

Mediating the Social Face: Self-Presentation in Computer Communication

by

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Abstract

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is investigated as a social medium through which participants become textual characters and through their message exchanges create and refine, or socialize, textual selves. Following the methods of qualitative case study content analysis, this study applies Erving Goffman's concepts of self-presentation to three characters' messages accumulated over three months. Goffman's concepts themselves are expanded and operationalized through G.H. Mead's theory of socialization, and the insights of Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, Martin Buber, R.D. Laing and Eric Berne to interpersonal communication.

The study concludes that participants in CMC create and individuate online characters through self-presentation. Despite a reduction in nonverbal communication and metamessages, characters are individuated by the amount and kind of physical, individual, and social information they reveal in addition to any unique use of message content, structure, and language. These findings contradict research portraying CMC as anonymous and deindividuating and elaborate approaches describing CMC as heightening characters' private, or internal self-awareness. The physical distance enforced by the computer allows characters to develop or express personal attributes which may or may not appear later outside the social space of the computer. The computer thus creates a text-based forum for individual self-expression and self-exploration. These conclusions suggest a new approach to analyzing CMC based upon the social presentations and relationships enacted through messages.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The social use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) involves the simultaneous absence of physical bodies and the presence of textually constructed and socially defined personae.¹ Online selves on socially centred bulletin board systems (BBS) face minimal social risk compared with face-to-face contact. BBS participants can control self-disclosure to a greater extent because the computer's standardized front levels the variations in social status evident in face-to-face contact. Attributes of personal front (sex, age, height, vocal tone, inflection, appearance or handwriting) which classify people according to social norms in face-to-face, telephone or written communication are not present. Removing these indicators removes the body from communication and reduces the risks involved in social contact. Acceptance or rejection hinges initially around the communicative content and context rather than uncontrollable social cues revealed by the physical body. Without a physical presence, communicative partners can be easily acknowledged or rejected without the loss of social face as CMC users remain physically anonymous. Although names and addresses are known, these labels cannot be identified with a specific, physically-present individual.

¹ Throughout this thesis, the term "computer-mediated communication" or "CMC" refers to social networks and relationships which are constructed using the computer as medium. The particular focus of this thesis is a particular application of CMC, a bulletin board system (BBS). The conclusions I reach concerning this BBS are, I believe, generalizable to other instances of social communication using computers. For this reason, I use CMC to refer to both communication on the BBS studied and to other uses of social computer networks.

This thesis applies Erving Goffman's (1959) concepts of self-presentation detailed in The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life to the process of self-presentation by members of a computer bulletin board system. It seeks to discover how, in the process of CMC self-presentation, people create textual selves. When people establish and maintain relationships solely on the basis of written communication, the physical body does not guarantee claims made by the social persona. Unlike face-to-face communication, where information on sex, age, economic status, social status and physical condition is available at a glance, in CMC this information is subject to the possessor's control. Effectively, participants have the power to create themselves in CMC.

Analyzing the Self in CMC and Other Media

Given control over self-disclosure, the question must be posed as to how complete this control can be in CMC. Contrast CMC with the telephone. The telephone provides both a physical presence and absence. Voices on the telephone provide extensive verbal and non-verbal information about the participants' sex, age, ethnicity, class, and social status. Social status is asserted by manipulating verbal and non-verbal cues to create and convey information reflecting a personal definition of the interpersonal relationship. Thus, although the physical body is not identifiable, the power of telephone conversants to create themselves is mitigated by the available social cues. The rapid exchange of information in telephone dialogue allows participants to assess and corroborate information about the other more quickly than CMC but still much less quickly than face-to-face communication.

More similar to a CMC message, many, if not most, social cues governing one's presentation of self are absent in a letter (assuming it is not a "pen pal letter", which may have much in common with the creation of CMC text-based personae). The structure of a letter is similar to a CMC message; it is a writer's monologue with a specific audience and when typed, the information revealed by handwriting, pen choice or ink colour is absent. The author of a letter also mediates contact with the audience, selecting large sequences of information assumed to be relevant. But even in letter writing, the writer presents a self. In choosing information and a sequence of topics, the writer reveals a definition of the relationship between the reader (the other) and the writer (the self). How this relationship is manifest through language, topic, number of paragraphs, or even spelling, constitutes the writer's self-presentation. Further, the writer's choice of words and grammar reveals clearly a "voice", a sense of character or persona. These two cases, telephone conversation and letter writing reveal that even in mediated communication, self-presentation occurs. This examination of CMC messages therefore, should also discover the methods of self-presentation.

Methods of self-presentation have been analyzed in television and radio. For example, Horton and Wohl (1986) find that audiences "know" media personae by observing and interpreting their on-camera gestures, vocal qualities, conversation and conduct. These cues create, for the audience, a media self, or persona. In creating this self/persona, the performer's actions set-up audience knowledge and responses by defining the situation in such a way that an "appropriate answering role is specified by implication and suggestion" (Horton & Wohl, 1986, p.191). Thus, the performer's skill at manipulating the definition of the situation creates a planned and desired

media self and in providing specific cues leads the audience to act according to the performer's plan. Similarly, Meyrowitz (1986) reveals that various camera shots, angles and techniques creates specific self and situational definitions in television shows. These techniques lead the audience to identify specific "situations or characters", to align "with selected characters" and also reveals specific information about character relationships (Meyrowitz, 1986, p.265). Here, the camera allows the television program to be presented in such a way that specific attributes are enhanced. In these examples, deliberate actions--verbal and non-verbal cues--create a sincere, but nonetheless managed self-presentation.

Personal ads in newspapers and magazines have also been fertile ground for the analysis of self-presentation. Rosemary Bolig's (1984) analysis of personal ads in a singles magazine revealed an "average" self-presentation for females and male. This presented self appeals to attributes of an assumed audience and "provide[s] one opportunity for individuals to be their own public relations person--to emphasize characteristics and accomplishments they are most pleased about". (Bolig, 1984, p.592) For example,

The average female profiler is 35 years old, 5' 2 1/4" tall and weighs 117 pounds. She tends to emphasize personality traits, education, and career over physical characteristics and degree of physical attractiveness. She describes herself as intelligent, honest and sensitive, open-minded, and with a sense of humor. Her interests are primarily passive, but ones that can be enjoyed with others, music, movies, dining out, reading, travel and conversation. She also enjoys walks. She is seeking relationships with men who are her own age or older and who are sincere, intelligent, sensitive, honest and able to genuinely accept and respect her competence, and who share her interests.

The average male profiler is 31 years old, 5' 10 1/4" tall, 173 pounds. He tends to emphasize his own physical attractiveness, and activities and interests over career and education. He describes himself as honest, intelligent, affectionate, easy-going, and sensitive. He enjoys music, movies, sports, dancing and dining out. He is seeking relationships with attractive women his own age or younger who are honest, affectionate, intelligent, caring, and have a sense of humor, and who share his interests. (p.591)

Bolig concludes "that the men who placed profiles in this magazine. . . were not looking for the women who placed profiles (nor were the women looking for these men)" (p.592). Since these written self-descriptions are the only means for social contact, they provide excellent opportunity to manipulate self-presentation by enhancing positive attributes to accord with the assumed values of other singles.

Similar results are reported in Steinfirt and Moran's (1989) study of self-presentation in personal ads. Their examination of ads in *The New York Review of Books* revealed that women gave more physical descriptions than men (they note this does not follow other studies) and confirmed other findings "that men seek physical characteristics in women" (p.138). Male advertisers also offered financial security, asked for photographs, and surprisingly enough 5% asked for a partner with children. Steinfirt and Moran speculate that this finding is related to the "current appeal of the nurturing male" (pp.137-138).

Both Bolig's and Steinfirt and Moran's studies deal with textual self-presentation. The people they studied represent their physical and mental attributes in writing. Knowing that these written self-presentations must attract attention, the presented selves are customized to reflect a specific definition of the situation (qualities they imagine their audience finds

desirable). Thus, in Steinfirst and Moran's study, the men re-created themselves textually as sensitive males who care for and desire children, an attribute assumed to characterize the women reading personal ads.

In some cases, such as those above, self-presentation involves attributing desirable attributes to a self that simply does not exist (although labelling such adoption "false" is difficult at best). If we take such claims to be rough manifestations of personal and cultural 'dreams', these claims can be seen as prescriptive guides for the claimer's behaviour. Individuals use the symbolic capability of language to re-create a social self possessing prized social symbols--in this case *desiring* children--and do so because claiming these attributes balances their 'appearance' with how they think they should appear.² Presented to an audience without prior experience of the individual, this recreation may be successful, even when desirable attributes are not overtly claimed but suggested because language "possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning" (Jung, 1964, p.3). The metamessage of desiring children signifies a desirable man both to others and also *to the man himself*. The social display of attributes is integral to, and validates, their possession as presentation re-creates the attributes as real in the social world.

² See Carl G. Jung (ed.) (1964) Man and His Symbols (New York:Dell Publishing) for his discussion of dream interpretation and the role of such interpretations. Dreams and self-presentation can be equated in Jung's construct. Dreams balance out the individual and lead to wholeness. "Because, in our civilized life, we have stripped so many ideas of their emotional energy, we do not really respond to them any more. We use such ideas in our speech, and we show a conventional reaction when others use them, but they do not make a very deep impression on us. Something more is needed to bring certain things home to us effectively enough to make us change our attitude and our behavior. That is what 'dream language' does; its symbolism has so much psychic energy that we are forced to pay attention to it" (p.33).

CMC participants are not unaware that the selves they correspond with may be different from the selves with whom they would actually drink beer. For example, I recently 'received' a message detailing "The Facemail Project".³

This is the work of a home beer-maker who found it

a real mind-bender to meet people from the digest [the Homebrew Digest] face-to-face. I was constantly reevaluating my mental images of peoples [sic] personalities. . . .At my booth I set up an S-VHS camera and passed that [sic] word that I would be videotaping any electronic brewer. I asked people to hold to 3-5 seconds of time, just enough to say their name and mug for the camera a little. I will be editing the tape into short clips and converting them into motion-video files. . . .I will then upload these files. . . .Then you'll be able to download the file and actually see (and on some systems hear) what various electronic [sic] brewers look like

A similar project has been proposed by a user of the Interpersonal Computer and Technology List. Called "Portraits", the user invites others to write to him describing what they think he looks like. To further their efforts and increase their trust, he offers to send his resume to anyone requesting it. Publications such as Whole Earth Review have discussed the existence of "virtual communities" and the difference between online and physical self. For example, the result of one online WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link) conference was that:

Grateful Dead lyricist John Perry Barlow met and befriended a couple of hackers who went by the cyber-punkish noms-de-hack "Acid Phreak" and "Phiber Optik." Although they "knew" each other electronically, Barlow's face-to-face meeting with Acid and Optik was a revelation: "Acid and Optik, as material beings, were well-scrubbed and fashionably clad," Barlow later wrote. "They looked to be as dangerous as ducks." (Godwin, 1991, pp.40-41)

³ I qualify 'received' in the previous sentence because I was sent the message whether I liked it or not. Received thus differs from the meaning implied by "ask and you shall receive". The message is dated August 2, 1993 08:41:58 -0700 (PDT)

The computer pop-culture magazine *Wired* enthusiastically describes the possibilities for a Cyberpunk lifestyle provided by these differences.

Likewise, the magazine *Online Access* describes the legal and fun world of online sex.

In the examples cited thus far, the self grounded in the physical body has been replaced with a purely social self, a persona created and interpreted through text. The selves created for personal ads in Bolig and Steinfirst's (1989) and Moran's (1984) studies are checked in their creative freedom by the need to have some correspondence between their physical and textual selves in case of a physical meeting. Yet did Acid Phreak and Phiber Optik ever anticipate meeting John Perry Barlow? Or did those homebrewers ever think that the way they type could create a textual doppelganger? This is the unique feature of social CMC and especially BBS CMC. Unlike many other media, it is not used to facilitate physical meetings, it is an end in itself. BBS users can and do communicate only in the social world they share online.

Chapter Two

Social Cues in Computer-Mediated Communication

The selves created in computer-mediated communication (CMC) live in a most peculiar context. Individuals communicate using keyboards at a computer screen, in offices, living rooms, schools, or on airplanes. They discuss work, ask questions, provide answers, give instructions, or contact friends. And often this occurs between people who call each other "acquaintances" or even "friends" but have never physically touched, shook hands, or talked on the telephone. However, by calling themselves "friends", these people recognize that they have touched each other. They have exchanged messages describing their opinions and feelings, even in conversations about impersonal and task-oriented topics such as work. Over the course of this exchange, textual personae or selves have been created by which these individuals "know" each other.

However, most CMC research has not identified the presence and creation of textual selves. Instead, CMC researchers have examined how the structural attributes of computers "filter out" non-verbal cues. This research was undertaken to explain the observed behaviour of CMC participants. In some instances, such as workgroups or questionnaires, CMC participants have been reported to be more "honest" than in face-to-face conversation.¹ In other

¹ The conclusion of greater "honesty" is based on observations that CMC participants self-disclose more willingly and to a greater depth than face-to-face respondents answering questionnaires on socially incriminating topics. However, I believe that respondents recognize that they are more anonymous with the computer than with a human interviewer and as a consequence are more self-reflective. Human interviewers provide a perception of being perceived and judged which is absent in CMC. Honesty is therefore not an "effect" of the computer, but an effect of people's relationship with each other contrasted with their

situations, participants are extremely offensive or hostile. Researchers attributed this behaviour to social deindividuation, creating what I have called a "deindividuation thesis" for CMC. This thesis states that participants in computer communication are anonymous because the computer mediates communication completely. It states that social cues do not exist in CMC because non-verbal channels which convey vocal tone, breathing pauses, gestures, proximity, race, age, sex or colour and contact don't exist. CMC participants feel like they are not communicating with real people and begin to feel anonymous. Anonymity shelters participants from social norms regulating politeness or decorum allowing individuals to say things they would not normally dare and engage in "antisocial" behaviour. The deindividuation thesis suggests that a complete lack of social cues makes it impossible to communicate a sense of personality or self in CMC.²

A more recent line of inquiry explores the same behaviour, but rather than attributing it to deindividuation, finds that CMC intensifies users' awareness of their personal beliefs and feelings. This perspective I have called the "self-awareness" thesis, as it locates the cause of anti-social CMC behaviour in the participants' own selves. Defining deindividuation as "a loss of private self-awareness in that internal standards for behaviour are lost", Matheson and

relationship with a computer. The absence of a human relation is stronger than the presence of a computer.

² Walther (1992) breaks studies of CMC into those focussing on the lack of social presence, lack of social context cues, and degree of media richness. Social presence theory focuses on participants feeling that along with others, they are involved in communication. It characterizes a medium by the number of channels or codes available and states that fewer channels/codes are associated with a lessened feeling that others are involved in communication. Social context cues are physical or nonverbal cues defining the social situation and actors' relationships. Media richness classifies media according to the number of channels available, calling face-to-face the most "rich" based on "immediate feedback, the number of cues and channels utilized, nonverbal (facial and oral) backchanneling cues, and personalization and language variety" (pp.56-57). However, I think it safe to classify all these as variations of the classic deindividuation approach.

