ensues when two persons, dealing with one another in a face-to-face situation, consider each other reciprocally" and are "consumed in a period of participation in each other's life, however short" (p.

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[99] This is also captured by Sartre's (1964) colourful proclamation that "I am possessed by the Other.... The Other holds a secret—the secret of who I am" (p. 475).

323). Importantly, when there is *any* kind of reciprocity between two people, the Thou orientation opens into the realm of We-relationships. For Schutz, reciprocity was the key in this transition to the We-relation. As Schutz's student Maurice Natanson (1970) poetically puts it, *"our* movement from 'I' to 'you' brings us next to 'we'"* (p. 47, emphasis in original). When an "I" then orients itself towards another – an "alter ego"[100] – in face-to-face or some other more indirect (mediated) way (letter writing, on the phone, and, nowadays, email, chatting, instant messaging, commenting on and interacting via blogging, etc.) we engage in the interactional and intersubjective level of the We-relationship. Thus, We-relationships can be characterized as Thou orientations, overall, with the additional aspect of the possibility of reciprocity between two or more people in varying degrees of mutual acknowledgement of one another. In We-relationships, deeper degrees of intimacy minimize anonymity amongst interactants in gradational levels of disclosure depending on the type of interaction engaged in by the parties involved, reminding one of social network theory's levels of social multiplexity (see Chapter 5). Within the Thou orientation, the sociality found in We-relations takes on the full dimensionality of human co-existence with others, encapsulating the full spectrum from those strangers we acknowledge more anonymously to friends and loved ones with whom we intimately and constantly live with in increasing levels of intimacy and personal disclosure.

As the mounting sociological and ethnographic evidence is showing,

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[100] Schutz (1962) borrows Husserl's term of the "alter ego" in various places and uses it interchangeably with terms such as "the other self," "another," "consociate," the other conscious being that one is intentionally directed towards, etc.

interactions online also depict these Schutzian gradations of immediacy. In Husserl's terms, and as I explained in Chapter 5, the "other" online is apprehended through the self-presentations of the textual residues they leave behind. As in offline settings, the "other" online is "intended" in various "active" and "passive" phenomenological stages of apprehensions. While I've already addressed in the previous chapter how we can come to know another embodied self online through their textual residues, how do we phenomenologically account for community formations when mediated by the computational constraints of IMC? I address this question in this chapter, grounding the following discussion of online community in Schutz's intersubjective dimensions of sociability and the phenomenological theories introduced in the previous chapter.

Towards Schutz's Theory of Community

Based on the discussion in Chapter 5, it is clear that the possibility of the other online is, in Heideggerian terms, "revealed" through the hermeneutic and appresentational layers of the textual trace. I believe a Schutzian theory of online community is also possible from the phenomenological appresentations of the other as presented in Chapter 5, together with Schutz's theory of the gradations of immediacy just described. I believe Schutz's social phenomenology can show how community is "worlded," in Feenberg's terms, (see Chapter 2) and the other "given" through the computational affordances of the Internet. For this to map to Schutz's interaction theory, however, any notion of online community must also be rooted, first and foremost, in the Schutzian work/partial self illustrated in Chapter 5. This is because *how* the working/partial self encounters others and *to*

which degree interactional intentionality occurs in social life depends, for Schutz, on the degree of intersubjective overlap, or in what gradation of immediacy each *acting* (working) individuals' life-world is conjoined with the life-world of another (see Appendix 1). Borrowing from Simmel, Schutz (1970) writes that "the group is formed by a process in which *many* individuals unite *parts* of their personalities" (p. 84, emphasis in original). As Mead also showed in Chapter 4, For Schutz (1970) each personality, in turn, collectively joins to form the uniqueness of the group as "each individual members' biographies participate" (p. 82). Additionally, Schutz's degree of intersubjective overlap between group members always depends on how enmeshed their mutual projects and actions are.

An Imagined Community

As Anderson (1983) Jones (1998), and others point out, the notion of "community" is a multifaceted concept, both objectively knowable and phenomenologically experienced. On the one hand, community is made up of empirically observable individuals (we can count community members) in networked geographic locales of varying sizes (we can locate these members at physical locations, we can map the network, etc.), and shared time (community "happens" mostly in the existential here and now, although it is sustained over time). On the other hand, community is also an "imaginary" social construct; community exists in the shared experiences, mutual attitudes, common goals, and shared values of its members (Anderson, 1983). By considering both realities when defining community, Bakardjieva (2003), Feenberg (1995), and Mynatt et al. (1998), for instance, have shown that the "real" versus "virtual" community

debate is a dead-end when describing actual practices of online communities and for designing appropriate online community applications and tools. Indeed, Anderson (1983) convincingly argues that all communities, from the "primordial village" to larger group formations and on up to the nation state, are all "imagined" (pp. 16-18)—they are social constructs created by the shared common bonds and agreements between a group of people that may include some of, but not necessarily all of, the following: geography, a common history, common values, and shared cultural norms.

As such, a distinction between "real" face-to-face community and "virtual community" is superfluous. Anderson's "imagined communities" concept deflates both the hailing of cyberpace as the advent of new and unique "cyber" locales for new types of virtual communities by the Internet's loudest cheerleaders (Rheingold, Barlow, Tapscott, et al.) and the glib critiques of essentialists (Dreyfus, Borgmann, Slouka, Postman, et al.), the latter group claiming that virtual communities are not possible because the virtual somehow compromises the needed "authenticity" of community for its members (i.e., social stability, the ability to take risks and mitigate risks, commitment, ethical codes, etc.). As Feenberg & Bakardjieva (2002) point out, both camps ironically fall into the same conundrum: Both view the technologically narrow bandwidths of virtual communities as lowering the commitment and risk needed by individual members to engage in community by allowing anonymous identity formations and identity play. To the essentialist critics this is proof that online communities cannot sustain "real" community because "true" community is only possible within the "authentic" risks of face-to-face interactions where authentic

revelations of selves cannot hide behind the veils of simulations and representations afforded by the network of servers, transfer protocols, and packets underwritten by the mysteries of its binary code. For cyber-enthusiasts, the very reduction of commitment and risk purported by online community's detractors opens up new avenues for identity experimentation and new kinds of virtually supplanted community formations precisely located within the fragmentations, veils, and simulations of the cyberworlds afforded by binary code. Rather than add one more voice to this tired, if colourful, debate, I would like to show how Schutz's theory of intersubjectivity and his dimensions of sociability offers a corrective to the real/virtual community dichotomy, adding phenomenological weight to Anderson's notion of imagined communities.

Schutz's Theory of the "In-Group" as a Theory for Online Community

For Schutz (1970), all individuals experience two types of communities or, as he termed them, "in-groups" (p. 80): "*existential groups* with which I share a common social heritage" (p. 82, emphasis added) and "*voluntary groups* joined or formed by me" (pp. 82-83, emphasis added). We have no choice as to which existential groups we belong to. We are born into these or engage within them out of necessity. We do, however, have choice over which voluntary groups we belong to. Groups formed solely online can be said to be mostly voluntary in nature, although IMC can support both types of in-groups as Smith & Bakardjieva (2001) show vis-à-vis their "little behaviour genres" and as Baym (1998; 2000), Ward (1999), and Correll (1995) illustrate vis-à-vis groups forged solely online (I offer examples of these varied online group formations later in this chapter). Both existential and voluntary forms of groupings require

members to adhere to the group's "typifications, relevances, roles, and positions" (Schutz, 1970, p. 83). With voluntary groups, these typifications and recipes for interaction are not, Schutz writes, "readymade...; it has to be built up by the members and is therefore always involved in a process of dynamic evolution" (p. 83) needing to be literally invented by group members based on a "common definition of the reciprocal situation" (p. 83). As previously discussed in this chapter, in voluntary groups these "reciprocal situations" are intimately tied to the level of We-relationship required and are based on the role each member is either given, chooses, or earns depending on the membership rules and codes of conduct for that particular group (p. 84). Further, Schutz continues, in-group participants can have "multiple membership in numerous groups" (p. 84), pointing back to his notion of the plethora of intersubjectively overlapping life-worlds lived in varying gradations of immediacy (see Appendix 1).

Rooted as Schutz's theory of the in-group is to his overarching theories of intersubjectivity, Schutz subsequently defines the in-group as the "subjective meanings of group membership" (p. 80). Using Scheler's words, Schutz theorized that in-group members maintain an assumption of a "'relatively natural conception of the world'" (p. 81), helping to sustain the group long-term. Schutz termed this group assumption "thinking as usual" (p. 81), eventually mapping out four main socio-phenomenological requirements needed to hold most types of social groups together. Paraphrasing Schutz (1970, pp. 79-81), I label these four requirements, or in-group characteristics, as follows: 1) *consistency*; 2) *values, beliefs, and myths*; 3) *rituals and ways of communicating*; and 4)

coherency.[101]

Perhaps not coincidentally, it is striking how well these four categories

map to the five affordances for fostering network communities theorized by

Mynatt et al. (1998)[102] and to Feenberg & Bakardjieva's (2002) four required

technical conditions for sustaining virtual communities.[103] As I describe each of

Schutz's categories I will also point out the links to both Mynatt et al. and

Feenberg & Bakardjieva while also briefly suggesting design considerations that

may better support the phenomenological realities of online communities. As

such, in-groups are able to sustain themselves in relative stability by "thinking as

usual" in the following four ways:

1) *Consistency:* In-groups believe that "life and especially social life will
   continue to be the same as it has been before" (Schutz, 1962, p. 81) and that
   past experiences will provide the right recipes for action for future
   experiences. In order to accommodate this, Mynatt et al. (1998) suggest an
   element of "periodicity" be designed into online communities showing how
   "activity and time are made meaningful in the community" (p. 130) and the
   "persistence" of the group over time. Along these lines, Feenberg &
   Bakardjieva (2002) recommend online community platforms include
   "tracking" features, such as newsgroup and BBS threads listing "how far each
   participant has read discussions" and "archiving" features that "maintain
   accessible records of discussions" (sec. 3) such as found on blog archiving
   tools and conferencing systems.

2) *Values, Beliefs, and Myths:* In-groups "rely on knowledge handed down"

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[101] While these four characteristics of the "in-group" are Schutz's (1970, pp. 79-81), he does not
offer overarching category labels for them. These labels for the four categories, therefore, are my
own attempts at capturing the essence of Schutz's four categories of the in-group.
[102] Mynatt et al's (1998) five affordances for network communities are: "1) Persistence: durability
across time of both users and particular uses; 2) Periodicity: rhythms and patterns through which
activity is structured over time in a meaningful way; 3) Boundaries: spatial divisions, often
metaphorical, that make possible different social groupings; 4) Engagement: possibility for
participants to establish diverse forms and modes of communication; 5) Authoring: possibility for
participants to change the configuration of their space" (paraphrased in Feenberg & Bakardjieva,
2002, sec. 5).
[103] Feenberg & Bakardjieva's (2002) four minimum conditions for online community are: "1)
Bounding: forming closed online groups; 2) Tracking: listing how far each participant has read in
community discussions; 3) Archiving: maintaining accessible records of community discussions;
4) Warranting: ensuring stable and (most of the time) genuine participant identities" (sec. 3).

from predecessors which are meaningful in the actions and projects of the group (Schutz, 1962, p. 82). For concretizing these values, beliefs, and myths into the very design features of the online community, Mynatt et al. (1998) suggest that community software should support social rhythms by recognizing the "persistence" of these rhythms, values, and mores over time, providing a continuous "context" for the "ecology" of the group (p. 130). Feenberg & Bakardjieva's (2002) notion of "warranting" might facilitate this, ensuring persistence and stability of the group by linking online identities to offline ones (sec. 3) and by ensuring the consistency of roles and identities over time via, for example, user profiles, membership lists, and invitation capabilities as available on social software tools such as *Orkut.com* and *Friendser.com*. This, Feenberg & Bakardjieva explain, would serve the purpose of clearly indicating to each of the group's members which other members are aware of the group's values and which members need support in learning them. Appropriate administrative features (members lists, permissions allocations, community area accessibility, etc.), learning tools (tutorials), and FAQ pages would also guarantee accessibility to learning the online community's values and mores in addition to the possibility of sustaining them, changing them if needed, and, in extreme circumstances, controlling the practices of the group by limiting the access of wayward members.

3) *Rituals and Ways of Communicating:* In-groups need to "know something about the general type or style of events we may encounter in the life-world in order to manage and control them" (Schutz, 1962, p. 82). For Mynatt et al. (1998) online community members need to know how to "manipulate their space" in the "living" processes of developing the online community (pp. 131-132) in order to be able to interact properly and yet sustain the group at the same time. This can be accomplished by what Mynatt et al. and Feenberg & Bakardjieva term "authoring" capabilities, such as the easy-to-use publishing tools of blogs, form-based commenting capabilities (Bausch et al, 2002), and the explicitly laid-out writing sections of conferencing system applications such as Feenberg's *Textweaver* tool (Feenberg, 1989; Mynatt et al., 1998, p. 131; Feenberg & Bakardjieva, 1998, sec. 3). As such, online communities should be designed with flexible, easy-to-use, and member-accessible tools for inter- and intra-group communication and site administration. Also, and as recognized by Schutz (1962) concerning in-group members' distinctive roles (p. 81), each members' roles should be properly allocated and these roles should be mutually beneficial and supportive of the community's projects, needs, and membership roster.

4) *Coherency:* The in-group's "system of knowledge" takes on "the appearance of a sufficient coherence, clarity, and consistency to give anybody a reasonable chance of understanding and of being understood" (Schutz, 1962, p. 81). Feenberg & Bakardjieva's (2002) concept of "bounding" – "forming closed online groups" (sec. 3) – guarantees this coherency. For Mynatt et al., (1998) exclusionary but not impermeable "boundaries" should be established in the online community by integrating proper communicational tools and designing, for example, metaphorical "rooms" or "spaces" within the online

community in order to ensure an "ecology" that both distinguishes the group from other groups and yet affords flexibility for mutual "engagement" within the group (Mynatt et al., 1998, p. 131). In Chapter 4, for example, I discussed Hine's (2000) Schutzian- and Meadian-influenced theory of "situational relevances" to show how topic-based newsgroups incorporate and sustain this coherency (and guarantee the long-term survival of the newsgroup) by controlling (formally and informally) the topics to be discussed, the styles of symbolically addressing each group member, the appropriate writing style, and even the connections between online and offline situational spaces that afford in-group cohesion and inter-group differentiation (Hine, 2000, pp. 109-112).

What is striking about Schutz's still-relevant analysis is how in tune it is with the needs of online communities, yet one more suggestion that life online is firmly entrenched with life offline. Also, it shows how much there is still to be mined from more classic humanist theories of sociability for better understanding our increasingly technologically-mediated contemporary social settings.

With this phenomenological framework in place, Feenberg & Bakardjieva's (2002) definition of community as the "scene on which a large share of human development occurs" (sec. 1) takes on fuller meaning. They also convincingly show how their constructivist theory of technologically concretized yet phenomenologically-imagined community is experienced in online community settings, in strong concord with Schutz's theory of social in-groups. If we were to approach their view of community through constructivist and phenomenologically hermeneutic lenses (in agreement with their own philosophical foundations), Feenberg & Bakardjieva's definition of online community can be seen as nicely summarizing the key points in Schutz's theory of the in-group: For Feenberg & Bakardjieva, online communities are "the formation of relatively stable long term online group associations... [that]

...involves the participatory engagement in a collective practice aimed at constructing collective identities" (sec. 1). Schutz would undoubtedly agree.

Some Examples of Schutzian Online Communities: Multiplex Communities Made Up of Interactional Selves

Complementing the work of social network theorists and social interaction researchers, recent online ethnographies seem to also be bearing out this Schutzian model of multidimensional sociability and community forged by the intersubjective mergers of individual life-worlds and the IMC technologies of choice. Challenging cybertheorists' notions of online anonymity and multiple and fragmented online identities as well as the essentialists' concerns regarding the inauthenticity of online sociability, and supported by Wellman's recent social network research (see Chapter 5), online social interactions are showing that self-disclosure is insisted upon when online intimacy or strong supportive community relations are sought and expected by group participants. Conversely, when more weak ties are sufficient for the online social situation at hand (i.e., online purchasing, FAQs, one-time chats, a friendly game of chess with an unknown online partner, etc.) more anonymous interactions are acceptable. In other words, as in offline settings, the level of anonymity in online social settings is dependent on the type of interaction that is sought by all parties; there isn't necessarily a privileging of anonymous behaviour when interactions are mediated through computer screens even if the bandwidth might be "more narrow" than in face-to-face interactions.

Correll (1995), for example, reported that, while "an electronic community can be constructed and sustained" through online interactions (p. 15), there was,

in the broadly supportive lesbian BBS she investigated, a high degree of

consistency between her informants' online and offline identity performances.

Baym (1998) came to similar conclusions in reporting on a Usenet group of soap

opera fans she studied: Baym showed how group interactants "actively

discourage anonymity, suggesting that the Usenet is not the only influence on

the creation of…identities" (p. 55). This finding led her to conclude that "the

reality seems to be that many, probably most, social users of CMC create online

selves consistent with their offline identities" (p. 55). Further, and in agreement

with Mynatt et al, (1998), Feenberg & Bakardjieva (2002), and Hine (2000), these

identity disclosures, Baym contends, ensured a tighter, more useful, and more

stable community. In yet another study, Ward's (1999) "cyber-ethnographic

exploration" (p. 1) of two online feminist communities – a BBS and an email list –

discovered a very clear level of strategic use of the online communities by

members. Ward found in the groups she studied strong evidence for what I

would deem to be Schutzian dimensions of sociability with an indication of

"weak ties" at play (see Chapter 5)—she concluded that her community

participants had "a transitory, unconditional relationship with the online

community" (p.1), participating in the community intermittently when the online

community's resources seemed most useful to the participants' immediate

therapeutic and, I would add, existentially discovered needs. While Ward's

groups engaged in sociality that showed intermittent weak ties at work,

members nevertheless energetically participated in message exchanges, running

dialogues, and other forms of online and offline interactions, especially when a

fellow member needed the immediate support of the group. Indeed, each

member felt deeply responsible for the emotional well being of each other when called upon to support a fellow group member in distress.

There is another Schutzian subtext to the findings of these online social studies that alludes to the gradations of intimacy experienced in online "in-groups": Although the Internet social studies I reviewed agree that sociability via IMC does not foreclose the formation or sustenance of deeply intimate relationships online, it also seems that, as Schutz suggests and as IMC research such as Wellman & Gulia's (1999) reveal, the closer to a broad multiplex and intimate relationship (a deeper We-relationship) one experiences online the more that online social acts tend to push themselves into face-to-face encounters. If the intimate We-relationship is left online the evidence is implying that the relationship will subside to lower gradations of immediacy long-term or else eventually diminish all together (see Correll's (1995) conclusion, for example).

Wershler-Henry (2003), for instance, suggests that this was the case with the networking application *Friendster.com*: While the online social software-based community saw meteoric membership growth and press coverage in early 2003, members eventually got frustrated with the software when it seemed that, beyond linking up with people of like mind, there was nowhere else to take the online relationships forged strictly on the *Friendster* environment. Unlike dating services such as *LavaLife.com* and *FriendFinder.com* where the whole point is to eventually get off of the online environment and meet a potential partner face-to-face for more intimate, deeper We-relation encounters, it seems that, besides identifying individuals with similar preferences and interests, there was not a clear-cut purpose for *Friendster.com* users to get together online (Wershler-Henry,

2003). In Schutzian terms, individuals failed to find mutual projects to build long-term interactions around on *Friendster.com*. Using Schutz's in-group theory, *Friendster.com* seems to be good at affording platform *consistency* and a place where *values, beliefs, and myths* can be shared via its member profiles pages, but the platform does not seem to enable users to explore flexible *rituals and ways of communicating* further in order to solidify new group *coherencies* and knowledge exhanges in order to forge and create mutual projects. That is, once members get over the fact that they've connected with others of like-mind there isn't necessarily anything specific to do with that knowledge strictly on the *Friendster.com* environment. Comapratively, on EverQuest, for example, individuals come together to play and work together in common tasks and goals that help them to co-construct and shape their adventures within EverQuest in a collaborative manner. There is reciprocity involved based on shared goals, taking on the successes and failures of one's group. Recall Ito's examples of strategic and multiplex uses of IMC discussed in Chapter 5; there were reciprocal purposes in the interconnections Ito forged on his blogs and IRC in the interactions involved in hiring someone: Ito needed to hire and potential employees needed work. The IMC tools used allowed Ito and his potential hires to explore each other's interests and compatibilities mutually and effectively. But in Ito's scenario, long-term *consistency* from the IMC tools, in the Schutzian sense, was not needed because the whole point was to exchange information about values, beliefs, and job competencies in the short-term, not to sustain a community that is consistent over time. The *coherency* aspect of Ito's intended job-based in-group practices will happen offline once the Ito's hiring takes place.

As I suggested in Chapter 5, for initial meeting and contacting, Ito's media multiplexity strategy was a good fit for the task at hand: to hire someone. But once a synchronous face-to-face interview is reckoned to be the next step by both interactants, the IRC and blog technologies used are no longer needed for the employee/employer hiring relationship as the deeper We-relationship needs are deemed to be better served offline. *Friendster.com* enthusiasts, on the other hand, didn't know what else to do with the strictly online connections that brought individuals of like-mind together from every corner of the world. Perhaps this is the case with *Friendster.com* because the affordances of the technology aren't in synch with the actual long-term intersubjective demands of meeting people of like-mind or for deeper forms of We-relationships. Consequently, *Friendster.com*'s future is very much in doubt as of this writing (Boyd, 2004).[104]

In further Schutzian terms (although admittedly needing further exploration), it seems to me that certain high-investment typifications of intimacy – that is, certain types of socially multiplex relations – are not sustainable solely online for long periods of time, perhaps needing offline contact and face-to-face connection to be fully integrated into each interactant's reference schema. The common practices of online dating, as with Wershler-Henry's observations concerning *Friendster.com*, are a good illustration of how these gradations of intimacy play out on the network, providing more evidence of how the

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[104] As my senior supervisor for this thesis, Prof. Richard Smith, pointed out to me, some *Friendster* users, in the absence of things to do with *Friendster*, have started playing with their identities and "faking" their credentials on the system (Mieszkowski, 2003; Terdiman, 2004). Subsequently, they have been labeled "Fakesters" (Terdiman, 2004). In an interesting counterstrike, the *Friendster* marketing team has attempted to appropriate this phenomenon and has recently started selling fake profiles of characters linked to the movie *Anchorman* (Terdiman, 2004). Can this behaviour be chalked up to an ironic pastiche by both *Friendster* users and marketers, where the interactional stakes can perhaps be argued to be fairly low? Would users be compelled to be "Fakesters" in Joi Ito's scenario in Chapter 5 where the goal is to find a job?

mediational role of online tools are tactically used by interactants: When two people meet for the purposes of ultimate romantic connections on services such as *LavaLife.com, ePersonals.com,* and *FriendFinder.com,* for example, they share pictures of themselves, personal information, physical descriptions, likes and desires, and, of course, eventually email addresses, IRC handles, or phone numbers. After a time of online courtship or connection, and if both parties feel compatible, they will usually eventually meet face-to-face to explore the possibilities of deeper or more physical intimacy. Throughout, the textual and digital representations of the users remain directly linked to their situated and embodied realities, although key aspects of their embodied selves are gradually disclosed as trust is created between the interactants. (Recalling the discussion in Chapter 5, extended bodies are both actively and passively present in these scenarios mediated by the text.) As interactants desire more intimacy, more disclosure of each other is sought; each seeks to know more about the other and their mutual compatibilities as the We-relationship expands. Phenomenologically, the potential daters subsequently move from the more passive readings of each other through the textual affordances of the interface to more active disclosures as the online channels of communication are expanded or opened up to the other as dictated by the level of reciprocity needed for the next stage of interaction sought. For example, *LavaLife* has customization functionality in its personal profiles pages that allows the user to control the level of access that other *LavaLife* users have to those pages. Each user is able to keep the general *LafaLife* population and even specific *LavaLifers* out of these more intimate and less anonymous pages while allowing the user the choice of inviting

favoured *LafaLifers* in to their more intimate pages, if desired. Access to other IMC tools that facilitate the eventual encounter is then accessed within these more intimate member pages. Whether or not interactants eventually meet is then up to the mutual agreement of the users based on what they were able to glean of the other from the IMC tools at hand. Judging by the growing success of these dating services and the general acceptance of them as dating options, it is hard to see how the full expression of the human connections that may be facilitated by these services are either fragmentary and decentered or inauthentic and lacking in commitment, as the essentialists claim. Indeed, meeting online first is proving to be safer and more preferable than meeting at bars or even more restrictive offline environments where individuals might be known to each other primarily within one or two specific life-roles that discourage divulging more intimate aspects of each other's life-worlds needed for deeper We-relations (i.e., think of social settings such as school, work, church, etc.).

As the social studies reviewed in this section and as the cursory look at the online personals phenomenon begins to show, if a relationship starts online and becomes increasingly intimate online it seems that IMC will ultimately become too present-at-hand for the relationship to successfully mature and the relationship will tend to lead to a face-to-face encounter or eventually fade out. On the other hand, for those already experiencing close and proximate social ties in the world of flesh-and-blood IMC tends to be instrumentally used to support the situated relationship instead of being the only medium of interaction in what, as I introduced in Chapter 5, the social network theorists call "media-multiplexity" practices.