Zanna (1990) find that CMC "involves a state of high private self-awareness rather than deindividuation" (p.2, p.7). Rather than finding the structure of CMC to blame for participants' behaviour, this thesis attributes the behaviour to the increased awareness of personal beliefs and attitudes. Thus, statements that contradict personal beliefs are more likely to receive hostile responses in CMC than in face-to-face because CMC participants are more aware of their own beliefs. This position leads the self-awareness thesis to contradict the arguments of deindividuation researchers and state that social cues "may play a role" in CMC (Matheson, 1991, p.144). Because enhanced private self-awareness involves close contact with personal beliefs, information in messages can stimulate these beliefs. Participants respond to these stimuli as attributes of the other, although this does not necessarily follow. The self-awareness thesis differs from the deindividuation thesis as it suggests that participants in CMC do take on the characteristics of identifiable selves.

Generally, however, CMC researchers have been of the opinion that social cues do not exist in CMC. This conclusion may be attributed to the contexts CMC research has examined. Supporters of the deindividuation thesis have preferred to analyze experimental, task-oriented instances of CMC such as computer conferencing or business and educational systems. Even Matheson and Zanna's (1990) work on the private self-awareness thesis was conducted in such a context. In contrast, few authors have examined the social use of CMC. In social usage, freedom from institutional goals allows participants to manipulate the "contextual characteristics" of deindividuation and create textual selves, as Myers (1987) suggests. Participants in goal-directed systems, while not having the formal freedom to indulge their selves, cause a

breakdown in processes aimed at achieving institutional goals when they respond to individuating social cues. But curiously, the presence of social cues has previously been suggested. Two groups of researchers working within the deindividuation thesis have indicated evidence of "socioemotional content" or that "A great deal about personality and degree of literacy and intelligence are also conveyed by language chosen" (Rice & Love, 1987; Hiltz & Turoff, 1978, p.88). This direction, however, has seldom been explored fully. For this reason, analyses of the social uses of, and social presence in, CMC are not well represented in the literature.

Regardless of this research deficiency, the deindividuation and self-awareness theses have led to useful analyses of CMC. The deindividuation thesis has explored the structural effects of the computer as medium. It has traced the reasons for the behaviour of CMC participants to the "effect" of CMC as a medium. For its part, the self-awareness thesis shifts the focus of research to the people themselves, examining the "effect" of the medium in terms of participants' cognitive states. The following section describes the achievements and developments of these trends in CMC research as related to the presence of social cues and the creation of textual selves. However, as I argue at the end of this chapter, a third locus of attention is needed: the role of the communicative behaviour of the social group in creating textual selves as a process of individuation. Deindividuation has explored the structural effects of the medium; self-awareness explores the individual 'psychological' effects. These approaches can be usefully combined to explain the relation between the physical characteristics of the computer as a communication medium and the behaviours observed, and to suggest a mechanism through which individual characteristics are highlighted. CMC

behaviour may be best explained by examining for the purposes for which the medium is used and the role of individuation or creation of self in fulfilling these objectives.

Deindividuation in Computer-Mediated Communication

The deindividuation thesis roots its analysis of antisocial behaviour exhibited in CMC in the attributes of the medium and the ensuing structure of messages. All computer messages contain at least two parts, a message header and a message body. The header shows the recipient's name and computer address, message subject, time and date of message creation and often some computer-generated address information. The message body is always typed with lines a fixed length, a fixed number of characters on each line and a fixed number of lines on a page. And although some characters can be combined, for example, a colon, dash and bracket to create a sideways "smiley face" :-), the range of expression is limited by the realm of alphanumeric choices. Thus, researchers explaining CMC behaviour as deindividuated see the limited range of characters removing conventional non-verbal expression, making participants anonymous. For example, Hiltz and Turoff (1978) describe deficits in CMC of latent language content, lack of vocalizations, visual information, facial expression, eye contact, body movement and psychophysiological responses (Hiltz & Turoff, p.78-80).

These conclusions are unquestionable. However, they define anonymity as the lack of a 'set' of conventional non-verbal cues--only visual or aural--and do not account for participants' inventiveness in using symbols or words. Often a signature component is included at the end of a message. This contains the

person's name or pseudonym, often a network address, other addresses or a favorite saying or slogan. This information is secondary to the content of the message but provides additional information about the sender. And although a message cannot be signed with a pen and the style of the signature is limited by the characters available on the keyboard, here too characters can be combined, as when ^\^ forms the letter "M", allowing ^\^ichelle to sign her name in a more elaborate manner. This choice indicates something about Michelle and her perception of the way she is being "seen" by an intended audience.

CMC researchers explain social behaviour in this anonymous medium by borrowing the concept of deindividuation from Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb's 1952 study on the behaviour of crowds. According to Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb, deindividuation is a mental change occurring when individuals stop seeing others as individuals and begin to feel they themselves cannot be singled out. "This 'deindividuation' results in a reduction of normal inner restraints and enables group members to engage in behavior that they would not ordinarily display" (Jessup & Connolly, 1990, p.338). Thus, because CMC lacks non-verbal channels, it is deindividuating. Jessup and Connolly (1990) trace a history of studies contributing to the deindividuation thesis such as Latane's (1981) social impact theory and Milgram's (1965) obedience to authority study which "provide evidence that the lack of close social contact can lead to deindividuation" (Jessup & Connolly, p.338). Jessup and Connolly (1990) also review related studies on social loafing (Kerr & Bruun, 1981; Williams, Harkins & Latane, 1981) and cognitive loafing (Weldon & Mustari in press) to support the contention that

anonymity reduces physical or cognitive effort, thus making anonymous individuals less likely to expend the effort of following social norms (p.339).

Transferred to CMC, the concept of deindividuation is used to explain the consequences of what is already assumed to be an anonymous environment. But once a lack of conventional non-verbal cues is accepted then it must follow that participants must be anonymous and deindividuated because anonymous people cannot feel individuated. The premises have contained the conclusion.

Hiltz and Turoff (1978) provide an example of CMC behaviour in which a participant:

chews gum, blows bubble, while reading intently. Laughs at receipt of one message. Pops a bubble. Leans over and re-reads items just received. Types a reply; touch types but checks accuracy every few letters. Checks watch. Chews gum while reading messages as they print out. Goes back and re-reads one just received. Shakes head, no; again, shakes no. Then deletes scratchpad; pauses and looks back. Then moves chair in; sighs slightly; begins typing. (Hiltz and Turoff, p.94)

Here, the anonymous participant acts in ways unacceptable in face-to-face group discussion. The participant does not feel bound by group norms and obviously feels immune to observation. What "would be deviance in other group communications contexts is not communicated and not perceived as such" (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978, p.94). This example illustrates that one kind of anonymous behaviour--gum chewing, bubble-blowing--cannot be substituted for another--breaking norms of social conduct. In the face-to-face social world such behaviour might be deviant, but in the social world of CMC physical

actions are irrelevant. In CMC, the only relevant behaviour is contained in online texts.

In reviewing the literature around CMC, Kiesler, Siegel and McGuire (1984) hypothesize that "social standards will be less important. . .because. . .[of] the lack of social feedback and the absence of norms governing the social interaction" (p.1126). They support this hypothesis with a controlled study revealing that a CMC group takes longer to reach consensus than face-to-face groups, displays higher rates of choice-shift (changing opinions), is more uninhibited, swears more and reveals more hostility (Kiesler et al., 1984). They conclude that the best explanation for this display of antisocial, uninhibited behaviour is "that depersonalization from lack of nonverbal involvement and absence of norms" made CMC participants "more responsive to immediate textual cues, more impulsive and assertive and less bound by precedents set by societal norms of how groups should come to consensus" (Kiesler et al., 1984, p.1130).

This is an important conclusion. If CMC participants see typed language as not only the concrete form of "what you said", but also as "everything you really meant to say", then CMC messages become texts, literal translations of speech that can be studied and interpreted. While the ambiguities of language use in face-to-face contexts are modified by non-verbal cues such as facial expression, gestures, etc., this kind of non-verbal supplementation does not exist in CMC. Participants are forced to derive all meaning from the text. However, this is not evidence of either depersonalization or a lack of nonverbal involvement. Rather, it suggests that people are personalized and glean nonverbal information *through* message texts. But Sproull and Kiesler

(1991) also reflect the assumption that CMC lacks nonverbal cues and, noting that CMC conveys meaning only through plain text, describe messages as "ephemeral". Messages constantly "appearing on and disappearing from a screen without any necessary tangible artifacts. . . . make it easy for a sender to forget or ignore his or her audience" (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991, p.40). This is also a feature of speech, although participants in spoken conversation have the benefit of a physical presence and non-verbal cues to elaborate communication and focus attention. In this usage, ephemerality seems to be another way of conceptualizing the assumed lack of nonverbal information.

Bellman (1989) and Feenberg (1992) also reference ephemerality, but in context of Marc Guillaume's (1988) concept of "spectrality". According to Guillaume, the CMC participant is freed from the symbolic, non-verbal restraints of face-to-face communication. However, by escaping at her/his own convenience through the computer, the CMC user "becomes a spectre. . . [fading]. . . away in order to wander freely like a phantom in a symbolic order which has become transparent" (Feenberg, 1992, p.23). In contrast to Sproull and Kiesler's description of ephemerality, Guillaume characterizes the CMC *participant*, rather than the message, as a spectre. This is a more accurate analysis as it emphasizes the withdrawal of the physical body from communication. Although the physical person still exists, the computer frees the self from most of the non-verbal strictures identifying and fixing the self in a specific body (or allowing it to be perceived as identifiable) in face-to-face communication. Guillaume's emphasis makes the physical person a shadowy figure behind the messages instead of messages which themselves are shadowy. Schutz and Luckmann (1973) point out that the more anonymous

the person, the more "objectivated" they become (Bellman, 1989).³ But anonymity and objectivation are not features just of CMC. Schutz and Luckmann note that people deal with different levels of anonymity on a daily basis in the face-to-face world, knowing and moving around people they recognize, know more or less well or don't recognize at all. Bureaucrats, for example, become more anonymous and more sheltered from the public to whom they are supposed to respond, the higher they move in the organization. They become shadowy figures behind memos and messages.

However, the argument that anonymity objectifies individuals is an important part of the deindividuation thesis. Shamp (1991) also studied CMC participants as objectified selves. He states: "when messages containing little or no explicit personal information are received. . . perceptions of the. . . communication partner are based on the perception of the computer and are computer-like" (p.150). Shamp terms this finding "Mechanomorphism", or "the similarity between an individual's assessment of the computer communication partner and his or her assessment of the computer" (p.154). His finding parallels the link between the lack of non-verbal channels and anonymity. When intimate information which could distinguish an individual from the general group of CMC participants is not communicated, the individual remains anonymous, their messages are treated as objects or texts and the individual is seen as an extension of the computer. Kiesler, Siegel and McGuire (1984) suggest a similar effect, stating that "it almost seems as though the computer itself is the audience" (p.1125). In the reality created by the message, "the setting, scene and

³ Although Bellman (1989) describes messages and people as "objectivated", I have chosen to use the term "objectified". However, I have retained Bellman's usage in her quotations. These terms should be seen as synonymous.

situation of participation are neutralized by the anonymity of the medium", making CMC messages highly objectivated texts (Bellman, 1989, p.3).

Once messages become objectified, people "focus their attention more on the words than on each other" and "feel a greater sense of anonymity and detect less individuality in others" (Sproull & Kiesler 1991, p.40). And, "[w]ithout reminders of an audience, people become less constrained by conventional norms and rules for behavior" (Sproull & Kiesler 1991, p.40). These findings echo statements made previously about the lack of non-verbal cues and anonymity. Messages become objectified because they are the only means of communication and their authors are objectified because there is no non-verbal information individuating them. Therefore the authors are anonymous and great attention is paid to the message text. CMC messages seem to display "less social awareness" (Sproull & Kiesler 1991, p.38). CMC participants ignore social norms, and in this non-face-to-face context, become cognitively detached from society as a whole. Because participants concentrate on texts, deriving all meaning and enacting all interaction through texts, and because messages are separated from context, CMC separates individuals from society's normative framework, as suggested by Hiltz and Turoff, Jessup and Connolly, Latane and Milgram. However, if we agree that messages are texts individuating people, the separation between self and message suggested above is not useful. Given the lack of non-textual nonverbal communication, messages become the only medium of self-creation. The message *becomes* the self.

More dramatic than behaviour simply ignoring social and behavioural norms, *Flaming* is often cited as a result of deindividuation. Flaming is defined as

speaking "incessantly and/or rabidly on some relatively uninteresting subject or with a patently ridiculous attitude. . .Synonym: Rave" (Steele, 1983, p.65). The term "flaming" also appears in general CMC conversation describing any personally directed intense and sustained repudiation of a particular idea or suggestion.⁴ Like other forms of deindividuation, flaming results from a "low level of social information" and a loss of fear of "social approbation" (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991, p.49). Because the structures of the computer mediate human communication heavily, participants become anonymous. Reduced social awareness, a textual concentration and a reduction in the perceived need to follow social norms allows people to more forcefully state their own opinions. Shamp (1991) states that his finding of Mechamorphism in the nonpersonal content of messages could explain flaming in impersonal contexts as it is appropriate to impersonal relations but not interpersonal (p.150).

According to Bellman (1989), the main reason for a lack of social awareness is that participants do not share a social "key" or definition of CMC social reality.

Members have expectations and make assumptions about the normative rules for participating. . .based on the definition of social reality they have for it. The definition provides the auspices for interaction and is a significant constitutive feature in the otherwise highly objectivated meaning context for the online discussion. (p.3)

When CMC participants do not share a common concept of the purpose or goal of communication, they cannot properly interpret and create messages. Group goals become unattainable since the group lacks "the social structure

⁴ Philosophers call this "ad hominem".

provided by. . .[shared]. . .roles, norms, and status and reinforced by trust and personal engagement with others" (Siegel, Kiesler, McGuire, 1984, p.1127).

Riel and Levin's (1990) study of academic networks further reinforces the conclusion that a shared social definition is essential. They list six conditions for the success of a CMC system,

- 1) does the group already exist?
 - 2) does the group have a need for telecommunications?
 - 3) is there a shared goal or task with a specified outcome?
 - 4) will access to technology be easy and efficient?
 - 5) will all participants have regular patterns of mail access?
 - 6) is there a person who will facilitate group planning and work?
- (p.163)

Each of these items, particularly (3), (5) and (6), ask an evaluator whether the social context in which the CMC system exists has such a social definition.

Point (1), "does the group already exist" suggests that a pre-existing group is already structured by some social definition. This definition is related to the extent that a group has defined point (3), "a shared goal or task with a specified outcome". Point (5) implies that participants will have regular access patterns if this social definition can be created and finally, the "person who will facilitate group planning and work" ensures the group remains focussed around their goals and social definition.

The pre-existing social system discussed by Riel and Levin (1990) is necessary to CMC, especially if deindividuated behaviour is considered in context of the socializing/individuating role of language. Mead (1934) states that through language, society grants membership in the group and status as an individual in the collective (c.f. Chapter 4) As a method of socialization, language gives social roles, norms and methods of behaving in public. It also provides a way

to use these tools to individuate oneself. Deindividuated behaviour seems to involve a problem in individuating.

Deliberate Deindividuation

Many applications of computer-mediated communication are based upon the deliberate use of deindividuation. Following the thesis that CMC creates an anonymous user by eliminating "the social structure provided by the roles, norms, and status. . .reinforced by trust and personal engagement with others", CMC applications are used to allow people to voice their opinions freely (Kiesler et al., 1984, p.1127).⁵ Group Decision Support Software (GDSS) deliberately uses anonymity to remove social status cues in business decision-making and force participants to concentrate on the text of messages. Thus, "[i]t is assumed that the anonymity, and--in some configurations--reduced proximity offered by. . .[GDSS]. . .will depersonalize the group members and promote a free-flowing exchange of ideas and opinions" (Jessup & Connolly, 1990, p.336). GDSS software, therefore, is based upon the belief that CMC participants objectify texts, seeing them as objects rather than the textual embodiment of individuals.

Deindividuation, or its perceived cause, anonymity, is therefore deliberately designed into GDS software to remove the effects of social status and take advantage of the increased concentration on texts:

⁵ However, despite its levelling effect, Bellman (1989) found that unless anonymity is the group norm, it is seen as secrecy, "rather than a method for maintaining privacy", and is therefore not legitimate (p.5). Under some circumstances, anonymity is seen as a mask protecting the individual from being responsible for the consequences of their statements.

GDSS interaction can be anonymous, so that a group of executive planners could begin their strategic planning by generating and evaluating ideas each knowing that he or she will not be ridiculed for contributing what others might feel is a silly idea. Further, when evaluating other group members' ideas, the executive can do so freely, without deference to a powerful player's bad idea. In principle, the merit of others' ideas can be judged solely on the inherent worth of the ideas, not on the reputation or rank of their proposers. (Jessup and Connolly, 1990, p.335)

Hiltz and Turoff (1978) state that CMC allows individuals to "express disagreements or suggest potentially unpopular ideas. . . .statements may. . .[also]. . .be considered on their merit" (p.27). They also suggest that physical isolation allows individuals "more reflection and/or introspection" and cite instances where anonymity has allowed individuals to discuss "personal inadequacies, deviant preferences, past love affairs, and serious personal problems" (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978, p.28). Bellman (1989) also cites a CMC message filed by Turoff in which he "suggests that anonymity is useful for general 'brainstorming' sessions, role playing techniques for conflict resolution" (p.6). Sproull and Kiesler (1991), describe their study on illegal drug use. When administered on paper, 3% of subjects admitted to using illegal drugs once a week, but when administered on computer, 14% of subjects admitted to using drugs once a week. Sproull and Kiesler (1991) attribute this jump to the fact that "[c]omputer interviews, like electronic mail, create a feeling of privacy. This sense of safety makes interviewees somewhat more willing to disclose information" than in a face-to-face or paper survey (p.45).

Coincident to deindividuation, experiments such as these reveal an "increase" in honesty when computers are used instead of face-to-face communication. Sproull and Kiesler (1991) state that CMC participants "ignore their social

situation and cease to worry about how others evaluate them. Hence, they devote less time and effort to posturing and social niceties, and they may be more honest" (p.120). The anonymity of CMC also helps equalize CMC participants' social status, according to Edinger and Patterson (1983), "because so much hierarchical dominance and power information is hidden" (Kiesler et al., 1984, p.1126). Thus, "physical appearance, accent and other speech characteristics, ethnicity and gender" are irrelevant to online communication (Bellman, 1989, p.3). The physical and social distance CMC creates accounts for Hiltz's (1986) report that CMC is immensely popular with women, the handicapped and members of minority groups (Bellman, 1989, p.3). Likewise, Kiesler et al., (1984) state that computer communication software reinforces CMC's social levelling influence as it "is blind with respect to the vertical hierarchy in social relationships and organizations" (p.1125). Hiltz and Turoff (1978) further point out that messages tend "to be somewhat better organized and more fully thought out than comparable statements recorded from a face-to-face conversation" (p.82). For this reason, CMC messages allow participants to present meaning "as fully and succinctly as possible" (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978, p.83).

The deindividuation thesis links the behaviour of CMC participants with attributes of the medium. It states that the medium detaches an individual physically from a group thereby reducing the influence of social norms regulating speech and behaviour in groups. Norms are reduced because participants are socially anonymous and nonverbal channels do not exist through which social cues can enforce norms and provide information clarifying messages. The lack of nonverbal communication accompanying the strictly alphanumeric messages leads to the assumption that texts are

interpreted at face value and given more credence and attention than are face-to-face verbal statements. The result is that CMC participants are anonymous and see each other as objectified and somewhat 'spectral' beings. CMC participants engage in deindividuated behaviour because anonymity reduces the power of inner restraints. Under different circumstances, these same conditions are said to lead to either deindividuated behaviour or increased honesty.

Undeniably, gum chewing, bubble-blowing, and flaming do not often occur in face-to-face work groups, but this behaviour really seems to reveal that norms are not important when the norm-breaker is physically isolated. In social CMC, where task or work-groups don't exist and the computer communication is not affected by corporate organizational hierarchy, norm violation cannot result in physical censure or firing. And if one of the medium's effects is the levelling of vertical social hierarchies, then the physical protection the medium offers must be expected to result in greater honesty.

Self-Awareness in Computer-Mediated Communication

Matheson and Zanna (1990) explain CMC behaviour as the result of increased awareness of private positions, beliefs and stereotypes. Building on the deindividuation thesis' position that anonymity and physical isolation allow greater "introspection" (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978) or "privacy" (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991) and Franzoi, Davis, and Young's (1985) connection between high self-disclosure and high private self-awareness, Matheson and Zanna suggest that CMC participants are able to freely discuss their beliefs (and other personal

subjects) with strangers because the communication environment of CMC encourages introspection. Other research cited by Matheson and Zanna (Scheier, 1976; Scheier & Carver, 1977; Scheier, Carver & Gibsons, 1979) also suggests that high private self-aware individuals are more aware of affective states.

Matheson and Zanna's explanation, which I have labelled the "self-awareness thesis", suggests that CMC behaviours such as flaming, high self-disclosure, greater honesty and decision-shift, result from a higher awareness of private, personal beliefs, needs, and desires. To explain this behaviour, they sharpen Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb's definition of deindividuation. Originally defined as "a reduction of normal inner restraints. . .[that]. . .enables group members to engage in behavior that they would not ordinarily display", Matheson and Zanna define it as "a loss of private self-awareness in that internal standards for behavior are lost" and suggest that CMC "involves a state of high private self-awareness rather than deindividuation" (Jessup & Connolly 1990, p.338; Matheson & Zanna, 1990, p.2;p.7).

Private self awareness is defined as awareness of "internal needs and standards" that "is enhanced in situations that induce introspection, or self-evaluation in a nonsocial sense (e.g., when striving to reach personal goals)" (Matheson & Zanna, 1990, p.2). Behaviour reflecting private self-awareness is likely to reveal one's covert aspects, private feelings, values, beliefs and the like. By contrast, public self-awareness is awareness of aspects of the self such as physical attributes or behaviour that are open to public scrutiny and evaluation. "This aspect of self is derived from viewing one's self from the perspective of others and is expressed by motives involving self-presentation

and social comparison" (Matheson & Zanna, 1990, p.2). This definition of private and public self-awareness, reveals a dualistic understanding of human nature. The private self is portrayed as being hidden by a presented public self, the presentation of which is motivated by social comparison and, one assumes, social censure.

Matheson and Zanna (1990) argue that "the use of computer-mediated communication involves a state of high private self-awareness rather than deindividuation" (p.7). They find that instead of detaching participants from group norms, CMC focuses their attention on personal beliefs and feelings. Flaming, decision-shift and increased honesty reflect the effect of increased internal attention rather than decreased external norms. Rather than the computer's environment facilitating aberrant behaviour, Matheson and Zanna suggest that behaviour characterizing CMC results from participants' awareness of their internal states. That CMC messages reflect internal beliefs is suggested by content analyses showing that 51.7% of all of undergraduate messages concern "intimate" matters and private thoughts or emotions (McCormick & McCormick, 1992, p.388). Rice and Love (1987) have also found that active CMC participants sent more socioemotional expressions than casual users. CMC may be particularly suitable for expressing personal opinion, feeling and belief because it intensifies participants' focus on internal states, overcoming the power of norms enforced by public scrutiny.

Enhanced private self-awareness also intensifies awareness of others' social attributes reflected in their messages. Matheson (1991) states that CMC participants find social cues in messages through the triggering of internal

stereotypes by heightened self-awareness. Her studies reveal that CMC users are sensitive to "social cues that facilitate access to an interpretational framework" although these social cues do not necessarily reflect others' actual characteristics (Matheson, 1991, p.144). For this reason, Matheson (1991) suggests that "social cues may well play a role in computer-mediated communication" (p.144). Thus, someone reading a message understands it in context of their personal beliefs and stereotypes. Their interpretation of the other creates an impression of the other's individuality. The messages they send, therefore, will reflect this impression, in turn creating an impression of their own self. Matheson (1991) conducted a study in which she primed female subjects with the information that their partner in a negotiation game was female. Their responses to received messages accorded with the stereotype of females as more fair and cooperative "but not as less competent or strong" (p.143). Having triggered their internal gender stereotypes with only the knowledge of their partner's sex led subjects to compose messages reflecting their understanding of their partner.

Thus, information about a CMC partner "invokes stereotypes regarding gender appropriate behaviour which in turn, influences expectations and perceptions of the other communicator" (Matheson, 1991, p.144). This conclusion confirms the findings in Matheson and Zanna (1990). Although anonymity or the use of pseudonyms reduces access to these cues, thereby "reducing the priming of stereotypes", social cues "conveyed via language and other behaviors" are not stripped out of communication, as stated by the deindividuation thesis (Matheson, 1991, p.144).

Matheson's conclusions are significant in showing that individual attributes exist in CMC. By separating participants from social context, assuring anonymity and focussing on texts, CMC allows participants to abandon some social norms regulating decision-making and argumentation found in face-to-face communication. Given security from social repercussions, CMC participants state opinions they might otherwise keep to themselves. Furthermore, far from completely stripping all non-verbal cues from communication, CMC messages contain sufficient social cues that participants' behaviour is influenced by the stereotypes such cues invoke.

An internal focus in CMC participants is also evident in Myers' (1987) study of social communication on a Bulletin Board System (BBS). Myers found that people use BBSs to "create a unique and personally meaningful identity" (p.262). Such a task must involve a focus on personal desires, feelings and attitudes. Participants create their own persona using aliases and online behaviour to express attributes they feel express aspects of their own individuality. Although each alias "is selected to express individual traits ("The Rook" - an avid chess player; "Andromeda X." - a feminist; "Bogey Man" - a night-duty security officer), the online "self" gains online meaning only through relationships with other" (Myers, 1987, p.258). Personae are formed not only by the choice of alias or pseudonym, but by individuating these personae (Myers, 1987). Myers also found that individuals approached CMC from one of two perspectives: the "physical/mechanical (the system) and the emotional/social (the community)" (p.262). Each perspective entails a specific view of CMC. The "System Expert" views the computer as a piece of hardware, a machine in which logical relationships allow off-line individuals to share information. By contrast, the "Social Expert" sees the computer as

software allowing a community to form and enact social relationships expressing the values of online personae (Myers, 1987). Such different beginning points represent different conceptualizations of CMC.

Unlike the Deindividuation thesis, therefore, the private self-awareness thesis states that social cues are present and used to individuate. In communication, a participant creates an alias which becomes the label to which a persona or self is attached, by negotiating the meanings of that self "through interaction with and approval of others" (Myers, 1987, p.258). By the messages sent, the self is defined as messages are the means through which others see and understand the self's behaviour. Because this social information is subject to interpretation, online information "may be distorted from its value within off-line environments" and online selves may differ from physical selves (Myers, 1987, p.264). But this is a key attraction, as participants in Myers' study engaged in BBS CMC because it gave them self control and self-understanding through the process of self-generation (Myers, 1987).

Thus, the private self-awareness thesis seeks to explain the behaviour seen in CMC by shifting the focus of research away from attributes of the machinery toward human psychology. Enhanced private self-awareness encourages participants to write messages reflecting their true and honest beliefs and positions. It also makes CMC participants more aware of others' social attributes encoded in the text of messages. This thesis is supported by research indicating that social CMC does indeed contain social cues which, although not necessarily attributes of the individuals, are used to create distinctive online personae.

Conclusion: Defining CMC as a Social Space

Matheson and Zanna's (1990) conclusion that CMC behaviour attributed to the deindividuating environment is actually due to increased private self-awareness does not mean the deindividuation thesis should be rejected. Instead, self-awareness appears to be the mechanism by which individuals become deindividuated. CMC allows participants to become more aware of their personal beliefs, values and opinions rather than those of the group by creating an anonymous, text-based environment. Instead of abandoning social norms, CMC participants to emphasize their own beliefs.

Here, we must define the concept of "beliefs expressed in messages". The idea that participants communicate "true beliefs" must be considered in the context of making statements in a public forum. Are these beliefs-I-should-reveal, beliefs-I-wish-to-be-seen-revealing or beliefs-I-actually-hold? Do participants reject lying, for example, because they think they should reject it although they may see occasion to lie, because they want to be seen rejecting it and display their membership in the group of non-liars, or because they believe it to be bad? Communication is affected by its social nature and content and presentation of ideas is tied to the perception of being perceived.

Slightly modifying the deindividuation thesis allows us to continue using it to explain and describe CMC behaviour. The deindividuation thesis should read therefore, that CMC participants react to a communication environment relying on typed messages whose meanings must be interpreted by voicing their own opinions, beliefs, and values with more conviction than in face-to-

face communication. Social norms regulating the appropriateness of behaviour and statements are put aside in favour of personal positions. CMC participants effectively deindividuate themselves while the neglected social norms still function internally to reference frameworks of meaning. Thus, even in a seemingly anonymous communication environment, messages contain sufficient social cues that CMC participants have a sense of the other participants' social characteristics (but these may differ from actual characteristics). Such a conclusion also agrees with results reported by Rice and Love (1987) and Hiltz and Turoff (1978).

These modifications accommodate CMC participants' desire, as discovered by Myers (1987), to experiment with the social mutability allowed by deindividuation. The attributes of deindividuation described by Kiesler et al., Sproull and Kiesler, Hiltz and Turoff are "exactly those characteristics which are manipulated by the social expert communication leader in building an online "family"" (Myers, 1987, p.264). Instead of being seen as deindividuating, these CMC attributes can instead be cast as "self-creation, an emphasis on personal discovery through introspection and group interaction, and a reliance on familial and/or dramatic relationships to build and enforce interpersonal relationships" (Myers, 1987, p.264).

These two approaches to CMC can thus be unified by treating one, the deindividuation thesis, as a subset of the other, the self-awareness thesis. However, in both these analyses, the context of communication, the computer, is reported as the "cause" of deindividuation or self-awareness. The deindividuation thesis argues that the "nature" of computers as a communication medium is anonymous (although some authors indicate that

this anonymity is not complete). Thus, users are disconnected from the group and social norms are not enforced. Likewise, the self-awareness thesis sees increased self-awareness as the result of the medium's anonymity. In this view, the medium intensifies the user's examination of personal beliefs, which prevail over group social norms. Both viewpoints describe CMC as asynchronous, place independent, time independent (Harasim, 1990) and see that these features prevail. Because of its physical structure, certain "effects" are argued to result. Due to this research focus, much CMC research sees "the reduction of nonverbal cues as the critical difference between CMC and face-to-face channels" (Walther, 1992, p.58).⁶

While we can assimilate the deindividuation thesis into the self-awareness thesis to provide a more comprehensive theory of CMC, such a move continues to stress the physical characteristics of the medium itself. The primary focus simply shifts from "computers causing participants to not follow group norms" to "computers causing participants to follow their own norms"--from the effect of the computer to the effect of cognitive state induced by the computer. Although there is no doubt that context shapes communication, these analyses ignore the context created by the communicators themselves--their messages.