A Definition of Online Communities

By synthesizing Schutz's theory of community with his theory of the intersubjectively influenced working and partial self; the constructivist community research of Feenberg & Bakardjieva and Mynatt et al.; and the empirical evidence of multiplex online communities I looked at in Chapter 5 and this chapter, I make the proposition that community, online or off, can be defined as *the intersubjectively motivated contribution of individuals committed to participating in mutual reciprocity to accomplish or partake in a common project.* Moreover, we can say that *community is about the affective and mutually respectful means of communicative interaction between a group of individuals* that are not necessarily brought together by a commonality of ends (although they could be) but, more importantly, *by a commonality of projective means, sharing in the processes and values that are intersubjectively constituted and agreed upon.*

As such, we come to our sixth postulate of the interactional self which links it socially, culturally, politically, and ethically to a community of others, online or off:

- *Postulate 6: The interactional self practices community-building and community-sustaining acts that are the intersubjectively motivated contributions of individuals committed to participating in communicational reciprocity to accomplish or partake in common projects together.*

Rethinking Anonymity and Fantasy in IMC

Schutz's theories not only add dimensionality to the interactional self and, via his sociological phenomenology of the gradations of immediacy, *between* interactants but also can be said to add dimensions to the individual's *personal orientations* towards particular types of social acts. With these subjectively situated dimensions, the levels of self-disclosure and the appropriateness of the

205

particular IMC technology to use can also be gauged and the dynamics of online anonymity revisited.

Schutz subdivided each interactant's experience of a "world" of "indetermined number of worlds" (1970, p. 323) into many "provinces of reality" (1973, p. 22) (which he also termed "provinces of meaning" (1970, p. 252)), each province in turn coloured by dimensions of experience he called the "accent of reality" (1973, p. 22).[105] According to Schutz, "...there should be several, indeed probably infinitely many, different orders of reality that at any given time have a special style of being that is characteristic of them alone" (p. 22). (As I have already discussed in Chapter 5, the life-world, for Schutz, happened to be an experiencing subject's "paramount reality.") The accent of reality can be said to colour and inform each "finite province of meaning" which is "meaning-compatible experience" that is embodied in a "style of lived experience," or circumstantial and meaningful preferences, actions, motivations, projections, etc. (p. 23). To Schutz, within an experiencing individual's "accent of reality" there can be infinite styles in "multitudes of provinces of meaning," each with their own meaning compatible experience working to make meaningful both the existential and the appresentational encounters being attended to at any given moment. Importantly, Schutz stressed that the accent of reality shading each

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[105]The "accent of reality" shades each "province of meaning" making up each individual's experience of the many phenomenological worlds he or she inhabits at any given time. The accent of reality was, for Schutz, his version of what William James called "subuniverses" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, p. 22). For Schutz, following James: "Reality means simply relation to our emotional and active life; whatever excites and stimulates our interest is real" (1970, p. 252). In this theory of "multiple realities" we see congruence with Heidegger's notion of "worlds": Provinces of reality can (and do) include "the life-world, the world of play, the world of dreams" (p. 323) as well as things like the "world of arts, of religion, of politics," etc. (1962, p. 329). That is, realities can be shared with others via the intersubjectivity of our life-worlds or can be uniquely experienced by an individual within other "worlds" directly reachable only by the experiencer.

province of meaning is *not* shaped by the "ontological structures of their Objects" but rather through the very act of experiencing these objects (p. 23).[106] Further, Schutz envisioned the experiencer as possessing the capability of moving back and forth between each province seamlessly and without much conscious effort (p. 23). "For in the course of a day, indeed of an hour," Schutz explained, "we can, through the modification of the tension of consciousness traverse a whole series of such provinces" (p. 24).

Moreover – and of particular interest in rethinking cybertheory's and the popular press's fascination with online role-playing – these multitudinous provinces of meaning can also be made up of fantasy (p. 28). While in fantasy, however, our ability to influence the "social reality" of the external world is suspended; according to Schutz, fantasy worlds "bracket determinate strata of the everyday life-world" (p. 28) thus preventing meaningful intersubjective action:

> We speak of 'fantasy worlds,' since it is a question not of a single but rather of several finite provinces of meaning.... When my attention becomes absorbed in one of the several fantasy worlds, I no longer need to master the external world.... But also, as long as I live in fantasy worlds, I cannot 'produce,' in the sense of an act which gears into the external world and alters it. As long as I tarry in the world of fantasy, I cannot accomplish anything, save just to engage in fantasy. (pp. 28-29)

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[106] This falls in line with both Heidegger's and Husserl's phenomenology of experiencing the objects of the world and coming to know the world by manipulating its objects and entangling oneself with the things of the world (see Chapter's 3 and 5).

Implications for Online Fantasy and Anonymity

Online fantasy and role-playing practiced on MMPORGs[107] such as EverQuest, therefore, looked at with a Schutzian eye, could be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, online fantasy and role-playing could be thought of as an instrumental and temporary decision by the interactant to suspend the "external world" and engage purely in fantasy and play. In this case, while fantasy would still be part of the EverQuest gamer's multifaceted plethora of realities, it would be a "province of meaning" of the gamer's "accent of reality" dominated by intra-subjective, and thus "non-producing" (non world-altering) fancy. In this scenario, EverQuest is *not* part of the player's intersubjectively adumbrated life-world. On the other hand, using Chee & Vieta's (2004) EverQuest case study as an illustration, the role-playing activities of players could, for example, be viewed as not occurring in a pure "fantasy" world but, rather, as happening within another "working" dimension of the life-world of players where "real" others and "real" human needs are explored and engaged with—in other words, EverQuest sociability becomes another outlet to explore the human "will-to-communicate" within each player's life-world. Indeed, based on the evidence Chee & Vieta observed through ethnographic observation, the authors failed to find any sharp contradistinctions between gamers' will-to-communicate and the practices of community on EverQuest when compared with interactions in gamer's offline lives. This reading would contest both the postmodern insistence *and* the essentialist critique that sees online communities bring with them fractured yet freeing altered identities and multiple personae in

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[107] Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games.

the former's case, or dehumanized and decontextualized monsters in the latter's. In fact, if Chee & Vieta's observations are assumed to be the case, both Schutz and Husserl inform us that, as on *LavaLife*, the EverQuest-influenced gamers' life-worlds come into contact with each other's, in varying degrees of overlap, via the phenomenologically passive and active readings of the synchronous and asynchronous activities and the textual residues created by their avatars.

My reading of Schutz's phenomenology of intersubjective interaction in light of to the sociality that occurs on EverQuest, for example, underscores for me the importance for social researchers, game designers, and policy makers to first seriously ask themselves whether and how the computational worlds of EverQuest are radically different and dichotomously positioned from the non-computational worlds of flesh and blood before conceptualizing the gamer (social researchers), designing the games (programmers), and legislating restrictive policies in regards to gamming activities (policy makers). If social behaviours and socio-phenomenological experiences are that different on EverQuest-type multi player role playing games when compared to other types of community formations, how so? It seems that, phenomenologically, either calling immersive multiplayer games such as EverQuest "just a game" or, contrarily, claiming that they have the power to destructively influence the "real" lives of users are both ill-informed and simplistic views of the full spectrum of social formations that can possibly take place via the mediation of these games. If the online universe of EverQuest is fundamentally detached phenomenologically-speaking from our situated world of flesh-and-blood, these ruptures must be clearly articulated. Chee & Vieta (2004) show that,

phenomenologically, there is no strong case to be made that such a sharp dichotomous separation exists: The life-world of players and the ways community experiences are described by them are just too complex and too integrated into everyday life to make strong assumptions regarding the uni-linear influences of MMPORGs on the lives of users.

I believe that using the phenomenology of Schutz to rethink online sociability mediated through EverQuest radicalizes the ostensibly concrete differences between offline and online human interactions. Indeed, in true phenomenological fashion, the separation of the "subject" engaging with the online "objects" of EverQuest is effaced and replaced by the conscious *processes* of intentional beings engaging with each other within the intersubjectively overlapping accents of reality of their life-worlds as experienced through EverQuest. Further, this social phenomenology bears witness to the extentions of users' "manipulatory spheres" (zones of operation), actively and passively, as working selves within their phenomenologically intentional projects and practices as mediated via EverQuest. In addition, Chee & Vieta found that, again phenomenologically, legitimate *meanings* and *community formations* are indeed forged within these EverQuestian relationships via the communicative processes of actors engaging with other actors and the digitally tangible stuff that makes up the EverQuest world.

Moreover, the much-discussed anonymous and fantasy-based online interactions that occur in MMPORGs like EverQuest could be explained via Schutz's (1973) concept of the "zones of anonymity" of the life-world (pp. 79-80) which, like the "dimensions of sociability" addressed earlier on in this chapter,

span the full gamut of We-relation types. Examples of other types of anonymous online relations where full disclosure is not needed for the desired task would include the following: an email to an online FAQ expert; an online purchase on Amazon.com; an anonymous online chess partner engaged with for a few hours; engaging in an ongoing debate on a correspondence class's online conferencing system; etc. In these interactions, there is no need, as in similar situations offline, to disclose too deeply the nature of one's situated self-identity. We can afford to disclose only key parts of our personalities and backgrounds according to the demands of the communicative act at hand and still function well within these less multiplex social settings. Inversely, and again as in offline sociability, online interactants desiring deeper "gradations of immediacy" (deeper We-relations) – or, in other Schutzian terms, some sort of deeper "mastery of their external world" – might demand fuller disclosure from each other online or off. Does one need to know the name of any of the opposing players on the soccer pitch in order to play a game of soccer? No. At the same time, does one stop being a "soccer player" and perhaps also a father, sister, farmer, teacher, etc., when on the pitch if one does not disclose these other life-roles – accents of reality of our life-worlds – to the opposing players? No, again. Alternatively, one should have a good idea of the social biography, the likes, and dislikes of a spouse or a best friend in order to maintain a mutually beneficial and deeper We-relationship. Chee & Vieta (2004) found that in EverQuest social mediations, for example, gamer experiences span all of these possible gradations of anonymity.

So, perhaps some EverQuest relationships fall into the area of weaker We-relations. Or maybe, as in the world of flesh-and-blood, there are also myriad

types and dimensions of relationships to be had on EverQuest. Or, perhaps for some gamers, EverQuest is, after all, just a temporary suspension of the working world and actually a world of "pure fantasy," where full disclosure of the self is optional and the relationship is merely narrowly specialist or only about engaging in temporary play. The full dimensions, occurrences, the exact degree to which the IMC tool influences these experiences, and the location of these online experiences within the greater life-world of users need to be explored further both phenomenologically and ethnographically to get a better sense of the full dynamics of mediated intersubjectivity and play in such Internet-mediated scenarios.

Summarizing Schutz's Theory of the Other and Community for IMC

In summary, the overarching perspective for IMC that Schutz's theory of the other helps us understand is that the social world online is a part of the "accent of reality" of our greater life-world, not a part of a different world or, on the whole, a sharply differentiated reality of fantasy. Where interaction is more narrowly based and specialist – that is, where only weaker We-relations are necessary – the need for fuller disclosure diminishes, Schutz teaches us, and the interacting (working) self remains more anonymous and in a weaker relation with the other as more specifically focused (though no-less meaningful) uni-dimensional interactions are engaged in. Related to this, online fantasy and play looked at from a Schutzian perspective is, while perhaps temporary and fanciful, still very much a part of our myriad provinces of meaning. Indeed, Schutz shows us that even these situations of fantasy and play may be active and "real"

parts of our meaningful life-world, evidencing the "will-to-communicate" through the textual residues left behind by embodied users and gamers.

Schutz's sociological phenomenology, then, helps us understand the dimensions, the instrumentality, and the depth of IMC from the perspectives of individual interactants' experiences of social scenarios in the context of broader group interaction, greatly informing the emerging concept of the interactional self, online sociability, and community theories. Schutz can also help the researcher and the IMC designer better conceptualize whether the IMC scenario in question is narrowly based in focused affinity activities or more broadly multiplex in supportive and deeper social ties—that is, in Schutzian terms, the degrees of the "We-relations" that various IMC scenarios afford. An understanding of these phenomenological user conceptualizations can ensure better-designed and more flexible IMC platforms and tools. Further, by also taking into account the malleability of IMC technologies for user interpretations and appropriations, Schutz can further inform the technologist what aspects of the community software should be left for users to ultimately control and develop based on actual life-world use-contexts. In addition, Schutz's gradations of immediacy and anonymity can help the social researcher rearticulate online (and offline) anonymity and role-play, helping to better understand the social formations that are mediated through the social articulations of the Internet.