In contrast to these research paradigms, CMC can be investigated as a transactional process of creating and defining social selves in a social space. This analysis makes communication itself the context for investigation,

⁶ Walther (1992) points out that the limited results of much CMC research can be attributed to methodology. He states that most studies are limited in time, usually examining communication around a set experimental problem. CMC research also does not use the nonverbal communication of control groups to measure the ratio of nonverbal to verbal socioemotional content.

rather than the equipment or method of communication and messages become significant behaviour situated in other messages or behaviours.

Walther's (1992) technique of social information is rather similar. He argues that when CMC is continued over time and enough messages are exchanged, users will adapt their messages to convey relational communication, allowing them to establish relationships similar to face-to-face. His project is based on three points: (1) the "axiomatic principle that humans are driven to interact with one another"; (2) that "communicators do attribute characteristics to others on the basis on verbal cues"; (3) people develop interpersonal epistemologies based on "distinctly individuating representations of one another's psychological makeup" (Walther, 1992, pp.68-71).

Other authors, even those supporting the deindividuation thesis, provide data supporting this new direction for CMC research. Bellman (1989) reports Hiltz's (1986) findings that CMC is immensely popular with women, the handicapped and members of minority groups (p.3). These groups obviously report satisfaction with context of CMC as it allows them to escape the context of interpersonal stereotypes. Such a levelling of social status and screening of cues allowing power divisions is often cited as one of the benefits of CMC. But anonymity allows participants to escape stereotypes or social status, and alter other aspects of the context such as their self-presentation. Messages can be composed to edit out mis-spellings, accents, or even the speech patterns characteristic of gender (cf. Deborah Tannen). Removing these items changes the nature of interpersonal contact. It allows one to appear as one wishes to appear, or believes one should appear. The entire nature of communication and interpersonal contact is thereby changed. A

transactional analysis of CMC must therefore deal with the uncertain connection between the physical and textual self.

Chapter Three

Erving Goffman's Everyday Life and the Presented Self

In this chapter, I describe self-presentation and its constituent concepts. I then discuss the use of Goffman's self-presentation made by Impression Management theorists, and finally Goffman's use of dramaturgy. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize Goffman's analysis of self-presentation before considering how his work compares with other works on the self and how it can be used to analyse self-presentation in computer mediated communication.

Analyzing the Presented Self

In The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), Erving Goffman is concerned with "the structure of social encounters--the structure of those entities in social life that come into being whenever persons enter one another's immediate physical presence" (p.254).¹ From this basis, Goffman analyzes three aspects of social relationships: Information, Situation and Actors. The interdependence of these aspects is revealed in Goffman's description of a social meeting: "Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him" (p.1). Interpersonal relations are characterized by attributes of the participants, the positions they present

¹ As this chapter concerns only Goffman's work, only page numbers will be cited in the text. All refer to Goffman's 1959 publication of The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York:Anchor Books).

verbally and non-verbally, and how the meaning of these attributes and positions are negotiated with the physical and social setting. Out of this transaction, participants understand who the other is, what the other's positions are, and the purpose or meaning of the meeting.² The result of such understanding is that individuals "know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response" (p.1). Here, Goffman's theoretical debt to Mead is apparent, not simply in the wording ("call forth") but in the analysis that communication is a cycle of responses resulting from gestures.³

Because Goffman's technique is somewhat metaphoric, his concepts are necessarily less precise and easy to apply directly to behaviour. He does not allow us to simply say X behaviour is Y concept because it is defined thus. His concepts are simply too 'loose' a fit to everyday behaviour. But this imprecision may actually allow us to be conceptually more accurate (if a little less accurate in terms of statistical categories) as human behaviour itself is not precise. This imprecision may also be useful as the eventual application of these concepts is not everyday, face-to-face interaction, but self-presentation on a computerized bulletin board.

² The Transactional view sees communication as an interdependent process in which self-definitions, responses to self-definitions of the other, responses to the definitions of self by the other and the social definition of the relationship is given meaning. This is referred to as "negotiation of selves" in which "persons construct and respond to definitions of themselves and definitions of the other persons communicating with them". (John Stewart (1988), Together: Communicating Interpersonally. 3rd ed. [New York:Random House] p.99) That Goffman agrees with this position can be seen in a description of "the definition of the situation" in which he states that "the definition of the situation projected by a particular participant is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate cooperation of more than one participant". (my emphasis) (1959. pp.77-78) The definition of the situation is also interdependent, created between people.

³ In a footnote extending over pages 3-4, Goffman cites arguments in unpublished papers by Tom Burns and Jay Haley that a basic, underlying theme to all interaction is "the desire of each...to guide and control the responses" of others. All communication therefore, reflects the interplay of differing desires and attempts to control outcomes. As a basic theme, this desire is not manipulative in the deliberately self-interested meaning of the term.

Goffman sees social interaction as *performers* presenting their various definitions of the situation in front of other performers, who in turn act as *audience*, in a specific context and arriving at a decision as to whose definition is accepted. In the process of negotiating this decision the character and meaning of the performers, audience and subsequent actions are created.

Although the terms performer and audience seem to designate an interactionist model of communication, Goffman uses 'performer' and 'audience' as convenient dramaturgical terms designating specific communicative behaviour in a given segment of a social transaction.⁴

Goffman suggests that all social action is a performance. If "we allow that the individual projects a definition. . . we must also see that the others, however passive their role may seem to be, will themselves effectively project a definition. . . by virtue of their response. . . and by virtue of any lines of action they may initiate" (p.9). Social action is based on a dramatic idiom. The idiom specifies broad roles, or "rights and duties attached to a given status", which are enacted as "'parts' or 'routines' which, when repeated to the same audience over several occasions, give rise to a social relationship" (p.16). Goffman states that a dramatic idiom must exist as to "*be* a given kind of person. . . is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance" associated with being that

⁴ An interactionist model portrays communication as a cycle of Sender, Message, Receiver, Feedback (to sender). This is basically a stimulus--response model and ignores the fact that the very nature of participants in communication and their communication is created in every situation. (see Stewart, 1988, pp.39-45)

"kind of person" (p.75). A performance, therefore, involves the performer in consciously and unconsciously referencing this idiom and enacting a part.

As Goffman divides communication into performer and audience, he also splits communication, stating that a performer attempts to create *expressions* while an audience gets *impressions*. An "individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally *expresses* himself, and the others in turn have to be *impressed* in some way" (p.2). Thus, Goffman's model acknowledges that communication is not as simple as Sender-Message-Receiver; there is a difference between what individuals say or do and what audiences perceive.

Expression and impression correspond to "two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expressions that he *gives*, and the expressions that he *gives off*" (p.2). These behaviours differ in that given information conveys conventionally understood symbolic information whereas given off information, while also symbolic, from the perspective of the performer is often unconsciously performed. Audiences, on the other hand, pay close attention to given off information, carefully examining their impressions for congruence with given information. Given off information is seen "as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way" (p.2). Goffman states that the attention paid to given/given off information demonstrates "a fundamental asymmetry. . .in the communication process, the individual presumably being aware of only one stream. . .the witnesses of this stream and one other" (p.7). Symmetry is restored as performers, aware of the benefits to their truth claims, attempt to manipulate their given off non-

verbal expressions.⁵ Performers and audiences therefore attend to different aspects of communication. Performers emphasize how things are said while audiences emphasize how things are done. This can be seen as the difference between verbal and non-verbal communication.

Expression and impression also form the performer's *front*. Goffman defines front as "the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unintentionally employed by the individual" in a performance which "regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation" for the audience (p.22). There are two aspects of front, *personal front* and *setting*. Setting is the furniture or props surrounding the performer and "tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting" must delay their performance until reaching that place (p.22). Personal front consists of "other items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer" such as clothing, hair colour or length, sex, age, race, height" (p.24). Although some items of personal front can be altered, they generally stay fixed.⁶

Like expressions, which the audience sees as given and given off, personal front is subject to a similar analysis. Personal front is revealed through *appearance*, cues "which function at the time to tell us of the performer's

⁵ Goffman notes that this balance between asymmetry and symmetry "sets the stage for a kind of information game--a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery". (8) In this analysis (although not overtly stated, as elsewhere) Goffman has been influenced by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern's The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior.

⁶ In Asylums, Goffman states that one's personal front is managed through an "identity kit" which is "cosmetic and clothing supplies, tools for applying, arranging, and repairing them, and an accessible secure place to store these supplies and tools". (Erving Goffman (1961). Asylums, [New York:Anchor Books] p.20) Loss of this kit prevents the individual from presenting the usual self-image to others.

social statuses. . .[and]. . .also tell us of the individual's temporary ritual state" and *manner*, cues "warn[ing] us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the oncoming situation" (p.24). The difference between appearance and manner reflects the adage that "you can dress them up, but you can't take them out". Clothing does not dictate behaviour. Similar also to the congruence expected between given/given off information, audiences expect a correlation between appearance, manner and setting. This correlation is based on the dramatic idiom which dictates, for example, that few people dressed and acting as motorcycle gang members will be found in the bank vice-president's office. Exceptions, therefore, receive close attention and, although Goffman does not state this, most likely greater attention is paid to the congruence between information given and given off.

Front also has abstract qualities in that several unique parts or routines can require that similar front aspects be displayed. Goffman states that this similarity can be seen in service sector occupations which require "dramatic expressions of cleanliness, modernity, competence, and integrity" (p.26). Cosmetic sales and dental assistants come to mind as examples. Goffman also points out that "a given social front tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise, and tends to take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks" in which it is seen (p.27). Thus a job, such as that of teacher, tends to demand a certain appearance, manner, setting and set of expressions.

Following the concept of front as a spatial metaphor, Goffman divides performances geographically by region. A *region* itself is defined as "any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception" (p.106).

Dividing performances by region allows audience segregation. The first region is the *front region* where the performance is given. The front region embodies two groups of performance standards. The first is manner, "the way in which the performer treats the audience" directly. Goffman refers to manner as "matters of *politeness*" (p.107). The second is appearance, "the way in which the performer comports himself while in visual or aural range of the audience" and concerns matters of *decorum*⁷ (p.107). Appearance is "ecologically" pervasive, in that a performer is subject to audience scrutiny throughout the entire front region. The second region is the *back region* where props and items of personal front are stored. It is in the back region that performers are free from audience scrutiny and "where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" (p.112). The third region is *outside*, a region neither front or back but completely outside the performance area. This region has significance as being an area from which performers tend to be insulated. That is, until outsiders become part of the audience in the front region, they do not see any aspect of the performance. The outside region is shut off from performance.

Thus far we have examined aspects and components of performances without examining the purpose of performances. A performance is intended to create or influence the *definition of the situation*. This definition is partially revealed through setting and personal front, information about an individual

⁷ Goffman states that both moral and instrumental requirements can be subsumed under decorum, on the grounds that the action effects of either moral or instrumental requirements are identical for performers. If moral requirements are ends in themselves referring to rules "regarding non-interference and non-molestation of others...sexual propriety...respect for sacred places" and instrumental requirements refer to "duties such as an employer might demand of his employees" then it makes no difference to the performance, which is sanctioned to maintain either of these requirements, "whether the standard is justified chiefly on instrumental grounds or moral ones" (pp.107-108).

which enables "others to know in advance" what will be expected of them and what they can expect from the individual (p.1). A situational definition is linked to individual and collective demands and requirements. For example, behaviour in a church can be radically different depending on whether a funeral or wedding is taking place. The participants' appearance and manner immediately reveal, also, whether the wedding is a somber affair or a joyous occasion. In situations such as this, each participant defines the situation, and thus acts in a way felt acceptable to the others present. Despite the fact that one may feel like shouting congratulations, this feeling may be suppressed by the realization that it is not 'that kind' of wedding. Individual desires are thus subject to "values to which everyone present feels obliged to give lip service" (p.9).⁸

Nonetheless, performances attempt to superimpose or meld individual definitions with those dictated by the context. The purpose of a performance is not to influence the behaviour of the other performers, but "the definition of the situation which the others come to formulate. . .[and]. . . lead them to act voluntarily in accordance" with the performer (p.4). In this endeavour, "[e]ach participant is allowed to establish the tentative official ruling regarding" vital personal matters which "are not immediately important to others. . . .In exchange for this courtesy, he remains silent or non-committal on matters important to others but not immediately" personally important (p.9). The official ruling results from negotiation over "whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored" (p.10). Status or power

⁸ This is a great example of Goffman's cynicism, and opinion that society is coercive. Could this simply be effective rhetorical strategy to make a point? We all are bound by social values and shouting at a formal occasion would not be welcome. The attribution of "lip service" adds particular emphasis to this reality of social behaviour.

thus have more influence over the definition than the 'rightness' or 'value' of any particular definition. The result is the *working consensus*. Adopting this initial definition, or working consensus, obligates individuals to specific lines of action. Following through on immediate action creates further obligations for later action. In this respect, all action is promissory. Individuals are thus committed to positions and must drop contradictory actions.

In committing to positions and specific actions, individual action is *moral*. Goffman identifies an inherent moral character in any situation, as "society is organized on the principle that any individual who possesses certain social characteristics has a moral right to expect that others will value and treat him in an appropriate way. Connected with this principle is a second, namely that an individual who implicitly or explicitly signifies that he has certain social characteristics ought in fact to be what he claims he is" (p.13). In putting forth a definition of a situation, therefore, an individual makes, and is bound by, moral obligations.

Morals are dramatically incorporated into performances through *idealization*.⁹ This is behaviour exemplifying "the officially accredited values of the society, more so" than does a performer's general behaviour (p.35). Because action is based upon roles, idealized behaviour is ceremonial, a "reaffirmation of the moral values of the community" though action which is less individuated and more stereotyped or ritualized (p.35). Idealized

⁹ Refer here to Goffman's *ideology of honest performers*, which describes the tendency to "see real performances as something not purposely put together at all, being the unintentional product of the individual's unselfconscious response to the facts in his situation." Contrived performances, "we tend to see as something painstakingly pasted together, one false item on another, since there is no reality to which the items of behavior could be a direct response" (p.70). This ideology comes into play in 'real' performances, as performers imply that 'I am not a liar'.

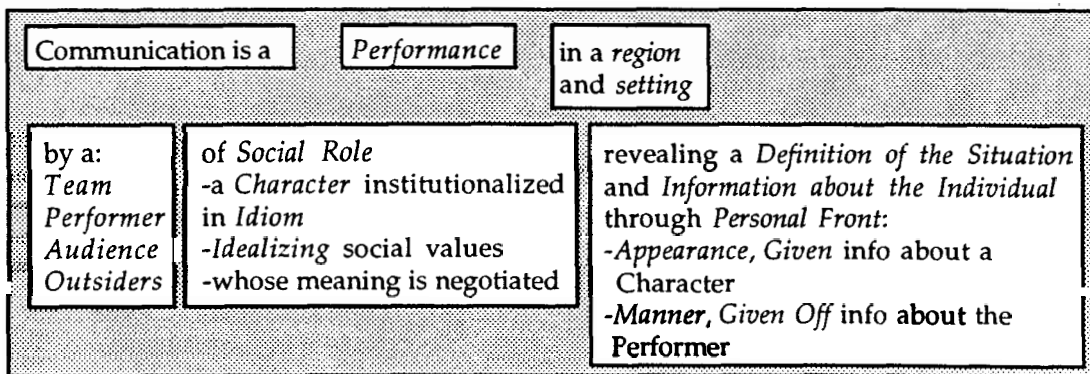
behaviour can involve a display of typical status symbols which are of a higher status; an idealized version of poverty can also be presented. For example, by deliberately maintaining a house or property in poor condition, a semblance of poverty is created and higher taxes avoided. Or, in sustaining a social definition of 'junk' as worthless, through behaviour and dress idealizing poverty and dirt, a junk dealer can conceal the true value and profits to be made from recycled goods. Goffman further suggests that idealization is at work in a performance, as by referencing the social idiom, performers create *character*. A character is "a figure, typically a fine one, whose spirit, strength, and other sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke" (p.252).