A Schutzian reanalysis of online anonymity, then, leads us to our seventh and last postulate illustrating the interactional self:

- *Postulate 7: The Interactional self uses strategic self-disclosure and anonymity as part of the normal course of encountering its life-world, online or offline.*

213

Conclusion:
A Conceptual Portrait of the Interactional Self for Re-theorizing Internet-Mediated Communication

"As subordinate actors, [ordinary people] strive to appropriate the technologies with which they are involved and adapt them to the meanings that illuminate their lives."

~Andrew Feenberg, 1999, *Questioning Technology*, p. *x*

Summarizing the Theory of the Interactional Self for IMC

Rooting this thesis in the human philosophies of experience of Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz, I have ultimately tried to illustrate how the emerging concept called the *interactional self* can give the social and human science researcher of the Internet, Internet software designers, and users a powerful interpretive theoretical tool from which to better understand Internet-mediated communication (IMC) and its place in the life-world of users. In particular, the interactional self helps one to understand the dyadic way users appropriate the Internet's technical (environing) affordances in light of users' socio-cultural (environmental) realities. Rather than the over-determined theories of cyberspace or the essentialist critiques of the (in)authenticity of computer-mediated communication, a theory of the interactional self for IMC reveals an "underdetermined" and interpretative perspective on the place of IMC in the everyday lives of users. In particular, by also anchoring the interactional self to Feenberg's (1999) hermeneutically-sensitive "double aspect theory" of human-technology relations, this self helps us see a crucial dynamic at

play between the technical structures of IMC and users' pragmatic appropriations of those structures as determined by their own use-contexts. That is, simultaneously, users (as "subjects") instrumentally approach the Internet by *"positioning* [themselves] strategically" with respect to IMC and its technical and mediational objects thus bringing the Internet's "inherent [technical] properties into account" (p. 204) via the very practices of "creatively appropriating" (p. 121) the Internet through various pragmatic, everyday "tactical initiatives" (p. 207) entrenched in users' deep engagements with meaningful lived experiences, social needs, and communities (p. 206).

At the heart of my thesis, then, is my belief that a reassessment of the will-to-virtuality – as also suggested by Hayles (1999) (see Chapter 1) and others such as Jones (1995; 1998) and Rowland (1999) – should also extend to the ways we think about the place of Internet technologies in our everyday lives. I believe locating the Internet and the sociability that occurs through it within the mundaneity of everyday living is important for demystifying IMC so as to not be seduced by the promises of "new economies" and fundamentally "new paradigms" of human thought and life caused, uni-linearly and in a normative and progressively historical trajectory, by the impacts of digital technology. By looking at contours of IMC sociability in light of the everydayness of most IMC interactions and use-contexts, I believe we can make better technical decisions as users, make better policies as lawmakers, and design better user-centred tools as developers.

I also think that situating the Internet in its everydayness is of the utmost importance for the same reasons Hayles (1999) states concerning the fate of the

self as subject at the juncture of the posthuman: As we find ourselves at the juncture-point of our digitally-infused late-modernity where our choice of technologically paved paths could decide the fate of our very humanness (Hayles, 1999), so do we find ourselves at a decision juncture that will decide the fate of our agency when it comes to how we are to use, design, implement, and legislate the IMC technologies in our lives. As I have suggested throughout this thesis, I believe it is particularly essential that, at this point in time more than a dozen years into the popularization of what we have come to know as the Internet, we start to seriously re-consider the place of IMC in our everyday lives in order to better design and implement IMC technologies to meet users—*our*—needs better.

In the 1990s we placed our faith in the "new economy" of virtualized information only to have the dot-com road-to-riches and the good life implode in on us. We also envisioned in the same decade different self-expressions and social relations occurring on our new cyberpsaces and posited these new virtually real online spaces as either freeing and exciting cyber-frontiers or dangerous and dank cyber-alleys and found both versions of VR wanting. For understanding the place of the Internet in our personal, social, cultural, and political realities we will be better served by, I believe, a demystified and pragmatic approach to the place of the virtual and the online in light of user practices. Our experiences of the introduction of the telegraph, the telephone, the television, and the personal computer, for example, should have taught us many valuable lessons by now: Initial prophesies of their promises or perils eventually gave way to more sober realities once the new technologies spread

into the socio-cultural and socio-political milieu (Carey, 1989; Czitrom, 1982; McLuhan, 1962; Rowland, 1999). I believe the theory of the interactional self offers a more measured account of the impact of IMC in our everyday lives. Additionally, and as I implicitly argue throughout this thesis, the more measured, more user-sensitive approach I propose could take us far towards understanding the importance of keeping the Internet and the subsequent communicational technologies it supports open and free in order to best meet users' personal, social, and political needs and appropriations.

In this spirit, the interactional self helps us see that the Internet is not pure technique. But neither is the Internet completely pliable to the whims of its users. Users and their social formations both shape and are shaped by the Internet—are in some ways constrained and implicated by the technical limits of the mediational tools of the network at the same time that users corral these very tools to meet their own personal and social ends. It is my contention that the interactional self provides a lens for showing us these dynamics at play by giving us a theoretical perspective from which to begin to critically view this human-technology interplay. The interactional self shows us that the Internet is not merely bits-and-bytes that fundamentally and deterministically decentre the selves that meet thereon and therein into fragmentary bits of binary code which can then be whimsically and wilfully reconstructed into altered user existences. But the interactional self also discloses an Internet that is not devoid of the possibilities for new types of user-driven social formations and productively supportive community realizations. That is, the Internet, the user, and the sociality that is mediated through it – the "interactions through the screen" – all

217

bear witness to socially-determined use-contexts that simultaneously mitigate the influential affordances *and* the malleable but nevertheless obstinately present boundaries of the Internet's instrumentality. It turns out then that the phenomenological and pragmatically informed interactional self offers a way to illustrate technologically-mediated communication via the Internet, painting a portrait of a technically positioned yet multi-dimensional, socially situated, and embodied self experiencing the world through an Internet that mediates the intersubjectively linked life-worlds of its users through the retinas of its screens and the arteries of its network.

The Seven Postulates of the Interactional Self for IMC

After introducing early on in the thesis the well-known postmodern-influenced cybertheories of cyberspace and the fragmented online self as posited by authors such as Turkle, A. R. Stone, and Poster, as well as the more pessimistic views of technological essentialits, I began to paint an alternative conceptual picture of an interactional self situated on a social world canvas. I began this painting by explaining how the interactional self's technologically-mediated existence can be explained via Feenberg's Heideggerian notion of the "world-disclosing" nature of technology. I then used the ontological theories of Heidegger's *Dasein* and the "Being-in-the-world" that resides therein as my foundational brushes to begin to sketch the first images of this self. The outline of the interactional self that began to emerge with Heidegger shows that online, as in offline settings, we encounter the world fully embodied and deeply engaged in daily acts that we use to interpretively understand our place in our world. These ontological brush strokes included such notions as the contextual

218

equipmentality and the readiness-to- and presence-at-hand of the objects of the world, online and off. From Heidegger's outline sketch of the human being (*Dasein*) at the heart of the interactional self, I then dipped my conceptual brushes into the colours and textures offered by the sociological theories of Mead and Schutz, exploring some alternatives to the postmodern and essentialist explanations of online sociability from a few of their key theories. I used Mead's theory of the "generalized other" and a brief case study of blogging practices to highlight the interactional self as a self that does not concretely distinguish between offline and online social settings but instead uses IMC technologies instrumentally and holistically in performative practices that maintain group cohesion in effaced online/offline settings. I then dipped my Heideggerian brushes of *Dasein* into Schutz's rich theory of the sociological phenomenology of the life-world to show how the interactional self and online sociability are fashioned via the intersection of "intersubjective" and multi-dimensional social biographies positioned within overlapping life-worlds. With a little more help from Husserl's phenomenological palette, the interactional self took on further phenomenological textures, allowing me to theorize how Internet users: 1) "intentionalize" (direct themselves to) the other that is signified via the traces left behind in digital texts; 2) "creatively appropriate" the Internet in order to extend the world within their "attainable reach;" and 3) form engaging and stable online communities that intermix offline and online social settings and practices. I finally relied on Schutz to provide an alternative interpretation for online role-playing and fantasy, adding yet more socially situated shading to the

technologically-mediated life-world of IMC. As a result, seven postulates

emerged in the portrait of the interactional self:

1) The interactional self's sedimented and socio-biographical offline affinities, on the whole, dictate its online activities.
2) The interactional self is the "point-zero" of all human experience and lives within a socio-biographically-rooted life-world where meaning is interpretively mediated within both the life-world's technological contours and the experientially-based and socio-culturally informed use-contexts of those technological contours.
3) The interactional self is in a constant state of interpretation of itself and its world, practically using the things of the world, online and offline, as conduits for communicating with others and for self-understanding.
4) The interactional self emerges within a social context by projecting itself onto others and being projected upon through social and symbolic interactions.
5) The interactional self encounters others through intersubjectively overlapping life-worlds and within varying degrees of bodily and spatial extensions.
6) The interactional self practices community-building and community-sustaining acts that are the intersubjectively motivated contributions of individuals committed to participating in communicational reciprocity to accomplish or partake in common projects together.
7) The interactional self uses instrumental anonymity and strategic self-disclosure as part of the normal course of encountering its life-world, online or offline.

These seven emerging postulates of the lived experiences of the interactional self

can subsequently be conflated into four interlocking hypotheses for the self

online:

1) The interactional self encounters social acts, online and off, as part of its greater life-world, practicing performative and group-enforcing self-management through...
2) varying and interlinked dimensions of sociability and...
3) pragmatic yet meaningful uses of the communicational tools at hand in...
4) contextually relevant degrees of self-disclosure.

Remnant Research Questions, Future Research

It appears, then, that the growing corpus of social research focusing on

IMC, looked at from the perspective of a Heideggerian-, Meadian-, Schutzian-,

and Husserlian-informed interactional self, is revealing a clearer picture of online

embodiment, social situation, self-disclosure, role-playing, and sociability. The

speculative tone of some of the phenomenological observations in this thesis

should be assumed to indicate that more ethnographic, dialogic (long,

descriptive interviews), and survey-based research is needed in order to not only

describe the place of IMC technologies for human interaction but also to further

unravel the specific *meanings* underscoring *users' lived experiences* of these IMC

practices. In this spirit, some of the questions brought to light by this thesis's

portrait of the interactional self needing further sociological and

phenomenological exploration include, but are certainly not limited to, the

following:

1) How exactly are online and offline identities experienced and played with, if at all, by IMC interactants considering that, as Chee & Vieta (2004) found with online gamers or as Smith and Bakardjieva (1999) found with user-appropriated Internet use patterns, the rules of the communities formed online seem to be co-constructed around the affordances of the IMC tools?
2) Inversely, how are these affordances being creatively appropriated to fit the social needs of users based on the phenomenological limits – the selectivity – of the online mediational tools at hand?
3) Are the most popular tools for online sociability the ones that give users the most flexibility for self-disclosure or anonymity or do interactants choose IMC tools more instrumentally within a greater rubric of available technologies in light of the tool's availability, the level of self-disclosure required by the social setting, and the communicational tasks at hand?
4) Can we say that, as the empirical evidence is showing, where new online identities are toyed with, the average online interactant tends not to dwell in these alternative identities permanently? That is, just as soccer players must eventually stop playing soccer and become farmers and uncles and teachers again, do online identity experimenters also return to more situated identities online? If so, when and how do IMC tools mediate these transitions?
5) How do the above four questions offer insights into the point-of-view of users located within subordinate positions in the technical and institutional power hierarchies they reside in? What is the perspective of technical users of IMC on that hierarchy? And, do IMC settings

(especially user-initiated IMC platforms and the interactions they afford, such as blogs) offer privileged insights into these power differentials that will then allow users to resistively and purposefully recreate the technological contours of their mediated communicational settings?

Combining these remnant questions, we are left with the following two overarching research questions and one sub-question each that should inspire the Internet social researcher:

- How do the lived experiences of users in IMC settings compare when we look at the encounters with self, other, and community on a wide range of IMC tools? Are these new types of social formations or new ways of expressing long-held communicational and social practices?
- Can we begin to look at specific IMC tools as "technologies of self," "technologies of community," and "technologies of worldly encounter," in general? That is, do certain tools afford self-expression, or community formations, or resistive expressions, or democratic appropriations, or the manipulation of things online in more responsive and reflexive ways than others? If so, what are these affordances and how do they facilitate some human interactions and engagements while hindering other user experiences?

Parting Images

And so, the image of the interactional self that emerges out of the social interactional and phenomenological theories and portrait presented here is in many ways different from the fragmented, decentered, and hyper-individualized self of recent popularity. Instead of notions of the imploded self that lives in a media-saturated world of hyperreal simulacra with no "referential being or substance [as] 'an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference'" (Waskul & Douglass, 1997, quoting Baudrillard, 1981, p. 11), I have argued that the more traditional human philosophies of experience continue to convincingly position the self, online and off, as a socio-reflexive and auto-interpreting being of co-constituted, co-constructed, and socio-historically formed realities and phenomenologically-known possibilities, developed and redeveloped

throughout its lifespan via a contingent engagement with the world. This interactional self is not a schizophrenic self of "multiple personalities" but *a self of multiple potentialities*, shaped by the myriad social interconnections with others in a multitude of social ties, fulfilling varying degrees of social needs, while constantly updating, reformatting, and reassessing the provinces of meaning defining its existence. While influenced by and constantly interpreting and negotiating a world that increasingly straddles the realms of computational and non-computational realities, the interactional self's essence, if you will, is not simulated, artificially created, or even changed wilfully but, at its core, is actually entrenched deeply in and is contingent on a social world. Further, its existential essence, though preontologically rootless, is in a constant search for stability, order, and home. In a never-ending search for self-definition and centeredness, the interactional self is a self always in flux in concomitant and contingent intersubjective life-worlds that, at the same time, shapes society's reality while interactionally moulding its own. Thus, as interactional selves, individuals live in an eternal present while always aspiring to futures (projections/protensions) based on the reflectively accessible meanings of a past (reflections/retentions). In other words, as interactional selves living within *our* presently-rooted stream of experience, that we aspire and that we remember moves us forward into the future while being always firmly planted in the experiences of our vivid and intersubjective present. In our interactions through the screen, we seem to be, on the whole, similarly guided.

Appendix 1:
A Diagram of Interactional Selves

Figure 1: The interactional self and a world of life-worlds

Everyday life is lived directly in the life-world, is interpreted by our accumulated stocks of knowledge, and is experienced through the life-world's mitigation. While it might appear from a cursory reading of Schutz that there is only one life-world, this is not the case; each individual has his or her own life-world with its own spatial and temporal horizons of experience. However, each life-world also overlaps with others' life-worlds to form the realm of social life in *a world of life-worlds*, so to speak. Ritzer (2000) interprets Schutz to mean here that "others belong to our life-world and we belong to the life-worlds of others" (p. 419), each individual life-world, in turn, is anchored culturally and historically to each experiencing subjects' socio-biographies which, when melded together, give unique personalities to the various groups individuals form (Schutz, 1970, p. 84). Collectively, these infinitely interlinked life-worlds make up our common cultural world that is connected to a past of "predecessors" and shapes the present within the realm of our "contemporaries" and "consociates," which will, in turn, shape the world of our "successors" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, pp. 61-92). Moreover, each life-world overlaps with other life-worlds within "gradations of immediacy" or "degrees of sociability" (see Chapter's 5 and 6).

Gradations of immediacy: Life-worlds overlap in "gradations of immediacy" or "degrees of sociability." Here, Suzie's and Jack's life-worlds overlap more deeply than do Jack's and Dingo's or Suzie's and Dingo's. This means that Suzie and Jack perhaps have a deeper, more multiplex relationship than say Jack and Dingo do. That is, Suzie and Jack share a more intimate relationship and perhaps have more areas of common affinity than each has with Dingo. Some areas of their affinities all intersect, however, forming the potential for a community.

The world of life-worlds: Dingo, Jack, and Suzie each have their own life-world but also inhabit a world of overlapping life-worlds.

The world of life-worlds

Dingo's life-world

Suzie's life-world

Jack's life-world

Overlapping life-worlds and community: Where Dingo's, Jack's, and Suzie's life-worlds overlap at the same time is where community (or the formation of an "in-group") has the potential to occur. This area of mutual intersection between all three is where common projects emerge.
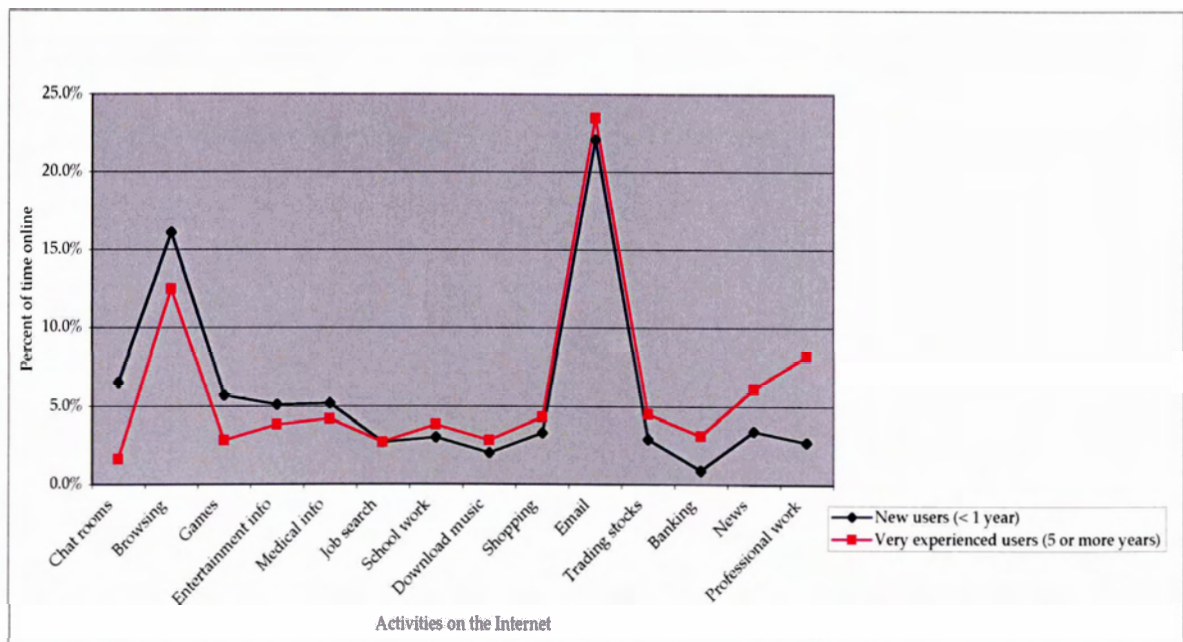
Appendix 2:
Internet Use Patterns

Table 1: What people do online

UCLA Internet Report: Surveying the Digital Future(2000-2001) (UCLA, 2003)

	2000	2001
Email and instant messaging	81.6%	87.9%
Web surfing or browsing	81.7%	76.3%
Buying online	57.2%	48.9%
Finding entertainment info	56.6%	47.9%
Reading news	54.3%	47.6%
Playing games	36.6%	n/a

Table 2: New users vs. very exeperienced users: What do they do online

UCLA Internet Report: Surveying the Digital Future (2000-2001) (UCLA, 2003)

Table 3: Daily Internet activities

Pew Internet and American Life Project (Howard et al., 2003)

	All Users
Email	87.0%
Fun	29.0%
Information utility	33.0%
Major life activities	21.0%
Monetary transactions	9.0%

Appendix 3:
A Few Examples of Blogs

Figure 2: An anatomy of a blog

Blog screenshot used by permission of its creator and manager, Joichi Ito (2004).

Blog header

Link to and "about" page providing biographical details about the author.

Anatomy of a post:

- Date (metadata)
- Time (metadata)
- Permalink (metadata)
- Main text/entry
- Comments link (metadata) (a link to a separate page where comments by readers concerning this post are archived).
- Trackback (a function that permits this post to be linked to another post on this or a reader's blog).
- Category link (metadata) (allows reader to go to a separate page where this post is categorized with other similar posts covering the same topic).

Faceroll

Drop-down menus to "Recent comments," archives pages, blogroll, and other resources. These secondary and tertiary areas may also directly appear as links on the blog's main page, usually along a left or right column such as this one. For aesthetic and organizational purposes and to reduce clutter, Ito has chosen to present this information using drop-down menus.

Blog Footer

"Contact me" link. Allows reader to email blog author.

Search function. Readers can perform keyword searches on this blog.

Figure 3: An example of a blogroll

Blog screenshot used by permission of its creator and manager, Jon Husband (2004).
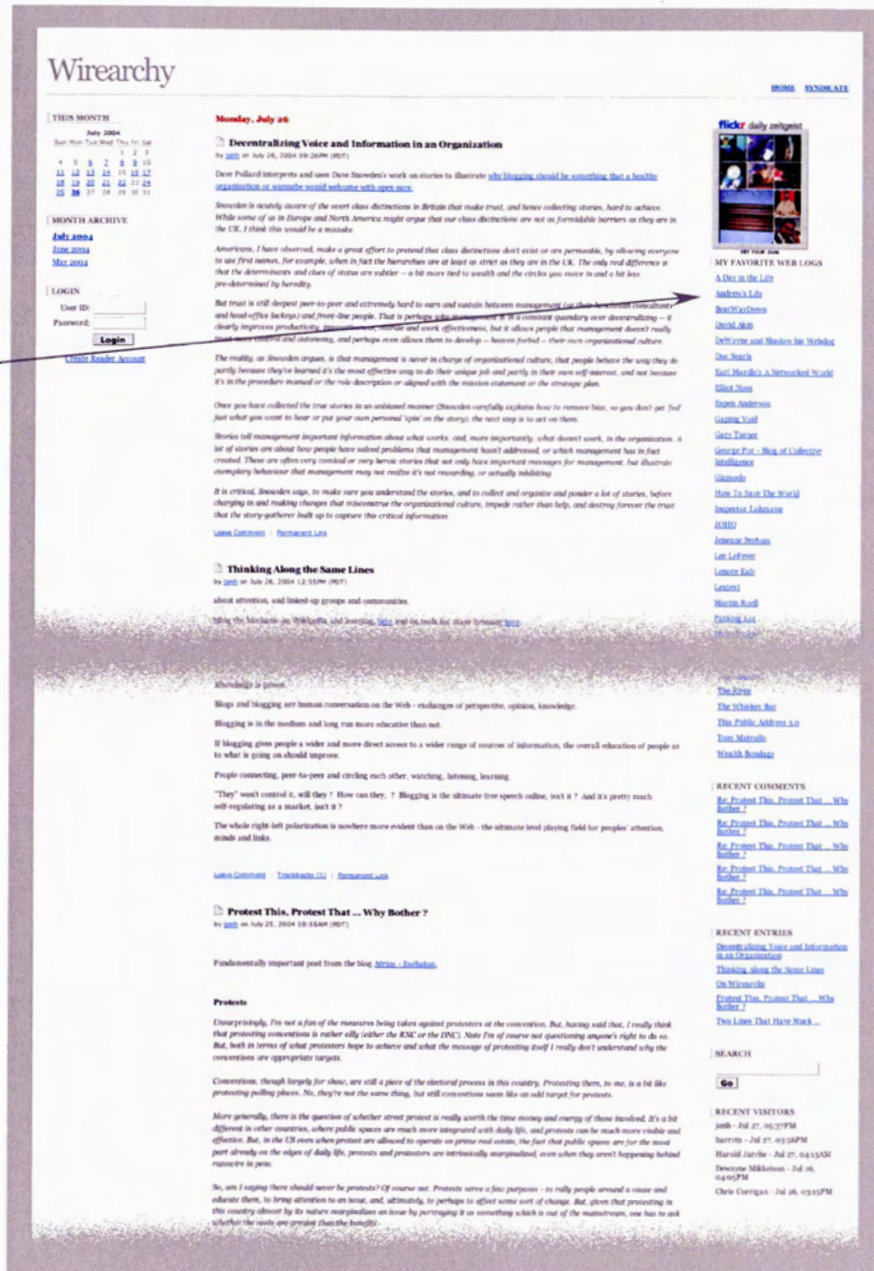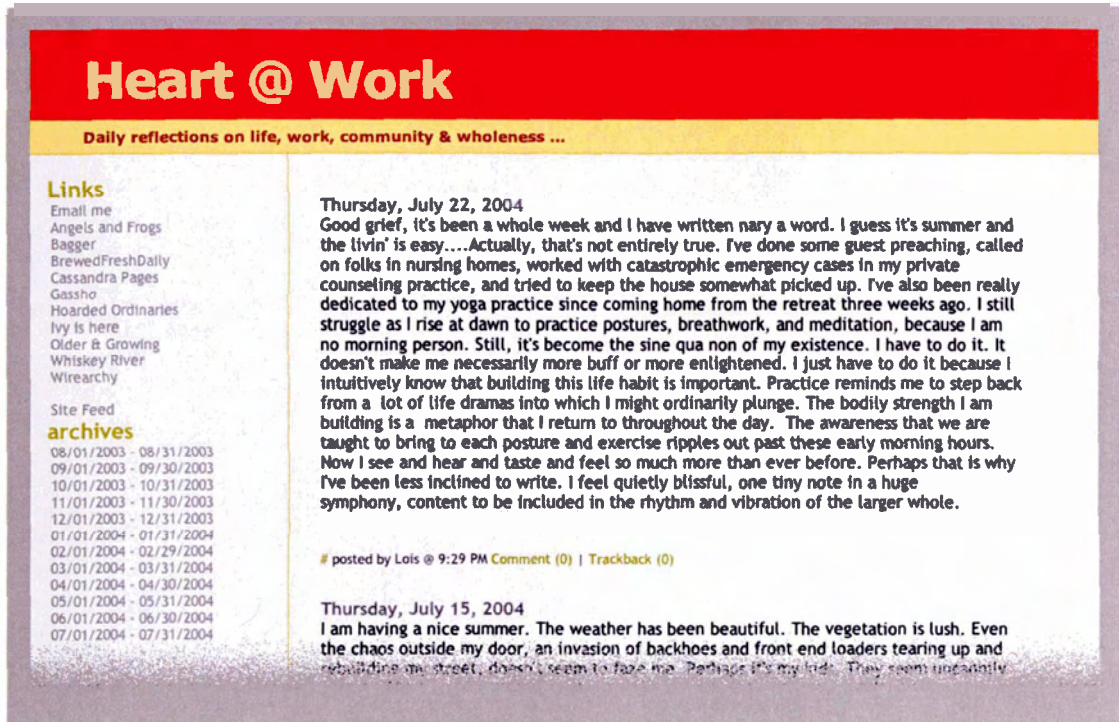
A blogroll designed into the main body of a blog.