The final concepts to discuss, rounding out this survey of Goffman's analysis, are *team* and *team-mates*. Teams are integral to self-presentation, as a definition of a particular situation is not simply projected by an individual, but "is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate cooperation of more than one participant" (pp.77-78). Such cooperation exists because performances often express the characteristics of the task, rather than that of the performer. A medical office, for example, is a performance sustained by the cooperation of doctors, nurses and support staff, the performances of whom define a professional medical office. The performance of the doctors as busy medical professionals can be contradicted, in this regard, by support staff having little or nothing to do. Thus, teams create a collective impression even when individual performances are dissimilar. A *team-mate* is defined as "someone whose dramaturgical cooperation one is dependent upon in fostering a given definition of the situation" (p.83). Goffman points out that a team-mate does not have to be an

individual, citing bridge as a "game between two players, each of whom in some respects has two separate individuals to do the playing" (p.80).

In accordance with this definition, performers and audiences can be analyzed as team-mates.¹⁰ Proof of the audiences complicity in 'creating' a performance are the *protective practices* audiences employ. These are the actions that audiences or outsiders take to help performers maintain or save a performance. These actions are expressed by culturally specific and unclear terms such as "tact" or "discretion" or "etiquette". Thus, audiences do not force entry to back regions, or if necessary, signal their arrival by knocking, calling out, or coughing. This demonstration of protective practice can also signal a change in team lines, as an audience member moves from the audience-team to the performing-team by entering the backstage region, for example.

Goffman's analysis of self-presentation states that communication is a process in which individuals act in scenes to further their perceptions. These concepts can be organized as a process thusly:



¹⁰ The division between performer and audience is not necessarily strict. Performers can act one moment as performer and the next to audience (and are thus self-reflexively aware of the effect of performances). In terms of formal logic, a performer shares a domain with the audience.

This diagram shows that for Goffman, communication is process and behaviour. As behaviour, individuals use communication as a form of behaviour or physical resource to achieve specific ends. Communication is also described as a process, a means of linking individuals with performances and definitions of the social situation. In this analysis, individuals are the subjects of communication.¹¹ The diagram also suggests a method of organizing any information to be analyzed for self-presentation. A performance comprises individuals, performing a social role which reflects broader and locally negotiated meanings. The process of performance reveals information about the situation and individual (as the character being portrayed and performer doing it).

Goffman, Impression Management and the Amoral Performer

Goffman's work on self-presentation has often been interpreted as a theory of self-interested, manipulative, amoral and atomistic individuals with two selves, a social presented self and a private self. This viewpoint is reflected in Impression Management (IM) theories which often cite Goffman as their theoretical grounding. Such an interpretation ignores Goffman's intentions and his moral framework.¹² The dramaturgical approach, which has given

¹¹ These divisions are implicit in Goffman's analysis. In drawing these divisions, Goffman seems to follow Mead's reworking of Durkheim's analysis of the social system. Durkheim stated that members of a society, are both part of the social system and part of its environment. The problem with this view is that it gives primacy to "the social system". Mead altered this to read that in society, the individual is both subject and actor simultaneously. In this reworking the individual, rather than the social system is the subject.

¹² Seeing Goffman as presenting a manipulative theory also ignores what seems to be his intentions as expressed in the epigraph of the The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. The quotation from George Santayana points out that while "Masks are arrested expressions...of feeling....Living things in contact with the air must acquire a cuticle, and it is not urged

rise to these views of public life as deception and manipulation, is intended not as a method to expose society's falseness, but as "a final way of ordering facts" which could be also seen from political, structural, or cultural perspectives (p.240). Goffman acknowledges that "reality" is itself not open to perception and the only knowledge of it which we can have is through our socially formed perceptions (p.259). Thus, the dialectic underlying our social reality is the balance between standards and opinions by which acting is judged. Goffman's dramaturgical interpretation of social behaviour insists on morality because, "the very obligation and profitability of appearing always in a steady moral light, of being a socialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who is practiced in the ways of the stage" (p.251). Dramaturgical skills do not arise to avoid morals, they are used precisely because of morals. As socialized characters, we must act morally, therefore we learn how to act.¹³

That our skill at acting roles derives from the need to be or act moral is reinforced in Goffman's 1982 posthumous address to the American Sociological Association. In discussing the presence and action of lawbreakers (people acting immorally), he points out that these characters depend on the existence of morals and norms, even while carrying out immoral acts. The existence of moral actions, of normal appearances, speech

against cuticles that they are not hearts....Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation".

¹³ This analysis does not question the presence or origin of morals, but simply takes them for granted. And although many, if not most, of Goffman's examples of morality are middle-class, the principle of acting in accordance with the morality of the group holds firm. The approach of taking social reality as a firmly established 'reality' identifies Goffman's philosophy as pragmatism.

norms and gestures allows violators to take the guise of non-violators and escape a scene undetected (Goffman,1982, p.5).

I believe that self-presentation as defined by Goffman is quite distinct from that found in Impression Management theory. Rather I believe that Goffman's work compliments the Transactional view of communication mentioned earlier. As I have suggested, there are distinct parallels between these two positions. Both views see communication as a creative process, in which individuals and actions gain meaning. Self-presentation is part of defining the situation and the information people bring as their self-presentation (both verbal and non-verbal), is fundamentally part of the same process. Through self-presentation we negotiate who we are in relationship and the meanings at which we arrive dictate the definition of the situation.

Self-presentation is therefore not the deceptive process of hiding inner beliefs or desires with outer masks implied by Impression Management theories. For example, Witt (1991) states that "individuals do not always put forth global self-presentations but rather select those that seem most important in the situation" and cites an extensive list of supporting research, including Goffman (pp.213-214). Olsen and Johnson (1991) describe three types of self-presentation: (1) Consistents, who "reported presenting themselves to others no differently than they viewed their actual selves"; (2) Flexible-impression managers, whose "self-presentation varied according to the social desirability of the trait behaviour involved, and they attempted to present themselves more positively to others than they viewed their actual personality traits"; (3) Rigid-impression managers whose "self-presentation differed significantly from their views of their actual selves, [but] their self-presentations did not

vary according to the social desirability of the traits involved" (Olsen & Johnson, 1991, p.498). Olsen and Johnson (1991) also describe research citing the importance of "consistency in self-presentation [which] enhances one's credibility" (Tedeschi, Schlenker & Benema, 1971; Schlenker 1980, 1985) and the use of positive characteristics, or avoidance of negative ones, to enhance public self-presentation (Roth, Snyder & Pace, 1986; Roth, Harris & Snyder 1988; Arkin, 1981) (p.496).

Baumeister and Cairns (1992) discuss "repressors", individuals who ignore negative feedback about themselves in private, but pay close attention in public. They state that threatening information revealed in private is ignored, but "Public circumstances, however, confer social reality on the ego threat (see Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982), and the threat cannot be vanquished by simply ignoring it" (Baumeister & Cairns, 1992, p.861). Repressors address public threats as they fear being seen "unfavorably" in future public appearances. Tice's (1992) study on self-concept change also reveals the effect of public scrutiny on behaviour. Her conclusions support previous work with Baumeister (Baumeister & Tice, 1984) that public responses to "counter-attitudinal behaviour" creates a greater degree of behaviour change than when similar behaviour occurs privately. (Tice, 1992, p.436) Similarly, Schlenker and Leary (1982) state that the "importance of the reactions of real or imagined audiences distinguishes self-presentational behavior from other behavior" (p.644).

Although IM's findings can be usefully applied to communicative analysis, they are predicated upon a dualistic approach to the self. They depict individuals as possessing two selves, a public self which corresponds to social

norms and a suppressed private self which is the "actual self" and is the "reality". In this view, public selves exist to garner social approval for the individual and avoid public censorship. The self is depicted in this theory as individualistic, existing outside of society but acting inside society; thus the two selves reflect public demands and private desires. The IM self also reflects a dualistic view of reality, that public life is a contrived experience allowing us to 'get along' and social norms are 'niceties', when the reality is that inside, we are all concerned with our own profit. Laing (1961) identified this view in his analysis that conventionally, the difference between 'inner' and 'outer' experience refers to the difference between private and common experience. Yet, as he points out, "an inner bodily experience is not always private (beating of the heart)" (Laing, 1961, p.17). And thus reality is not as easily defined. The split of the self in IM also ignores Mead's (1934) work, which states that "when the self does appear it always involves an experience of another" and thus is a "social self, it is a self that is realized in its relationship to others". (p.195, p.204) IM's inner/private--outer/public paradigm also ignores the self's dependence for existence and meaning on society and others with whom it enters in relationships.

I do not wish to deny that people can and do manipulate their self-presentation, and do present public selves to conceal how they truly feel.¹⁴ What I want to underline is that Impression Management theories posit a permanently divided self, that in our lives we always and invariably present a public/outer face while at home we take off the mask and the private/inner face appears. Goffman does talk of impression management and discusses

¹⁴The case of actors who seem so nice on the screen but are caught drinking and driving or cause fights, comes to mind here.

how audiences use impressions as a method of anticipating further acts and expressions, which are the deliberately given pieces of information. He also states that people manipulate impressions for three reasons: (1) as a calculated and deliberately applied strategy, (2) as a calculated but unconsciously followed strategy, and (3) as demanded by tradition or social status (Goffman, 1959, p.6). But, nowhere does Goffman state that these impressions and expressions are not part of the individual's self. IM, therefore, identifies attributes of a continuously variable self, one gaining its meaning through negotiations with other selves. Thus, Witt's (1991) finding that individuals select self-presentations "that seem most important to the situation" identifies the presentation or disclosure of characteristics negotiated with others. These characteristics are not deceptive, they are simply attributes of a self edited for social presentation.

Goffman's Dramaturgy as Everyday Communication

I suggest that dramaturgy, in the manipulative sense, does not occur as often as implied by Impression Management theories. It is important to remember that Goffman analyzed the sociology of everyday life instead of the sociology of deception and lying. Further, he uses dramaturgy as a meta-perspective on our daily actions. Thus, "social intercourse is . . . put together as a scene is put together, by the exchange of dramatically inflated actions, counteractions, and terminating replies" (p.72). A dichotomy of 'real' versus 'contrived' performances is not useful within this perspective, as socialization demands that individuals learn how to perform certain general roles, filling in details

as demanded.¹⁵ Although it is possible to distinguish between 'legitimate' and 'less legitimate' performers, Goffman points out that both draw upon a "dramatized and pre-formed. . . repertoire of actions"¹⁶ (p.74). As a method of analysis, dramaturgy allows the analyst to describe the manner in which social actors coordinate perceived relationships. Dramaturgy acts as a meta-analysis, seeing in actions a significance beyond that intended by the actors involved.

From his analysis it appears Goffman does not apply "the mathematico-quantitative ideal of the physical sciences" to his social science technique (Burke, 1945, p.510). Instead, Goffman's method seems to be constructed around "representative anecdote", a technique based upon seeing the world as metaphor (which provides perspective), metonymy (which is reductive) and synecdoche (allowing representation).¹⁷ This explains the 'vagueness' of

¹⁵ However, this dichotomy does serve as the *ideology of honest performers*, that their actions are real.

¹⁶ Goffman defines a legitimate performance as one which is not deliberately intended to be a performance and in which the performer doesn't know in advance what to do, and what effect actions will have. 'Less legitimate' performers do have this intention. See p.73 Goffman also notes that although the dichotomy of the ideology of honest performers provides a moral "strength to the show they put on" it provides "a poor analysis". (p.70)

¹⁷ In this technique, Goffman has followed Burke (1945) quite closely I believe. Burke discusses metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, making links between metaphor and perspective, metonymy and reduction and synecdoche and representation. Burke defines metaphor, as "a device for seeing something in terms of something else....tells us something about one character as considered from the point of view of another character. And to consider A from the point of view of B is, of course, to use B as a perspective upon A" (pp.503-4). Metonymy is seen in both the arts and science as a correlation. However, unlike human relationships, motivation is not important in science, qua science. Thus, "any attempt to deal with human relationships after the analogy of naturalistic correlations becomes necessarily the reduction of some higher or more complex realm of being to the terms of a lower or less complex realm of being". Burke notes that metonymy is "a device of 'poetic realism'--but its partner, 'reduction,' is a device of 'scientific realism' " (p.506). Finally, metonymy 'overlaps' on synecdoche as "a reduction is a representation". Burke states that sensory perception is synecdochic in that our senses abstract qualities from electro-chemical activities and "these qualities (such as size, shape, color, texture, weight, etc.) can be said "truly to represent" a tree" (p.508). These three categories are related "as reduction (metonymy) overlaps upon metaphor (perspective) so likewise it overlaps upon synecdoche (representation)" (p.507).

Goffman's work, and the 'conceptual imprecision' of which he has often been accused. Taking Burke's dramaturgical work to be the genesis of Goffman's dramaturgical analysis explains this difference in conceptual approach, as applying the metaphor of stage to everyday life reduces human behaviour to the language of the stage and represents only specific aspects.

For example, Front is defined as "that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (p.22). This is hardly a precise definition, and it is difficult, when looking at text or behaviour, to decide precisely what constitutes 'front' and what does not. However, the meaning of the term becomes clear when examined as metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. Front, first of all, has little to do with humans. Buildings, wars, line-ups and criminal businesses have fronts. In each of these cases, front means 'the thing before the rest'. In more specifically North American terms, buildings also have 'false fronts', a thing before the rest of the building to conceal its relatively small size and deceive the public. This term lends a different perspective to understanding how people behave in public. In the interpersonal context, 'front' focuses attention to specific parts of the individual, to specific behaviours in specific places (i.e. the public, as there is no need to deceive the private). 'Front' is also representative of the behaviour of all people and allows generalizations to be made about peoples' motives in publicly concealing their inner/outer states. It further serves as ground for assumptions regarding unmonitored (private) versus monitored (public) behaviour.

As an example of this process, Burke gives a relief map, which reduces the contours of the United States and so represents the U.S.. The map also gives a particular perspective of the country (p.507).

Chapter Four

Socialization, Self Presentation and Self

Although Erving Goffman first used the term "self-presentation" to apply a dramatic idiom to public behaviour, the question of how a self is presented and created is by no means new. Aristotle suggested in the Rhetoric that successful persuasion requires a positive public self-presentation. To this end, Aristotle admonished speakers to develop skills in developing and arranging arguments, selecting syntax, memorizing and delivering their speeches (Howatson, 1989). Goffman's predecessors, William James, James Mark Baldwin and George Herbert Mead also examined the development of the self in social behaviour. In elucidating the social genesis of the self, Mead concluded that the self is given individuality by first adopting and then adapting "the attitude of the generalized other", a process taking place through communication. Goffman's self-presentation theory describes the social creation of a unique self and applies Mead's analogy of communication as behaviour or gesture and response. For Goffman (1959), self-presentation is a means, a behaviour enacted out of concern with appearing to follow society's moral precepts and the self arises as "a product of a scene that comes off" (p.252). Social behaviour is a process of expressions and impressions and the self arising from this behaviour is a "dramatic effect" (Goffman, 1959, p.253).

The Relationships of Self and Other

Self-presentation is more than simply the preparation of an effective "front". It is communicating claims about the self, about some content, about reasons to be believed, and about future action. For the audience and the presenter, negotiating these claims creates both the presenter's and audiences' selves. Self-presentation is therefore a socialization process. Self-presenters apply standardized, collective attributes in unique ways in creating individual selves. By adopting collective characteristics such as verbal and non-verbal symbols, an idiom of social characters, roles, actions and claims appropriate to specific situations, a social self is created which is individuated by repetitively selecting and combining the same shared conventions.¹

Selves are presented, or socialized, in CMC through the exchange of textual messages. A self is built through an individual's unique selection and combination of content, expression and through an audience's impressions over time. This process can occur solely through the computer or accompany and elaborate a self-creation/self-presentation process taking place through other media. Regardless, the emerging self depends upon past statements.

T.S. Eliot (1960) described a similar process through which poets are socialized as poets. Only by knowing, practicing and mastering the

¹ This description owes its genesis to Roman Jakobson's article "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" (Robert E. Innis (ed.), (1985), Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology, Bloomington:Indiana University Press). Jakobson describes two modes of arrangement in language: selection and combination. In creating a work of art, the artist selects a word, then selects a verb to comment on this topic. The combination of these words is given 'poetic' function when the two words are given an unconventional relation. For example "the old man toddled" or "aged infant". Jakobson says: "The selection is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymy and antinonymy, while the combination, the build up of the sequence, is based on contiguity. The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination." (1985:155)

techniques of previous authors can authors create their own unique and individual poetry. (Eliot, 1960)² Socialization and the creation of a self requires the pre-existence of the social group or tradition which forms the basis for selection and combination.

This analysis of self-development originates with ideas proposed by George Herbert Mead. Similar positions appear in Goffman's self-presentation, Buber's dialogic discussion of human communication, Watzlawick et al.'s pragmatics of communication, R.D. Laing's existential phenomenological analysis of schizophrenic communication and Berne's transactional script analysis. Despite the diversity of topics these authors address, they are unified by their approach to interpersonal relations. All characterize the self as developmental, socialized into being by adopting common characteristics and all take a transactional approach to communication in which the self is created and recreated.³ Together, their insights illuminate the analysis of self-creation in CMC texts by focussing attention on four specific areas:

- 1) **The genesis of self.** Here the authors agree that while the self exists in society, it owes its development to society. Society

² Eliot writes "the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense...is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity." (Eliot 1960:4)

³ The Transactional view sees communication as an interdependent process in which self-definitions, responses to self-definitions of the other, responses to the definitions of self by the other and the social definition of the relationship is given meaning. This is referred to as "negotiation of selves" in which "persons construct and respond to definitions of themselves and definitions of the other persons communicating with them". (John Stewart, Together: Communicating Interpersonally. 3rd ed. [Random House, New York, 1988] p.99) In this view, communication is (1) contextual, (2) a process in which communicative cues are simultaneously created and deciphered, (3) each participant affects and is affected by the other, (4) in a communicative transaction, any variable can be seen as independent or dependent, contingent upon your point of view. (Wilmot, 1975)

is conceptualized as the means through which individuality is made possible.

2) **The relation of self and other.** The sense of oneself is created and given in communication through the reactions of others to one's self-presentation. However, identity is not solely negotiated, it is conferred upon us by roles, scripts, or indicators of social status.

3) **The relation of self and language.** As a component of a conventional meaning system, or idiom, a gesture is the induced response to a previous gesture. Thus, an expression implies its appropriate response and contains a conceptualization of the relationship.

4) **The relation of self and social behaviour.**

I will deal with each of these areas separately.

The Genesis of Self

Mead (1934) describes the self arising "in the process of social experience and activity" (p.135). His work on communication as gesture and response suggests that socialization is a continuous process. In Mead's schema, the self is not a biological given, but a developmental process taking place in the social context. Goffman's (1959) analysis begins with this social context, showing how the self is created in "the structure of social encounters--the structure of those entities in social life that come into being whenever persons enter one another's immediate physical presence" (p.254). Goffman emphasizes the development and organization of acts leading to the creation and maintenance of a single definition of a social situation.

The self develops through two specific social structures: play and games (Mead, 1934). In play, a child imitates the set of responses and gestures

appropriate to a series of roles (human or animal) that the child has experienced. The child "plays that he is, for instance, offering himself something, and he buys it; he gives a letter to himself and takes it away; he addresses himself as a parent, as a teacher; he arrests himself as a policeman" (Mead, 1934, pp.150-151). In adopting the roles of buyer and seller, the child moves consciously from one to the other, from negotiating the selling price to storming angrily out of the shop complaining about the price of refrigerators. Conscious of switching roles, the child compares action with role requirements and learns to be self-conscious. Play involves adopting roles and learning the attitude each role takes towards others. Through this process the child acquires the attitudes of the generalized other and develops an aspect of the self Mead (1934) calls "Me".⁴ The "Me" component of the self thus develops awareness of social norms and is the conscious self, "the self. . . [one]. . . is aware of" (Mead, 1934, p.175). "Me" is the "organized set of attitudes of others which one. . . assumes" and contrasts the second stage of self-development, "I", which develops in games (Mead, 1934, p.175).

A game requires more than the ability to generalize specific role gestures and responses to other situations and be aware of the variance of social roles. The aspect of the self required in a game is the "I". A game requires that "the child. . . must be ready to take the attitude of everyone else involved in that game, and that these different roles must have a definite relationship to each other" (Mead, 1934, p.151). Unlike role-play, successful performance in a game requires that all possible gestures and responses (as organized by the

⁴ The generalized other is "the attitude of the whole community. Thus, for example, in the case of such a social group as a ball team, the team is the generalized other in so far as it enters--as an organized process or social activity--into the experience of any one of the individual members of it". (1934:154)

rules) of all roles in the game be learned. The "I" responds to the "Me", the adopted attitudes of others (for example, the rules), with spontaneous action fulfilling the role-requirements. Games fashion the requisite skill of understanding the basic roles in social life necessary for later social action. However, actions create the "I" but neither the actions or gestures, nor their meaning can be foreseen. In games and social action, "[t]he situation is there for us to act in a self-conscious fashion. We are aware of ourselves, and of what the situation is, but exactly how we will act never gets into experience until after the action takes place" (Mead, 1934, pp.177-178)

Like Goffman, Watzlawick et al. (1967) analyse the structure of social actions as reflecting social laws and creating meaning. To accomplish this task, they examine "words, their configurations and meanings. . .their nonverbal concomitants and body language" as well as "the communicational clues inherent in the *context* in which communication occurs" (Watzlawick et al. 1967, p.22). They characterize communication as an open system with a specific environment, having wholeness, nonsummativity, feedback, equifinality, limitation and rules (Watzlawick et al., 1967). When these concepts are integrated with Mead's theory of the self and its genesis, it becomes apparent that selves can only be created by internalizing or adopting the systematic structures and rules of a specific culture. That rules are internalized suggests that self-presentation should reflect patterns created by these structures. The "life-scripts" Berne (1972) identifies are evidence of the impact of structure upon self-creation and self-presentation. He defines life-script as "a preconscious life plan. . .by which [an individual] structures longer periods of time--months, years, or his whole life" (Berne, 1972, p.25). Scripts derive from parental or family directions, a personal choice and a

particular method of success or failure. They are reflected in an individual's words and actions which can be classified as "rituals", "activities", "pastimes" or "games" and fulfill or further an individual's script (Berne, 1972, p.22).

Scripts and personal decisions to follow or reject them determine personal attitudes, choices and the way people face the world or present their selves.

Berne's analysis is based on the observation that individuals relate to their environment more or less consistently, and make consistent choices about that environment. These actions are unified by a theme. Like theatrical scripts, life-scripts also involve plots and characters, a dialogue of specific words spoken in such a way as "to establish the proper motivation for the outcome", a protocol through which script action adopts to new environments or changes, good/bad guys and winners/losers, and scenes, set-up by previous actions, in which script action takes place (Berne, 1972, p.36) These scripts dictate, or create "the structure of social encounters" Goffman analyses.

Laing's analysis of human inter-experience echoes Mead's concept of self-through-social-experience and Goffman's analysis of the self as the product of successful social performances. By focussing on the relation between "my experience of the other's behavior to the other's experience of my behavior", Laing identifies the fundamental role of *inter*-personal behaviour in self-creation and self-presentation. The self is the product of human interaction and our perception of ourselves and our attribution of qualities to ourselves depends upon the feedback we receive from others (Laing, 1961). Thus, my experience of the other's experience of me indicates to me which self-attributes were successfully presented, which were accepted, which fail, and overall, which even exist.

Similarly, Martin Buber (1970) stresses the social interdependence of selves in his analysis of forms of address. In communication, the self is always presented *to* somebody and the method of presentation reflects how the presenter sees or imagines the other. An "I" and a "You" or an "I" and "It" is implied in every statement as relations are *a priori* for human existence. Buber states that "[i]n the relationships through which we live, the innate You is realized in the You we encounter: that this, comprehended as a being we confront and accepted as exclusive, can finally be addressed with the basic word, has its ground in the *a priori* of relation" (Buber, 1970, pp.78-79). A self is created when You is said as this term implies the speaker's perception (I) of the relationship with the other (You). In relation, I don't experience You but enter into a relation with You as being.⁵ Thus, relations in the world are two-fold, as signified by the forms of address I and You. "When one says You, the I of the word pair I-You is said too" (Buber, 1970, p.54) Another basic word pair, I-It (in which It can be replaced by She or He), implies an object or analytic relation in which the It is experienced as an "aggregate of qualities, a quantum with a shape" (Buber, 1970, p.69) Buber's thought thus shows us how self-presenters imply their relationship with others in the kind of social entities they attempt to create.

These writings on the genesis of self reveal two conclusions pertinent to self-presentation:

⁵ Buber states that experience is not participation in the world, as "Those who experience do not participate in the world. For experience is "in them" and not between them and the world". (1970:56) Similarly, he cautions that while "social" is often used to describe any relation involving more than two individuals, this term does not entail any "existential relation between one member and another". (1990:450)

- 1) self presentation is a conventional social event invoking pre-existing symbolic rules (i.e.. behaviour, speech, action, role, character). At the same time as the act of presenting a self invokes these rules, the rules themselves invoke self-presentation as the means of fulfilling the rules.
- 2) as a social event, self-presentation is both an *inter* and *intra*-personal experience of communication, therefore self-presentation involves behaviour between people, the way that relationships are enacted and the cumulative experience of all past relationships.

The Relation of Self and Other

The self and other are intimately related in communication through a socialized system of perception, expressions and impressions. Because it involves perception, communication between two people actually integrates "Two living beings and six ghostly appearances" (Buber, 1965, p.453).

Through statements and actions, each communicator creates a perception of:

1. me-for-you: how I wish my expressions to create an impression on you;
2. me-by-you: the sense of me you derive from expressions I give and impressions I give off;
3. me-for-myself: my attribution of particular characteristics to my "self", their reflection in my communication and my impression of their "effect" on you.
4. physical-selves: each other as physically existing beings⁶

These perceptions are embodied in communication and their negotiation--the process of clarifying and elaborating mutual definitions of self and relationship--suggests that a sense of self is inseparable from relationship.

⁶ I use Buber's version of the interplay of selves in perception rather than later versions as it emphasizes the immediate flow of self-confirmation (or disconfirmation) in interpersonal communication. Later theorists restate Buber's idea as: my me, my you, my your me (and vice versa). Buber writes "First there is Peter as he wishes to appear to Paul, and Paul as he wishes to appear to Peter. Then there is Peter as he really wishes to appear to Paul, that is, Paul's image of Peter, which in general does not in the least coincide with what Peter wishes Paul to see; and similarly there is the reverse situation. Furthermore, there is Peter as he appears to himself, and Paul as he appears to himself. Lastly, there are the bodily Peter and the bodily Paul." (Buber, 1965)

Mead, Goffman, Watzlawick et al., Laing and Berne all reflect this basic interrelationship in agreeing that a self "must be recognized by others to have the very values which we want to have belong to it" (Mead, 1934, p.204). The self and other are related by feedback. Individual attributes derive from "a scene which comes off" in which the audience imputes a self to a performed character, making the self "a *product*. . .not a *cause*" because feedback makes individual attributes socially meaningful (Goffman, 1959, p.252). The self, therefore, derives from others' responses in a scene. This suggests that different selves exist in different scenes, as each scene demands specific situational characteristics. For example, a bowling alley requires a different self-presentation than does an operating room (although each may require a presentation idealizing competence).

Buber's analysis of selves in perception discusses many points appearing in Goffman's analysis. Goffman expresses the difference between (3) me-for-myself and (1) me-for-you, as the difference between performer and character. In his analysis of character, Goffman describes a process in which social characters are presented in communication exemplifying socially significant qualities. This is the level of dramatic action. In his analysis of performer, Goffman describes a level of physical existence. At this level, the actual person enacting the character, the performer, is a composite of personal wishes, desires, dreams, need for friends, consideration for shame and tact, all attributes which "are psychobiological in nature. . .yet. . .seem to arise out of intimate interaction with the contingencies of staging performances" (Goffman, 1959, pp.253-254). Goffman's analysis acknowledges a social world in which actors are perceived simultaneously as possessing the attributes of

their characters, but somehow, as performers, being different from the character. The perception of self also differs from perception by self.

Self-perception is therefore crucial to the relationship of self and other. but self-perception is not a direct experience of one's own attributes, rather "it always involves an experience of another; there could not be an experience of the self simply by itself" (Mead, 1934, p.195). Our attributes are brought to our attention through relationships with others and we are characterized as personalities through the repetition of these attributes. And because the "social process. . .is responsible for the appearance of the self", we can engage in a diverse set of social relationships by altering our emphasis on particular aspects of attributes of the self (Mead, 1934, p.142). The appearance of different selves "is dependent upon the set of social reactions that is involved as to which self we are going to be" (Mead, 1934, p.143).

Social relations themselves confer an identity. Identity results from the perception of being perceived or in Laing's (1961) identification of a three-fold relation between others' perception of us as possessing relatively stable characteristics, the characteristics we attribute to others, and our "sense of being attributed identity by others" (p.75). Watzlawick et al. (1967) phrase this relation thus: " "This is how I see myself. . .this is how I see you. . .this is how I see you seeing me. . ." and so forth in theoretically infinite regress" (p.52). And the identities contained in such statements are often part identities which complement audience members' own identities but lead to a great deal of frustration on the part of the person being imputed such identity (Laing, 1961).

The interrelationship of performers through perceptions of the characters they enact appears in Goffman as a connection between two elements of Buber's analysis: (1) me-for-you and (2) me-by-you. Both elements concern the success of a presented character in establishing the accepted definition of the situation. However, the connection between presented attributes (1) and perceived attributes (2) is not linear. Perception is mediated by perceptual sets, history and experience. Nonetheless, as Watzlawick et al.'s axioms of communication suggest it is impossible for perceptions-of-the-other *not* to exist. Incongruence between presented self and impressions is likely not to enter the negotiation of selves and the definition of the situation unless it is particularly damaging. Goffman points out that teams and audiences often conspire to ensure congruence and the maintenance of the definition of the situation by altering their perceptions of action or expectations.