Figure 4: Two more examples of blogs

Heart @ Work

Daily reflections on life, work, community & wholeness ...

Links
Email me
Angels and Frogs
Bagger
BrewedFreshDaily
Cassandra Pages
Gassho
Hoarded Ordinaries
Ivy is here
Older & Growing
Whiskey River
Wirearchy

Site Feed
archives
08/01/2003 - 08/31/2003
09/01/2003 - 09/30/2003
10/01/2003 - 10/31/2003
11/01/2003 - 11/30/2003
12/01/2003 - 12/31/2003
01/01/2004 - 01/31/2004
02/01/2004 - 02/29/2004
03/01/2004 - 03/31/2004
04/01/2004 - 04/30/2004
05/01/2004 - 05/31/2004
06/01/2004 - 06/30/2004
07/01/2004 - 07/31/2004

Thursday, July 22, 2004
Good grief, it's been a whole week and I have written nary a word. I guess it's summer and the livin' is easy....Actually, that's not entirely true. I've done some guest preaching, called on folks in nursing homes, worked with catastrophic emergency cases in my private counseling practice, and tried to keep the house somewhat picked up. I've also been really dedicated to my yoga practice since coming home from the retreat three weeks ago. I still struggle as I rise at dawn to practice postures, breathwork, and meditation, because I am no morning person. Still, it's become the sine qua non of my existence. I have to do it. It doesn't make me necessarily more buff or more enlightened. I just have to do it because I intuitively know that building this life habit is important. Practice reminds me to step back from a lot of life dramas into which I might ordinarily plunge. The bodily strength I am building is a metaphor that I return to throughout the day. The awareness that we are taught to bring to each posture and exercise ripples out past these early morning hours. Now I see and hear and taste and feel so much more than ever before. Perhaps that is why I've been less inclined to write. I feel quietly blissful, one tiny note in a huge symphony, content to be included in the rhythm and vibration of the larger whole.

posted by Lois @ 9:29 PM Comment (0) | Trackback (0)

Thursday, July 15, 2004
I am having a nice summer. The weather has been beautiful. The vegetation is lush. Even the chaos outside my door, an invasion of backhoes and front end loaders tearing up and rebuilding my street, doesn't seem to faze me. Perhaps it's my kids. They seem ungainly

Blog screenshot used by permission of its creator and manager, Lois Annich (2004).

photoblox

July 27, 2004 08:39 AM

Yes - keep the old one up and link to it

I've been using MoinMoin, a python based wiki because I thought I'd be able to hack it since I was learning python. It turns out that I haven't had any time to hack MoinMoin and frankly, it looks too difficult for me. The SocialText (I'm an investor and on the board) wiki software has become quite stable with some cool features so I've decided to switch my main wiki from Moin Moin to SocialText. The question I have is whether I should migrate pages from my old wiki and whether I should continue running the old wiki. If I am going to migrate the pages, another question is how to move the pages... Anyone have any thoughts?

- Old Wiki
- New Wiki

[Joi Ito]

I've been waiting for this to happen. Software needs professioanls to support it. This is the secret viral strategy of open source software. Once people start using it - they're hooked.

I knew that the open, unsupported Wiki Joi had - would someday HAVE to switch to

Mystery solved - "How did Photoblox take off in Japan"

For almnost two months now - we've been wondering how over 4,000 bloggers in Japan find out about teh laszlo Photoblox Blog object.

All of a sudden it seemed like they were all over the place - so we knew somebody was "affecting" all this. It wasn't Joi - so who was it?

Well - we just found out.

Here's what Lyndon Wong told me:

In an email thread with Kunikatsu, our photoblox fan from Japan, I have discovered:

The BlogBox Project is on the main blog page of Japan's largest ISP.

Profile of @Nifty in English: http://www.nifty.com/international/?top13 (wholly-owned division of Fujitsu).
Revenue: $590 million USD /year (in 2001)

The BlogBox Project mention is at: http://www.cocolog-nifty.com/link/link04.htm

Half-way down the page of featured cool stuff is the entry on the BlogBox Project, complete with screen shot. Further down that same list, you can spot SixApart (creators of MovableType, which powers @Nifty's Cocolog) and Google News. Laszlo Blogboxes are in good company.

I've excerpted some babelfish translations below:

```
''''''''''''''''''''
```
The blog box project
Rich interface feature, sticking to the side bar of □$B%V%m%0□(J, the tool which is used. MP3 is played back can do "Soundblox" and the sliding show etc. of the picture, the import with "photoblox" and OPML is possible, there is "linkblox"...

GET ONE FREE

PeopleAggregator
WebOutliner
Broadband Mechanics
Marc.Canter.com

1Up

Technorati Profile

BROADBAND MECHANICS

Laszlo™

tribe.net

Drupal

soundblox

flickr daily zeitgeist

GET YOUR OWN

friends

Medski
Los Angeles, CA
35 friends

Slater Turns 30!
187 friends

Randy
76 friends

El Guapo
Oakland, CA
40 friends

Alexasmuchasican!
52 friends

Peter
56 friends

Blog screenshot used by permission of its creator and manager, Marc Canter (2004).

Figure 5: An example of how running commentaries inspired by a blog post might appear on an actual blog page

Blog screenshot used by permission of its creator and manager, Stephen VanDyke (2004).
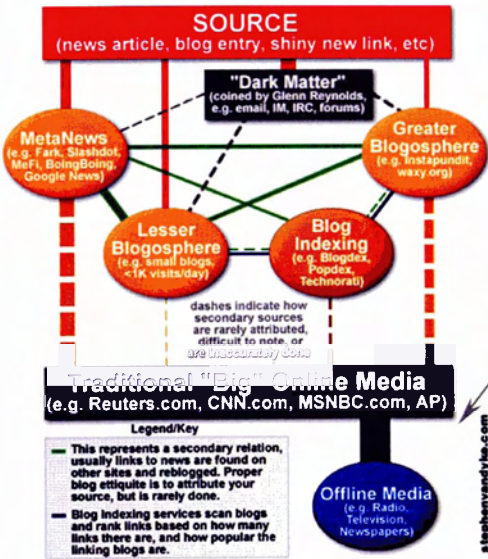
(See next page).

Mar 08 2004

How News Travels on the Internet

Categories: General, Articles

I read the Wired article *Warning: Blogs Can Be Infectious*, and thought it was informative. But it seemed to be lacking the big picture view of how the news travels. The Blog Epidemic Analyzer was also amusing and showed how attribution is underrated, but it too seemed sorely lacking cohesion, nor was it a very new topic. So I thought to myself: *"Hey this isn't all that complicated, I should make a visual diagram to illustrate this"*. And this infographic was born.

Here's how I see news travel, I think it's a pretty self-explanatory graphic, plus I'm too lazy to do a proper write up. Infer as you wish, maybe I will become the "source" one of these days.

How News Travels on the Internet
(A Visual Analysis of Website Interaction)

SOURCE
(news article, blog entry, shiny new link, etc)

"Dark Matter"
(coined by Glenn Reynolds, e.g. email, IM, IRC, forums)

MetaNews
(e.g. Fark, Slashdot, MeFi, BoingBoing, Google News)

Greater Blogosphere
(e.g. Instapundit, waxy.org)

Lesser Blogosphere
(e.g. small blogs, <1K visits/day)

Blog Indexing
(e.g. Blogdex, Popdex, Technorati)

dashes indicate how secondary sources are rarely attributed, difficult to note, or are unnecessary 80%

Traditional "Big" Online Media
(e.g. Reuters.com, CNN.com, MSNBC.com, AP)

Legend/Key

— This represents a secondary relation, usually links to news are found on other sites and reblogged. Proper blog ettique is to attribute your source, but is rarely done.

— Blog Indexing services scan blogs and rank links based on how many links there are, and how popular the linking blogs are.

Offline Media
(e.g. Radio, Television, Newspapers)

stephenvandyke.com

Miscellaneous links to sites listed:

- **Dark Matter**
  - Glenn Reynolds called email "the dark matter of the blogosphere" in a Wired interview. Naturally I extended this phrase to IM (Instant Messaging) , IRC (Internet Relay Chat) and forums. (link via blogosphere.us)
- **MetaNews** (I wasn't sure what else to call it, it's like collaborative blogging, except Google News)
  - Fark - users post news and comments, which are hand-picked by admins. TotalFark (a listing of everything submitted, huge list) is a sort of "dark matter" as well.
  - Slashdot - the grandaddy of the genre. More technically oriented.
  - MeFi - shorthand for MetaFilter, blogging on crack (all users can post?). Not accepting accounts.
  - BoingBoing - similar to MetaFilter, more blogging on crack.
  - Google News - through the magic of Google… the news. Limited sources.
- **Greater Blogosphere** - basically just a high traffic blog. sometimes the lines blur between this and MetaNews
  - Instapundit - Glenn Reynolds again, probably the most read blog on the Internet.
  - Waxy.org - A high traffic blog that has a lot of offbeat news. Made the "StarWars Kid" popular.
- **Lesser Blogosphere** - me, basically… we're all lowly citizens waiting for our 15 minutes, just like Bob's Qveere Eye parody (yes, it was me who posted it to Fark). While we wait, we link and blab.
- **Blog Indexing** - these are services that show what's popular based on how many people link to it in a certain period.
  - Blogdex
  - Popdex
  - Technorati - rankings also weighted based on how popular the site linking to the item is.
- **Traditional "Big" Online Media** - once they pick up a story, it can become a story again, how's that for echo chambers?
  - Reuters.com
  - CNN.com
  - MSNBC.com
  - AP - Yahoo News used for example
- **Offline Media** - hey what the… I can't link to them :)

Update: Fark picked up this story. I get to play the role of "source", so let's see how far it goes. I'll track this as well as I can and see if I can build a case study from this. Thanks Drew!

Update2: There is now an interim article on my initial observations after being linked from all over. Also, apologies for the site going down for a while there, the database was being moved and server upgraded.

posted at 2:05 am by Stephen VanDyke

79 Comments

The *URI* to TrackBack this entry is:

http://hammeroftruth.com/2004/03/08/how-news-travels-on-the-internet/trackback/

1. I think you give me too much credit. I only get a fraction of the traffic of someone like Instapundit.

   Comment by Andy Baio — 2004-03-08 @ 9:56 am

2. **03/08-04 - Computer Deals!**
   Be sure to listen in on Monday for show #0025. Tonight we've got another great show including where to find the best computer deals! All that and of course, the News, Sports, Weather and Socks all on tonights Bryan Roy…

   Trackback by The Bryan Roy Show — 2004-03-08 @ 2:59 pm

ARCHIVES
July 2004
June 2004
May 2004
all archives…

SEARCH ARCHIVES

go

SYNDICATION
RSS/RDF/Atom
SmartFeed ?

subscribe with
Bloglines

add site **kinja**

Take back the web

3. **Monday's Random Ramalamahamdamblings**
Marzipan's not here... so just leave a message. Today's Quiz: up until today, what was the age of the oldest living person? Winner gets 5KB o' fame. Tonight we've got another great show including where to find the best computer...

Trackback by Royville.com — 2004-03-08 @ 3:12 pm

4. **Stephen VanDyke » How News Travels on the Internet**
Stephen VanDyke » How News Travels on the Internet - via boing boing

Trackback by KnitWatchya: Where Am I? — 2004-03-08 @ 4:00 pm

5. I'd like to know more about big media! Seems like anything "multi-sourced" can become news. Google for the fake (but now not) ceramic body modifications... that became big news, but they were not cosmetic implants. Also, the whole thing with that CIA agent exposed was in a round about way to dispell how the US gets their intelligence... they are not well sourced.

Comment by thom — 2004-03-08 @ 4:15 pm

6. It's an entertaining chart. However, while it's true that those dashed lines are rarely attributed, you seem to be implying that that is a bad thing. Well, I'm one of the (apparently many) people who think, "who cares?"

Suppose I pass along a link to a new web page to my readers, because I think it's funny, or clever, or whatever. What's the important information **here**? It's the link itself. Who gives a rat's ass how I found it? Of what possible consequence is it to anyone that I found it from BoingBoing who found it **from Memepool** who found it from Slashdot who found it from Anonymous Coward who got it in email? The *ultimate web page itself* is the only attribution that matters. If you were writing a bibliography, that whole chain of discovery wouldn't go in it: only the primary sources. Documenting only the *last* link in the chain is only good for ego gratification of people who (like me) waste most their day dredging the net. The *first* link in the chain is the one that is the actual *creative act*.

Comment by Jamie Zawinski — 2004-03-08 @ 4:17 pm

7. Jamie, I agree in full with what you say, and I wasn't knocking people who link without attributing. One thing you mentioned was referencing the last person in the chain, which is exactly what I had in mind, but I also noted that attributions of this manner can also be wrong: they may link to the main page instead of to where it was actually found. Sometimes it's impossible to do it any other way of course.

Another important factor is information hoarding—never linking to sources—under the guise that readers don't care. They may very well not care, but it smacks of egoism, as if that site is only place the secret link to the cool website/news could be found, or that it's a blog scoop (it may very well be).

I've been compiling data from the amount of traffic generated from this and I'll definitely be doing a followup.

Comment by Stephen VanDyke — 2004-03-08 @ 4:26 pm

8. Stephen, your graph definitely makes it easier to see the flow of information from source to blogs to media outlets and so on. But what I found interesting about the Blog Epidemic Analyzer and the related research at HP Labs was that they had come up with a way to infer where information came from even when there was no attribution. (See, the point is not that people are "stealing" info when they don't provide attribution, but rather that it's much more difficult to track the flow of ideas when there are no explicit links back to the source.) Sounds like your visualization technique and HP Labs's inference technology could be a good complement. (I authored the Wired News piece.)

Comment by Amit Asaravala — 2004-03-08 @ 5:15 pm

9. I use two layers of linkage at max, eg. if I see an article on the CNN site that is actually an AP story I just make the link (CNN/AP)with the link directed to the CNN site. If the original source is being passed through a smaller blog I usually link to both the original source and the secondary site seperately with a phrase such "from [orig source] via [small blog]". I do that because I believe its important to drive traffic to the small blog for three reasons: the first being simple courtesy, the second to effect a "democratizing of the info" (which can lessen the burden on the original sources servers), and lastly the slant of commentary found at the smaller blog may be even more important than the original article itself.

Comment by cal — 2004-03-08 @ 5:35 pm

10. **Self-referential Linking**
From boing boing via bloglines There's an interesting article by Stephen VanDyke called "How News Travels on the Internet which has the graphic below which he created to demonstrate how he sees the flow of information on the net. click...

Trackback by railbox's anvil — 2004-03-08 @ 5:56 pm

11.
Stephen VanDyke. How News Travels on the Internet (If you're wondering where DPH might fall in this – the site's been getting an average of 4000 people a day for a while now.)...

Trackback by the puny humans — 2004-03-08 @ 5:59 pm

12. Screw the article, look at the robot in the suit in the upper right corner and read the accompaning text. That is great!

Comment by Julius — 2004-03-08 @ 6:27 pm

13. Would you put things like LiveJournal and Diaryland in the "lesser blogosphere"?

Comment by Ele — 2004-03-08 @ 6:54 pm

14. Hi Ele. It would depend on the blog/journal of course. I know that LJ and DL both have lots of members and some of them could be "greater blogosphere". My

233

Figure 6: An example of a collaborative online essay by multiple authors.

Collaborative essay screenshot used by permission of its creator and manager, Joichi Ito (2004).

JOI ITO EmergentDemocracyPaper

FrontPage RecentChanges FindPage HelpContents

Emergent Democracy

Mostly by Joichi Ito

Version 1.40 October 1, 2003

Note: another version of this document is in process, to be included in a the ExtremeDemocracy book Jon Lebkowsky and Mitch Ratcliffe are editing. If you have changes, additions, or comments in mind, please contact Jon Lebkowsky at joni at polycot.com.

Proponents of the Internet have long sought a more intelligent Internet which can help correct the imbalances and inequalities of the world. Today, the Internet is a noisy environment with a great deal of power consolidation instead of the level, balanced democratic Internet many envision.

In 1993 Howard Rheingold wrote[1],

> We temporarily have access to a tool that could bring conviviality and understanding into our lives and might help revitalize the public sphere. The same tool, improperly controlled and wielded, could become an instrument of tyranny. The vision of a citizen-designed, citizen-controlled worldwide communications network is a version of technological utopianism that could be called the vision of "the electronic agora." In the original democracy, Athens, the agora was the marketplace, and more--it was where citizens met to talk, gossip, argue, size each other up, find the weak spots in political ideas by debating about them. But another kind of vision could apply to the use of the Net in the wrong ways, a shadow vision of a less utopian kind of place--the Panopticon.

Rheingold has been called naive.[2] While the Internet has become a global agora, or meeting place, effective global conversation and debate is just beginning. We are on the verge of an awakening of the Internet, an awakening that may either facilitate the emergence of a new democratic political model (Rheingold's revitalization of the public sphere), or more fully enable the corporations and governments of the world to control, monitor and influence their populations, leaving the individual at the mercy of and under constant scrutiny by those in power (an electronic, global Panopticon).

[I'm having trouble following the last sentence in this paragraph, given that it's five lines long. Can this be broken up, deparenthesized, or otherwise revised to flow better? -- rs]

We must influence the development and use of these tools and technologies to support democracy, or they will be turned against us by corporations, totalitarian regimes and terrorists. To do so, we must begin to understand the process and implications of this Emergent Democracy. This new political model must support the basic characteristics of democracy and reverse the erosion of democratic principles that has occurred under the burden of concentrating power within corporations and governments. New technologies may enable the emergence of a functional, more direct democratic system which is able to manage complex issues and will support, change or replace indirect, existing representative democracies.

[Last sentence filled with commas, tripped over 'replace indirect' as a phrase until I realized the comma grouping pattern. -- rs]

Democracy

The dictionary defines democracy as "government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system." With the Gettysburg address, Abraham Lincoln gave us a more eloquent definition, government "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

A functional democracy is governed by the majority while protecting the rights of all minorities. To achieve this balance, a democracy relies on a competition of ideas, which, in turn, requires freedom of speech and the ability to criticize those in power without fear of retribution. In an effective representative democracy power must also be distributed to several points of authority to enable checks and balances and reconcile

Contributions and Edits

Please log your contributions and edits here:

Moved section on WeblogsAndEmergence to separate page, with notes. Added commentary there re: relevance of SmallWorldNetworks -- KatherineDerbyshire

Changed Peaceworks to One Voice, their new name and added link -- JoiIto

2003.07.02 / Language edits and a few comments in section 1, increment to 1.33, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.03 / Structural and language edits in section 1.1 (democracy), increment to 1.34, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.06 / Minor changes and some embedded notes in 1.1.1 (competition of ideas), 1.1.3 (the commons), 1.1.4 (privacy), 1.1.5 (polling and direct democracy), 1.4 (the power law), 1.5 (mayfield's ecosystem), 1.6 (the strength of weak ties), 1.7 (trust), 1.8 (the toolmakers). Structural change, moving two paragraphs from 1.1.5 (polling and direct democracy) to 1.2 (emergence) - this needs some fixing. Increment to 1.35, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.06 / Changes in section 1 (emergent democracy). Added introduction to 1.1.3 (the commons). 1.1.2 (critical debate and freedom of speech) becomes "critical debate and limits on speech" and moved after "the commons." Split 1.1.4 (privacy) into two sections, "privacy" and "the role of media," placing "the role of media" first. Revised 1.1.1 (competition of ideas) and moved part of it to "the role of the media." Edit for brevity in 1.1.1 (competition of ideas). Increment to 1.36. -- rojisan

2003.07.12 / Small edits in 1.1.1 (Competition of ideas), 1.1.2 (The commons), 1.1.3 (Critical debates and limits on speech), 1.1.5 (Privacy), 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy), 1.2 (Emergence) and 1.4 (The power law) for clarity. Added notes to 1.1.3 (Critical debates and limits on speech), 1.1.4 (The role of media), 1.1.5 (Privacy), 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy). Re-ordered the layers in 1.5 (Mayfield's ecosystem) to presage following material. Substantial edits in 1.6 (The strength of weak ties). Increment to 1.37, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.20 / Added notes to 1.1.5 (Privacy), 1.5 (Mayfield's ecosystem) and 1.7 (Trust). Fixed note in 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy). Re-ordered section 1.4 (The power law) providing an introduction , and moved a paragraph from 1.6 (The strength of weak ties) to this section. Minor edits in 1.4 (The power law), 1.5 (Mayfield's ecosystem) and 1.7 (Trust). Substantial edits in 1.6 (The strength of weak ties). Increment to 1.38, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.24 / Rearranged conclusion paragraph in the introduction, added corporations. Minor edits in the introduction, 1.1.2 (The commons), and 1.1.4 (The role of media). Struck footnote [3] (this is now referenced in context). Moved large sections of 1.1 (Democracy) to 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy). Retitled 1.1.3 (Critical debate and limits on speech) as "Emerging limits on debate." Retitled 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy) as "Direct Democracy and Scale." Rearranged 1.1.3 (Emerging limits on debate). and 1.1.6 (Direct Democracy and Scale). Increment to 1.39, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.12 / Small edits in 1.1.1 (Competition of ideas), 1.1.2 (The commons), 1.1.3 (Critical debates and limits on speech), 1.1.5 (Privacy), 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy), 1.2 (Emergence) and 1.4 (The power law) for clarity. Added notes to 1.1.3 (Critical debates and limits on speech), 1.1.4 (The role of media), 1.1.5 (Privacy), 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy). Re-ordered the layers in 1.5 (Mayfield's ecosystem) to presage following material. Substantial edits in 1.6 (The strength of weak ties). Increment to 1.37, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.20 / Added notes to 1.1.5 (Privacy), 1.5 (Mayfield's ecosystem) and 1.7 (Trust). Fixed note in 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy). Re-ordered section 1.4 (The power law) providing an introduction , and moved a paragraph from 1.6 (The strength of weak ties) to this section. Minor edits in 1.4 (The power law), 1.5 (Mayfield's ecosystem) and 1.7 (Trust). Substantial edits in 1.6 (The strength of weak ties). Increment to 1.38, new date -- rojisan

2003.07.24 / Rearranged conclusion paragraph in the introduction, added corporations. Minor edits in the introduction, 1.1.2 (The commons), and 1.1.4 (The role of media). Struck footnote [3] (this is now referenced in context). Moved large sections of 1.1 (Democracy) to 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy). Retitled 1.1.3 (Critical debate and limits on speech) as "Emerging limits on debate." Retitled 1.1.6 (Polling and direct democracy) as "Direct Democracy and Scale." Rearranged 1.1.3 (Emerging limits on debate). and 1.1.6 (Direct Democracy and Scale). Increment to 1.39, new date -- rojisan

2003.08.26 / For those interested in the decade of "e-democracy" experience of Minnesota E-Democracy, I encourage you to check out our Research section http://www.e-democracy.org/research and this short article on how we build the "online public commons" http://www.e-democracy.org/do/commons.html . Also I plan to mention this paper on the Democracies Online Newswire in the coming month http://www.e-democracy.org/do -- Steven Clift, http://www.publicus.net

2003.10.01 / Added multiple footnotes. Incremented to 1.40, new date. -- ●rs

2003.09.01 Emocracy - Rule by Human Emotion Please visit: http://emocracia.no.sapo.pt Many of your ideas are common with what i wrote in my site before reading yours! I need help to write a P2P system capable of handling all information! JCAntunes

2003.11.26 Here are some of my thoughts on this topic: http://ideant.typepad.com/ideant/2003/10/emergent_democr.html -um

2003.11.01 How emergent democracy differs from direct democracy http://ross.typepad.com/blog/2003/10/indirect_democr.html Some development in bridging emergent pluralism with institutional pluralism http://ross.typepad.com/blog/2003/11/lobbying_for_em.html -- ross

RefreshCache for this page (cached 2004-07-20 20:54:39 JST)
EditText of this page (last edited 2004-07-20 20:54:38 JST by user-0ccsrbj)
FindPage or search titles   ⌕ full text   ⌕ or SiteNavigation
Or try one of these actions: LikePages, LocalSiteMap, SpellCheck

MoinMoin Powered

Appendix 4:
Why Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz?