The definition of the situation and me-by-you (2) also affect self-presentation (me-for-you--1) and self-perception (me-for-myself--3). When specific, deliberately presented attitudes are confirmed, the self-presentation and self-concept are also confirmed. The other's perception also shapes the relative values assigned to presented attitudes. For example, a social relationship entails a code of roles, expectations, and obligations. The manner in which this relationship is enacted is compared to the code to determine its validity and the performer is given feedback defining the appropriateness of the performance and the character enacted. Self-presentation, therefore, involves enacting pre-existing roles - "rights and duties attached to a given status" - and parts - a "pre-established pattern of action" - which together confer a character, or identity, upon the performer (Goffman, 1959, p.16). Thus,

"[w]hen an actor takes an established social role, usually he finds that a particular front has already been established for it" (Goffman, 1959, p.27). The front creates audience expectations and enables "others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him" (Goffman, 1959, p.1). The parts and roles attributed to us by others' perceptions confer partial identities.

Laing (1961) points out that our first identity, that of child/infant-in-a-specific-family "is in the first instance conferred" upon each of us (p.84). As we gain self-reflexive awareness, "we discover who we already are" (Laing, 1961, p.84). According to Berne (1972), this discovery is the realization of the personal script. As the script gives purpose to life, provides a way to structure time and tells the child or adult how to do things, this discovery is the enacting of the direction and goals of the script. Laing (1961) also describes Buber's inter-relationship of selves through perception as simultaneous existence for others in "imagination", "reality" and "phantasy" (1961:3) He describes phantasy as a "basic mode of experiencing oneself in relation to others, and others in relation to oneself" (Laing, p.24). Laing identifies phantasy as basic to human relations, a concept describing the way we experience others in relation to ourselves and our personal definition of the situation and meaning of actions. Phantasy is the creation of personal narratives.

These writings on the relationship between self and other point to communication as ontogeny:

- (1) the self and other are related through perception, thus the self is a product of perception which is not a linear process, but transactional,

negotiated through perceptions of responses to presented attributes. Responses to those responses create and re-create the self repeatedly.

- (2) because the self is product, each scene in which it is presented requires different emphasis. Thus, the presented self is a character with attributes appropriate to each scene. The performer is the stimulus for the performance, the psychobiological needs for inclusion, personal power, confirmation, etc.
- (3) identity results from self-perception, other-perception, from context, role, history--in brief, from experience.

These points imply that new methods of experiencing the self create new methods of response, allowing identification of new personal attitudes.

Further responses on these new attitudes could stimulate further self-exploration.

The Relation of Self and Language

If communication is taken as the medium of self-presentation and self-creation, then language choice is a key element. Goffman (1959) states that expressions "given" through statements and deliberate behaviour and impressions "given off" by conduct and appearance provide "information about the individual" (p.2, p.1). This information is available to the audience and performer (to an extent) as these behaviours belong to a code of significant symbols. A symbol is significant when "it tends to call out in the individual a group of reactions such as it calls out in the other. . .this responses within one's self. . .is a stimulus to the individual as well as a response" (Mead, 1934, pp.71-72). The idiom, to use Goffman's word, of self-presentation thus encompasses both verbal and non-verbal behaviour. "To be a given kind of person, then, is not merely to possess the required attributes, but also sustain

the standards of conduct and appearance" (Goffman, 1959, p.75). Language provides this dramatic knowledge.

Mead states that language and behaviour are identical because a "symbol is nothing but the stimulus whose response is given in advance" (Mead, 1934, p.181).⁷ A blow, for example, follows an insult because it was "given in the very stimulus itself" (Mead, 1934, p.18). Both the issuer and recipient of an insult know the consequences because each shares the attitude of the generalized other or general values of the society against which action is compared. Socialized individuals adopt common characteristics and adapt these standardized features in individuating ways. Jakobson discusses the same process in the context of poetic or artistic literature as axes of selection--lexicon--and combination--the ordering of lexical choices (Jakobson, 1960). Goffman (1959) expresses a similar principle, stating that socialization requires learning "enough pieces of expression to be able to "fill in" and manage, more or less, any part. . .[the individual]. . .is likely to be given" (Goffman, p.73).

Specific aspects of presented roles and parts are therefore not learned. Socialization, the mastering of communicative behaviour, entails learning principles, methods and means, not memorization. This is the difference between "taming" and "training" (Berne, 1972). Scripts are the result of

⁷ Mead states that gestures call forth other gestures and that a response is both a response and gesture or stimulus for later behaviour. This concept appears in Charles S. Peirce's work as 'unlimited semiosis'. According to Noth, this is a process in which "There is no "first" or "last" sign (Noth, 1990, p.43). He quotes Peirce, who says that "thinking always proceeds in the form of a dialogue--a dialogue between different phases of the ego--so that, being dialogic, it is essentially composed of signs" (Noth, 1990, p.43). Peirce further states that since "every thought must address itself to some other", the "continuous process of semios (or thinking) can only be "interrupted" but never really be "ended"." (Noth, 1990:43)

taming as they are enacted when nobody enforces them, they are 'naturalized'. Thus, responses and gestures result from our scripts. Scenes in these scripts fulfill the long-term intent of the script and the individual's lines or dialogue make actions and establish the motivation, or scenario, for subsequent actions. For example, according to Berne's view, alcoholism involves socialization into alcohol and appropriate gestures (language and behaviour). The youth's parents model alcoholic behaviour and methods of sustaining an alcoholic lifestyle. Work becomes an activity between drinks and drinking becomes a ritual to relax from work and fill in time on weekends. And alcoholics play games in which the con is the justification that the drink is needed after a tough week of work and the drink is the payoff. Other actors fill supporting roles in the script or are rejected (Berne, 1972). In this respect, gestures and responses are determined by the alcoholic script.

* Mastering language also entails learning meanings. All the authors agree that the self and actions gain meaning through the matrix created by other actions. Mead (1934) states that a response to gesture is its meaning, making meaning socially determined. This definition applies equally to the meaning of statements and to self-presentation. As the self is presented to others and only acquires attributes based upon this presentation, so the presented attributes gain meaning from the reactions of others.

Agreement on this topic suggests the fundamentally pragmatic approach taken by all the authors. According to this view, meaning is not a question of "Why?", but rather of "What for?" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p.45). The search for "Why?" meaning is unprofitable because meaning is conventionally seen

as private to the individual, therefore unknowable. This belief is based on a divided self with two regions: inner/private and outer/public (Laing, 1961); This division reflects the assumption "that the other's body is, first, shareable with him up to a point, second, public property shareable by all *except* him, and third, private to him" (Laing, 1961, p.18). Thus, events are seen to have a private and public significance. Yellow painted walls, for example, privately remind a person of a childhood bedroom, an experience that is not public unless explicitly mentioned. When this experience takes on universal significance and yellow in any form becomes a public sign, always reminding the individual of the bedroom, the division between private and public has blurred and the person is regarded as mad. However, as Laing points out, this division is socially constructed. A blush, for example, is the external sign of an internal experience understood by all observers who are socialized to ignore or at least not comment upon indexes of internal states. To do so would violate a tacit agreement on the privacy of "internal" states. (This is why "mind-readers" or "fortune-tellers" are so "astounding". They can read seemingly "private" indexes and symbols because many are publicly evident.) Our bodies make certain private experiences public.

This approach shifts the analytic emphasis from psychological responses in the individual (like Matheson and Zanna's (1990) description of private self-awareness or the psychological "effects" of deindividuation) to the communicational and interpersonal arena. Thus, in Goffman, the definition of a particular situation is a negotiated "working consensus" determining the important goals and values and requiring that all participants commit to these goals by dropping "pretenses of being other things" (Goffman, 1959, p.10). This agreed-upon definition of the situation specifies the context in

which meanings are to be attributed. Similarly, meaning in scripts is contextual. Actions and events take place in context of the script's dictates and individuals gain meaning by the roles they play in the script.

Meaning, therefore, is socially constructed by the definition of the situation. Communication and behaviour have significance because they create similar responses in both the 'doer' and the 'observer'. In this respect, the 'outer' significance is also 'inner' and the range of responses anticipated and defined by the gesture. In this context, the analysis of self-presentation is not concerned with the meaning of the action for the presenter (an internal/private event), but with its significance for others and the impact of awareness of this significance on the presenter.

These writings on the relation of self and language inform the analysis of self-presentation by revealing that:

- 1) language is the medium of interpersonal contact, allowing socialization and therefore allowing the presentation of a self by making it linguistically "malleable". One can enhance and diminish personal attributes through words.
- 2) self-presentation is given and given off, referencing an idiom of dramatic knowledge of *how* to enact a character.
- 3) parts in roles are suggested through the significance of symbols--words suggesting their responses. This is the premise of script analysis, that one's words/actions result from and enact a plan evident in one's words.
- 4) meaning is socially constructed, a matrix specified in the definition of the situation.
- 5) the meanings of self-presentation are the responses negotiated in determining the definition of the situation in which the meaning of self-presentation is determined through the negotiated definition of the situation. In this way, specific meanings are indicated from a larger matrix.

The Relation of Self and Social Behaviour

Behaviour is social when it follows organized, conventional patterns. These patterns allow people to enact and interpret self-presentation and attribute specific meanings to consistent patterns. Such behaviour references the standard, adopted code and simultaneously allows individuating behaviour. According to what we have seen of Mead's (1934) analysis, these patterns are instilled in two developmental stages: play and games. Play structures the self around the gestures and responses for specific social roles. Adopting characters and understanding their rights and duties develops awareness of social norms. Mead terms this moral self "Me" and states that this is the aspect of "self. . .[one]. . . is aware of" (Mead, 1934, p.175). Games involve adapting these roles to spontaneous action. In a game, all the other roles must be known and understood for the self to act. Understanding how the various roles fit together allows the self, "I", to adapt the role through enacting its parts or varying the socialized patterns.

Together, the "I" and "Me" constitute "a personality in social experience" (Mead, 1934, p.178).⁸ But rather than creating a static self, Mead contends

⁸ B. Aubrey Fisher (1978) describes the story of Donald Lang, a black Chicagoan born and raised in the slums, who was accused of murder and finally (after 6 years), acquitted. Lacking social experience, Donald was never socialized into the generalized other. He never learned the appropriate gestures and responses for complex social roles. A deaf-mute, Donald communicated "simple needs or wants through his own primitive sign language. But in a more important sense Donald could not communicate at all. He was undoubtedly never aware that he was ever on trial for a crime. Indeed he could not even conceptualize the meaning of "crime," let alone a courtroom or a trial." (p.4) Fisher notes that Donald lacked any capacity for symbolic relations and language, and though he learned how to work, what money was, how to obtain sex from prostitutes, Donald could not understand the concept of love or fringe benefits at work. Unlike Helen Keller, or even his own lawyer Lowell Myers, Donald did not have the opportunity to overcome his lack of socialization, he was refused by

that the "I" and "Me" interact creatively. The "Me" is the source of social values and control, to which the "I" corresponds in varying the degrees, thereby providing "a sense of freedom, of initiative" (Mead, 1934, p.177).

Mead describes this interaction nicely:

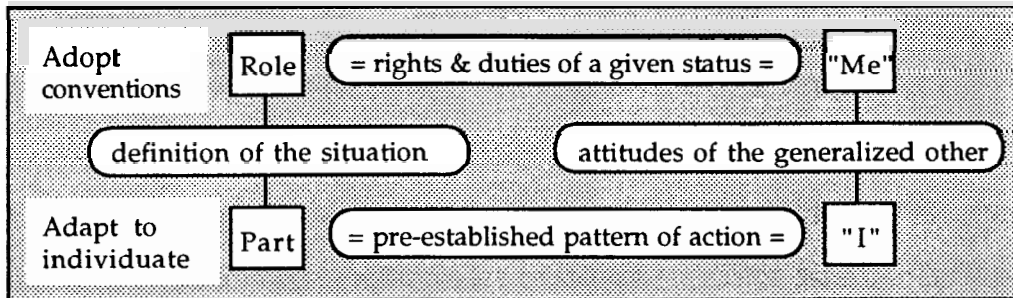
"me" reflects the social wishes or directions about actions, whereas the "I" responds to it automatically. Thus, when somebody falls down, the "me" hurries over to help the person up, while the "I" laughs over the spill. (1934, pp.206-207)

The variance between what "Me" says should happen and what "I" actually does, cannot be predicted as the "I" gets into. . . experience only after. . . [carrying]. . . out the act" (Mead, 1934, p.175). Looking back upon ourselves, the "I" appears as part of the "Me". This analysis of "I" and "Me" reveals that self-presentation allows individuals to both identify with the group and individuate themselves in social behaviour. By adapting social roles the self/"I" expresses its difference from the standard.

A similar division of the self appears in Goffman's division of role and part. Goffman describes a social role as "the enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status" which involves one or more parts, "pre-established pattern[s] of action" (Goffman, 1959, p.16). The social role, therefore, fulfills much the same capacity as does the "Me" in constituting a self. The rights and duties of a specific role are universally known, as they are specified by the definition of the situation. But the role itself says little about its application. Parts allow individuation through differences in expression, conduct and appearance. For example, a judge is expected to fulfill the role of interpreting the law. How a judge enacts the part of interpreting the law to

public and private schools and never obtained the necessary social learning. (Perspectives on Human Communication. New York:Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc.)

write a verdict is where one judge is defined as "liberal" and another as "conservative". Like the "I", the part allows individuation. For both Goffman and Mead, the relationship of role/part and "I"/"Me" in socialization or self-presentation can be illustrated thusly:



Goffman also points out that an individual's actions make claims about their validity and the validity of the individual to make these actions.⁹ Here, self-presentation becomes a moral issue as appearances, impressions, statements and inferences are made and perceived which have past, present, and future implications for action. A particular self-presentation, therefore, "implicitly or explicitly signifies. . . certain social characteristics" and makes the claim that the presenter will live up to these expectations. Actions are promissory for both the presenter and audience. Thus, "impressions that the others give tend to be treated as claims and promises they have implicitly made, and claims and promises tend to have moral character" that they should be fulfilled (Goffman, 1959, p.249). Or, in another form, "[t]he definition of the situation (as something being the matter) and the call for action are two sides

⁹ Jurgen Habermas makes the same point in his analysis of the Ideal Speech Situation. In this model of communication, the speaker makes implicit "truth claims" regarding (a) the truth of the statement, (b) the truthfulness of the speaker, (c) the moral correctness of making those statements. These claims correspond to the truth of the propositional content, the speaker's intention, and the nature of the interpersonal relation. Jurgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society. (Thomas McCarthy trans. Beacon Press, Boston, 1979.)

of the same coin" and "the correct, rational strategy of intervention is prescribed in and through the definition of the situation" (Laing, 1971, p.22).

That audiences accept behaviour as promissory makes it possible for some self-presenters to deliberately misrepresent facts and mislead others. However, as Goffman (1959) points out, conceptualizing daily self-presentation as "false fronts", or "a discrepancy between fostered appearance and reality" has "limited analytical utility" (p.59). Although he uses Park's definition that "the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask", Goffman also quotes Park's qualification that this mask "represents the conception we have formed of ourselves--the role we are striving to live up to--this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be" (Goffman, 1959, p.19). Behaviour is therefore representative of self-perception, identity and the parts we enact. Goffman (1959) finds support for this contention in Simone de Beauvoir's writings. De Beauvoir points out that when a woman puts on clothes, "she is "dressed". . .[but]. . .does not present *herself* to observation; she is, like the picture or the statue, or the actor on the stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there" (p.58). Of the woman's clothing, de Beauvoir states that the dress is "a rich possession, capital goods, an investment; it has meant sacrifice; its loss is a real disaster. . .for not only does the woman of fashion project herself into things, she has chosen to make herself a thing" (Goffman, 1959, p.236).