It is perhaps appropriate to say a few words about why I used and combined the philosophies of Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz in this thesis. A question that might come up for the reader is whether it is appropriate to combine the theories of these philosophers for theorizing everyday sociability that is increasingly mediated by networked technologies such as IMC. While differences between the four philosophers exist, I believe there are aspects of their philosophies that can be melded together. Indeed, each time I read these four philosophers, and as I begin to explore in this thesis, I am more convinced that there is a powerful fit between various areas of their thought, especially when looking at the self as situated in our increasingly complex and technologically-mediated social world. While I attempt in this appendix to touch on the key theoretical links I have found to date between these four theorists and their relevance to IMC, the following review will have to be limited to a few brief words. There is no doubt in my mind that a comparative analysis of their work could span several volumes and a lifetime of scholarship. Over the next few years, I hope to explore in more detail some of the connections between these philosophers and their relevance for understanding Internet practices specifically and our place in technological existence more generally.

Importantly, I'd like to clarify off the top that in interlinking Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz for developing my theory of the interactional self within the context of IMC, I am not seeking to efface their variances. Rather than effacement, this paper follows Ritzer's (2000b) Kuhn-inspired suggestions for "paradigm linking, leaping, bridging, and integrating" (p. 496) in sociological research. In one of these paradigm linkages, Ritzer connects action theories, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and existentialism under the umbrella of "the social-definition paradigm" of sociology and social theory (p. 498). Ritzer claims social theorists and sociologists that fall into this paradigm are interested in "the way actors define their social situations and the effect of these definitions on ensuing action and interaction" (p. 498). While only Mead and Schutz can be seen as working primarily within the field of sociology, Husserl and Heidegger can be seen as offering the first ontological and phenomenological footsteps that undergird, if indirectly, the social theories of Mead and Schutz. Moreover, I believe all four philosophers of human experience at the heart of this thesis can be said to fruitfully ground such a social definition paradigm. In the spirit of Ritzer's paradigm for sociology, then, this thesis uses the theoretical connections and intellectual congruencies between Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz for the interactional self and attempts to show how these connections afford excellent footing for identifying and understanding the social uses of the Internet in everyday life. In the following paragraphs of this appendix, I will first touch on some of the differences between these four philosophers of human experience and will then elaborate on the a fewe of the strong concordances between them.

Distinctions

While the early Heidegger (1962/2001, *et passim*) worked within the phenomenological standpoint he acquired from Husserl as his student and intellectual successor, Heidegger disagreed with his teacher on the primacy of consciousness for coming to know the world. To Husserl (1913/1931, *et passim*) the world is constituted and experienced through a complex continuum between a directed and "intentional" consciousness of the things of the world and the always partial "givenness" of those things to consciousness as filtered through the various ways we experience worldly things (see Chapters 1 and 5). Heidegger instead obstinately looked at the ontological level of *existence*, or *Being* (*Sein*), rather than consciousness throughout his published works, especially when discussing the existential worldly "being" aware of its "Being" (existence) that dwells in *Dasein* (Steiner, 1992) and how *Dasein* "concernfully" copes with the things of the world (see Chapter 3).[108] For Husserl, existence and consciousness were inseparable. For Heidegger, existence and encounter came before consciousness. And, while Husserl and Heidegger worked within the philosophical realms of the phenomenological attitude and used its framework to articulate how an experiencing human being and the world are intimately intertwined, Mead (1934, *et passim*) and Schutz (1970, *et passim*)[109] theorized primarily at the sociological level when they both looked at interpersonal action, interactional existence, and communication as the foundations for our pragmatic and social concerns (Joas, 1985; Ritzer, 2000a). Moreover, although not as rigid as Watson's stimuli-response behaviourism, Mead relied on behaviourist principles of action, albeit dialectically intertwined with consciousness and society (Joas, 1985): For Mead, the human organism reacted to environmental stimuli but also learned from these encounters; to Mead, engagements with things and others were inherently entrenched in social settings and contexts.[110] Heidegger and Schutz, on the other hand, grounded human actions in the Husserlian-inspired concepts of *intentionality* and *meaning* rooted in human experience (Taminiaux,

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[108] Rather than Husserl's contention that the world is made known solely through the intentionality of consciousness – that consciousness is always directed towards an imagined, material, procedural, or conceptual object – Heidegger instead proposed a practical intentionality, or engagement, with the world and that consciousness is already always in the world in the form of *Dasein* (Taminiaux, 1994). Thus, Heidegger moves beyond Husserl's focus on the descriptive meanings of experience made known in consciousness and replaces consciousness with the self-interpreting being that dwells in *Dasein* (loosely, his word for the meaning-making human), a being that is aware of itself as a Being, that is formed by the act of encountering the world, is constituted by the world, and is in a constant interpretive engagement with the world.

[109] Schutz also worked within the phenomenological attitude but was expressly concerned with the sociological issues of intersubjectivity and action. Heidegger and Husserl were more generally focused on articulating a phenomenological standpoint and a methodology for philosophical reflections concerning how the world is made known from the perspective of an experiencing human being and, in Heidegger's case, how we can think about existence ("Being") (Wagner, 1983; Taminiaux, 1994).

[110] Using an amended social behaviourism (Joas, 1985; Ritzer, 2000a), Mead "attempted to formulate a non-reductionist orientation to psychology that nevertheless drew on the natural sciences and was concerned with a theory of action" (Joas, 1985, p. 5).

1994; Wagner, 1983): Heidegger in the concept of the intentionality of all human encounters with the world's beings (Taminiaux, 1984; Dreyfus, 1991) and Schutz in the notion that all intersubjective action is still, at its core, rooted in the intentionality of consciousness (Wagner, 1983). Thus, to Heidegger, all encounters are directed at something encountered and, to Schutz, like Husserl, all consciousness is conscious of something. Mead, did not have a theory similar to intentionality and was opposed to studying mental processes "introspectively" (although he was contesting the psychology of Watson here, not phenomenological methods per se) (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Instead, Mead thought that the social act was the primary human vantage point from which to assess the human mind and interaction (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 384).

Congruencies

With this brief look at some of the theorists' main distinctions from each other two major questions still remain: Why use these four philosophers for thinking about how we encounter the world as mediated by the Internet and what concordances do these four philosophers have?

First, all four are foundational for each of their respective areas within the philosophies of experience and, I believe, should not be ignored by contemporary communication researchers. Second, all four address our place as human beings within the subject/object dichotomy, and that a sense of self is necessarily forged by, coexists with, and is contingent upon the world, thus also problematizing the dichotomy. But primarily, for all four philosophers, awareness of others and things were deeply contingent on one's socio-biographical experiences forged within the world of things, others, and projects. All four philosophers, for example, believe the following: 1) that we exist among a world of manipulable things; 2) that through a manipulation of these things we project unto the world, come to know the world, change the world, and are changed by the world; 3) that the world is open to our manipulation and interpretation but that the world also resists and pushes back; 4) that we live in a world with others; and 5) that others validate our own existence and our sense of self by reciprocating our communicative advances (Dreyfus, 1991; Joas, 1985; Ritzer, 2000a, 2004; Taminiaux, 1994; Wagner, 1983). In what follows I articulate some of these connections that I further elaborate on throughout this thesis.

Foundationally, on both sides of the Atlantic at the beginning of the 20th century, separate but related movements towards the philosophies of human experience began to take form in the humanities via phenomenology and *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) in Europe and pragmatism in the US. One of the common aspects of these movements was an attempt to resist the primacy of "psychologism," "positivism," and "scientism" that prevailed in sociology and the social sciences, and that was encroaching in on philosophy at the end of the 19th century (Bowie, 2003). Instead the late-19th and early-20th centuries saw the emergence of a movement towards a philosophy of experience on both sides of the Atlantic that sought to look at "a possible grounding of the human or social sciences by revealing how the objects of these sciences are constituted in the communicative life-praxis of human beings" (Joas, 1985, p. 41). Indeed, this was,

in their own separate circumstances but with links via the work of Simmel, Weber, James, Mead, Dilthey, and Schutz, amongst others, one of the major projects of both pragmatism and phenomenology (Joas, 1995; Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998; Moran & Mooney, 2002; Ritzer, 2004). All four philosphers fall within this movement.

All four are also seminal thinkers for the notion that human beings come to understand the world through directly experiencing it. In addition, there is evidence of a cross-pollination occurring between the continentals and the pragmatists throughout the 20th century concerning this, especially via the philosophy of Bergson and Husserl (Joas, 1985). Husserl, for instance was the first to fully articulate the phenomenological method for understanding the deep structures of experience and consciousness and greatly inspired the early thinking of Heidegger and Heidegger's own interpretation of phenomenology (Taminiaux, 1994). Husserl's work was also central for Schutz's sociological phenomenology and especially in the latter's conceptualizations of the life-world and intersubjectivity, which he then took to America after his exile from Austria in the late '30s (Wagner, 1983; Ritzer, 2000a). It is also undeniable that Mead was also influenced in part by German *Lebensphilosophie* and the "factical" view of life that also influenced Heidegger and early 20th century German thought via the work of Dilthey (Joas, 1985, pp. 41-43).[111] Dilthey's thinking concerning the "facticity" of the sciences and of practical life had affinities with American pragmatism and Mead even studied under Dilthey for a time (Joas, 1985, p, 41). Heidegger is the philosopher who reintroduced the exploration of "Being" and was, arguably, one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century, taking continental philosophy to the deep realms of the subjective and factically entrenched individual acting in a world. Mead bridged the mental world with the social and was one of the founders of American pragmatism and the founder of symbolic interactionism, inspiring Blumer, Goffman, aspects of Schutz's work, and others (Blasi, 1998). And Schutz brought Husserlian phenomenology to the social realm as well as doing much to introduce Husserl to North America. In addition, Schutz quoted Mead, James, Dewey and other pragmatist's often and can be thought of as an important bridge between continental phenomenology and American pragmatism (Ritzer, 2000a).

Tellingly, all four also quote Bergson at times in their writings suggesting a strong link between all four theorists' concepts of "time," a concept also particularly key to Husserl's phenomenology. To all four, there are notions of a sense of self that is intricately tied to one's time-based biographical experiences which sees the memory (Bergson) or "retention" (Husserl) of past experiences informing present decisions and actions as well as "projecting" (Bergson) or "protaining" (Husserl) future plans and actions. For example, Heidegger's "Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1962/2001, p. 153; Steiner, 1992), Mead's self and "reflective consciousness" (Mead, 1934, p. 22; Ritzer, 2000a), and Schutz's "stocks of knowledge" and realms of intersubjective interaction (Schutz & Luckman, 1973, p. 111; Ritzer, 2000a) all relied on Bergsonian notions of time's

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[111] For Wilhelm Dilthey "facticity" or "factical life" was lived experience in a pragmatically practical and inherently social world with the biography of individuals being influential in making up that social world.

non-mechanistic, biographically entrenched "flows" (see Joas, 1985; Ritzer, 2000a; Steiner, 1992) (see Chapter 5 for an elaboration of Bergson's and Husserl's notions of time and space for the interactional self).

Another related complement between the four philosophers of experience includes very compatible notions of *the self with others*; indeed, all four had concepts of "the self" and "others" and how others impact the self. All four philosophers, for example, agree that the self emerges, in varying degrees, as a dialectic between a social world and an inner being. This notion can be seen in the following related concepts: Husserl's (1970) "alteration of [intersubjective] validity through reciprocal correction" (p. 163) by "living together" (p. 108) (see Chapter 2); Heidegger's *Dasein*, "Being-in-the-world" and "Being-with-others" (*Mitsein*) (see Chapter 3); Mead's "I" and "me" (see Chapter 4); Schutz's concepts of "intersubjectivity" (see Chapter 5); the "working" and "partial" self (see Chapter 5); and *umwelt* ("we-relations") and *mitwelt* ("they-relations") (see Chapter 6); as well as in their agreement that the "real" is tightly intertwined with the world of self with others, and that the world is contingent on the individual as the "point zero" of experience.

For these and other reasons that are elaborated on throughout this thesis – not least of which are the kernels of theories of mediation in all of their writings that I particularly touch on in the thesis – I am increasingly convinced that Husserl, Heidegger, Mead, and Schutz can be reckoned with together when considering aspects of the human experience of the self in the social world and, thus, when contemplating how the Internet and networked society in general interplay with, affect, and afford sociability.

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243

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255

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