Self-presentation, therefore, is a mechanism through which people enact, and strive toward, ideal selves. Indeed, Goffman observes that performances "tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society" (Goffman, 1959, p.35). Thus, although Goffman distinguishes

between performer and character, his analysis rejects a dualistic interpretation of self-presentation. Like Buber, Goffman allows for the presence of multiple, contextually significant selves. Furthermore, any discrepancy between "front" and "true self" could be explained by a lack of right or authority to enact a certain role. For example, Goffman says that age or sexual status are subject to different rules, requiring people to enact "untrue" roles in the sense that while they may be firmly held, they are not "true":

It is a culpable thing for a fifteen-year-old boy who drives a car and drinks in a tavern to represent himself as being eighteen, but there are many social contexts in which it would be improper for a woman not to misrepresent herself as being more youthful and sexually attractive than is really the case. (Goffman, 1959, p.61)

This example illustrates Watzlawick et al.'s axiom that the "nature of a relationship is contingent upon the punctuation of the communicational sequence between the communicants" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p.59). The fifteen year-old is not guilty of a false front, rather, he is guilty of violating social rules regarding who can lie about their age and the purpose that such a lie serves. However, the woman's relationship with society has been punctuated by patriarchal rules regarding ownership of body. She has been told that younger women are more sexually attractive. Self-presentation, therefore, is not an issue of true or false fronts, but of social norms regarding when, how, where, why, and what self-presentation is appropriate.

The ability to enact multiple selves requires individuals to have command of the dramatic idiom. Laing (1971) points out that

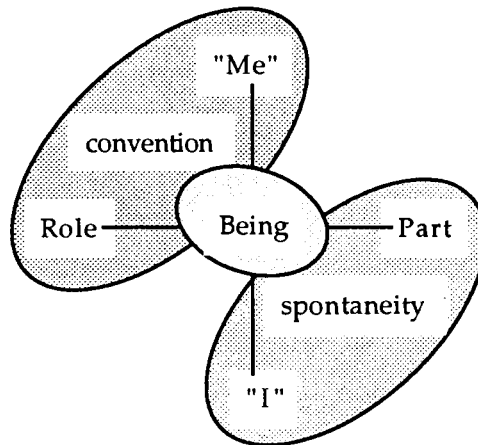
"[f]rom morning to night the one person metamorphoses as he passes from one group mode to another; from family to bus

queue, to business, to friends at lunch, to Old Boy's Reunion, before returning to family. . . [These changes entail]. . . carrying over one metamorphosis, based on being "in" and having inside oneself one group mode of sociality, into another" (p.12).

This process of metamorphosis requires adopting the generalized other for each group, or in Goffman's terms, mastering the appropriate dramatic idiom.

These approaches to the self and social behaviour reveal that social behaviour requires each person to have multiple roles. These roles are created out of a dramatic idiom containing the standards and values which form essential aspects of the self. Social behaviour requires that performers recognize the characters appropriate to each situation and create a self fitting the definition of the situation. Buber suggests with his concepts of Being and Seeming that genuine self-presentation (Being) can be distinguished from manipulative Seeming. Being is action in which one "proceeds from what one really is" unencumbered by "any thought of himself which he can or should awaken in the person whom he is looking at" (Buber, 1965, p.452). In contrast, in Seeming, one acts as "one wishes to seem" and is concerned with image, appearance, and the other's perception of self (me-by-you). Such a distinction can be made by examining the ratio of "Me" to "I" and Role to Part. Self-presenters enacting a genuine character balance the requirements of "Me" (the conventions of the generalized other) with "I" (individuating, spontaneous action) and Role (the rights and duties) with Part (patterns of action, which although pre-established are enacted anew in each presentation). These ratios suggest that self-presentation can be classed as Being, or genuine when all four elements are balanced, and Seeming, or stereotypical, when too much emphasis is placed on "Me" or Role aspects (see

diagram, below). Action emphasizing Part or "I" is non-role spontaneity, or individual, creative action that is outside social roles.



We can conclude that:

- 1) pragmatically, social behaviour is the enactment of internalized patterns or social rules.
- 2) individuating behaviour depends first on adopting group (role) collective norms and then adapting them (part). Thus, self-presentation is genuine when Me/I and Role/Part are "balanced" in some manner. The domains of Conventional/Individuating action are then balanced. The necessary degree of balance is perceived through impressions given off, as these behaviours are more difficult to manage than expressions given deliberately.
- 3) self-presentation is promissory, referencing morals of the definition of the situation.
- 4) self-presentation is stimulated by ideals, performers enact idealized characters.

Implications for Self-Presentation in Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated communication involves a form of self-presentation in which selves are individuated and created primarily through texts.¹⁰

¹⁰ Primarily, but not exclusively, because alphanumeric characters are used both "literally" as verbal signs and "metaphorically" as alphanumeric cues referring to non-verbal aspects of face-to-face communication.

Responses, questions and statements are literally read and created in one's own living space, and message exchange does not require physical travel or a physical appearance with all its requirements of dress, grooming and behaviour. Separated by computer screens and telephone wires, CMC participants can behave however they wish as long as their messages are readable and interesting enough for somebody to respond. And as with other social networks, the social "clusters" apparent on CMC are organized in a homophilous manner and reveal interests ranging from sexual techniques to contact with people from foreign countries. But CMC on a bulletin board system differs in several crucial ways from other communication technologies. First, almost all BBS messages are public. They are exchanged in conferences which are nominally organized by topic, although this is not always the case. Therefore, self-presentation cannot be customized for different audiences or readers. Every message forms part of a public narrative that each and every user on the BBS can read.

Whether every BBS user reads every message is an important consideration for participants as they compose messages. If BBS communicators feel that other BBS members select only those conferences which are of personal interest, they they must perceive messages as being read by an audience specific to selected conferences. This allows messages to be customized for the ideal type espoused by other messages, past and present, in a conference. On the other hand, BBS communicators may believe that others read all posted messages. This could occur when relatively few messages are posted on a daily basis, or the BBS software notifies members of new messages. If this is the case, messages are very public, are read by a wider audience, and

reflect this knowledge. Either way, self-presentation is affected by knowledge of the audience.

I have described the relations between the work of six authors to analyzing the self. This work has been examined in relation to four inter-related categories: Genesis of the self; Relation of self and other; Relation of self and language; Relation of self and social behaviour. Each of these categories describes aspects of the self relevant to analyzing self-presentation. This information can be summarized in a single table:

	<u>Mead (1934)</u>	<u>Goffman (1959)</u>	<u>Buber (1965)</u>	<u>Watzlawick et al. (1967)</u>	<u>Laing (1960-71)</u>	<u>Berne (1972)</u>
Genesis of the self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -self derives from social experience and activity -the group pre-exists the individual self -history of actions creates sense of self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -structure of social encounters reveals entities in social life appearing whenever people come together -performance is social activity -self is product of a scene that comes off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -"in the beginning is the relation" -two-fold relation with world, I-You (subject), I-It (object) -relation is a priori, "Man becomes an I through a You" (What for?-cmn establishes relation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -oidentify a link between cmn and behaviour -find evidence of a stochastic process pre-existing self -wholeness of system means self and system are interdependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -experience others and for others through physical presence -experience self and others in imagination, reality and phantasy -inner experience is private, outer is public, the basis of self-development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -self as it is now derived from childhood social experience and formation of life-scripts (parental) -social behavior (script) involves: withdrawal, ritual, activity, pastime, game, intimacy
Relation of self and other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sense of self available only indirectly from the standpoints of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -audiences glean information from expression and impression -worth of role and success of part seen in responses -self is character and performer -teams collude to sustain a definition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -"Two living beings and six ghostly appearances" in Cmn, (1) me for you, (2) me by you, (3) me for myself and vice versa -also physical bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Axiom 1: "cannot not cmn", always reaction to self -Axiom 2: Cmn contains content and relationship -Axiom 4: digital and analogue cmn. -Axiom 5: relations are complementary or symmetrical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -identity is conferred, is tied to roles but we are not the roles we play -identity can't be abstracted from other -identity based on solidity in world and recognition by other that I am what I take myself to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sense of self and purpose given by script, consists of ancestral influence, conceptive scene, birth order, names -self is created in relation to others and their value in script
Relation of self and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -a significant symbol is a gesture, the response for which is given in advance -meaning is a matrix of gestures and responses -relationships are created by relation of gesture/response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -self-pres. requires idiom of action -expression=giving symbols impression=giving off symbols -appearance and manner influence how symbols are received -definition of the situation provides a meaning matrix 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -saying You implies I, the relationship is in every statement -I-You address is the world of relation -in genuine dialogue, meaning is the relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -defines lawfulness inherent in sequence of symbols or events, (stochastic process) -meaning is not decideable, replace with search for pattern, "what for?" instead of "why?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -gestures are induced responses -division of world and self into inner and outer is basis for meaning of experience -person lives with a social system, a nexus of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -gestures/responses determined by script -acts and events take place within context of own script and others' -dialogue establishes motivation for subsequent actions (past determines present)
Relation of self and social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -role-play develops "Me", awareness of social roles and norms--generalized other -"I" develops in games, action contextualized by generalized other -"I"=source of spontaneous individual action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -parts=pre-established patterns of action -role=enactment of rights/duties of a given status -dramaturgical skills exist because must appear moral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seeming=how you think others want you to be (action too close to role), Being= acting as you really are (individuating action/part) -Confirmation is acceptance of person, recognition of "I" over "Me" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Axiom 3: punctuation of events gives feedback on self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -norms and morals come packaged with conferred identity -gestures (Axiom 1) confirm or disconfirm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -taming and training--taming=obeying injunctions when nobody enforces them -value of self in script is plus (+) or minus (-) relative to others

According to Mead, socialization is a creative process in which selves internalize the gestures and responses accompanying social roles and are able to engage in individuating action by adapting these roles in individual, creative ways. Thus, selves are "created" in social experience. I have shown that this process occurs in CMC. CMC messages are social experience. Through their exchange selves develop perceptions of others and of self. As social experience, posting messages signifies "membership" in the social group by making the self present and giving others an identifiable individual with whom to exchange messages. Messages also allow self-perception, attribution of characteristics to self, as the self can see responses to presented qualities.

As a socialization process, computer-communication should also display the same stochastic processes (organized, structured events) as the open system of face-to-face communication (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Similarly, the process of adoption/adaptation should also be evident. But since basic language, or basic socialization has already been acquired by CMC participants, the necessity to adopt and adapt should pertain more to how to enact selves and the correct discourse in CMC (how to converse, how to talk about the self, how to talk about others, how to criticize). Self-presentation is therefore a crucial consideration in CMC as it is only through the gestures and responses exchanged in messages that participants get a sense of the other's personality. 'Appropriate' characteristics will be signalled by responses of others, responses which 'narrow' the range of possibilities around self-presentation. Thus, identity cannot be abstracted from the other.

I have also demonstrated that Goffman's concepts of self-presentation can usefully be applied to this analysis of socialization. Goffman suggests that

every-day face-to-face communication involves *performers* enacting *characters* appropriate to each situation. These characters display idealized attributes as they reference widely known and accepted social *roles*. These idealized attributes derive from adopting roles. Characters are individuated by adapting these roles through *parts*.

The works of Buber, Watzlawick et al., Laing and Berne provide support for these positions. Like Mead, Buber stresses the primacy of the social relationship in the genesis of the self, stating that out of relationship, people gain individuality. Through social recognition, the self is given attributes. However, Buber recognizes the non-linearity of social action and perception. His analysis of "six ghostly appearances" and two physical bodies in communication suggests the role of others in creating the self but also emphasizes the interdependence of perception and communication. And like Goffman, Buber address the idea of "falseness" or deceptive characters in communication. Through his concept of Being versus Seeming, Buber acknowledges the influence of social ideals on people, but suggests that Being is preferable as one communicates who one genuinely is in the instance instead of trying to be as one should. By combining this position with Mead and Goffman, I have shown that Being is a balance of the requirements of "Me" and Role with "I" and Part. Confirming behaviour acknowledges the person, the "I" over the social role, "Me".

The first communicative axiom Watzlawick et al. (1967) describe states that one cannot not communicate. That is, behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, linguistic or nonverbal, is a source of personal, or self-presentation, information. And although their analysis of digital and analogic

communication is usually applied to verbal and non-verbal processes respectively, impressions are always present in communication. In this sense, impressions are analogic processes. Impressions are gleaned from each expression. A character's social behaviour, then, is defined by other's perceptions and by the rules of the social role which "punctuate" its actions and give meaning. Like Berne's observations, Watzlawick et al.'s conclusions are based upon the observation of the systemic attributes of human behaviour and communication. Because of the wholeness characterizing such systems, selves are intimately connected through communication and perception.

Berne's script analysis is based upon the analysis of systems of scripts. Berne states that behaviour and communication is regulated by life-scripts. As Laing suggests, one discovers one's existing identity through one's script. The script dictates identity through the influence of ancestral, inherited (usually though, ascribed) traits, conceptive scene (the desire for children by parents, for example), birth order and name. Other script attributes such as life-goals and methods to achieve those goals are determined by parental dictates but acceded to (or not) by the individual. If identity is conferred in the first instance and is tied to social roles and individual scripts, individuals are therefore performers enacting characters.

According to this information on the self, CMC can be described as a process through which selves are presented and socialized. CMC is an exchange of messages in which:

- a) information is limited to what can be gleaned from the text-alphanumeric characters and symbols (Hiltz & Turoff; Jessup & Connolly; Siegel, Kiesler & McGuire).

- b) participants "get to know" each other only through a message exchange over time (the time required is as yet unknown) (Walther).
- c) the self that other participants "get to know" depends on their interpretation of expressions and impressions in the text (Rice & Love), an interpretation involving their perceptions, beliefs, biases and stereotypes.
- d) the presented self/textual persona is not necessarily the "same" as a persona that would be presented in face-to-face communication (Matheson; Myers), but is a textual representation created and re-created in every message of an exchange.
- e) this textual representation is perceived and responded to as a "self", not necessarily corresponding with a person's non-BBS self (Hiltz & Turoff; Walther), as participants are aware that CMC can involve phantasy-play (both fantasies and phantasms). Exchanges between textual selves are therefore of a different quality than using other media.¹¹

¹¹ Although this sequence seems to describe only selves who have never physically met, use of other media is an "ecological" reality of CMC and especially of BBSs due to their local user base. Relationships are established and enacted through a variety of media and specific media can allow a specific type of self-disclosure. Nobody uses just one medium in their professional or social relations and "some things can be easier said over the phone than face-to-face". Thus, we learn different things about people through different media. And although contact outside of CMC "might provide confounds in an experimental sense, they are ecologically valid elements in much real CMC use. Relationships outside the computer connection are commonplace. E-mail is often used to communicate with someone one might also see daily." (Walther, 1992:66)

Chapter Five

Methodology

Goffman describes social action as a *scene*, comprised of *regions* (front, back, outside), in which *teams of characters*, enacted by *performers*, act out social *roles*. The characters are individuated by their *parts*, or specific means of enacting roles, and their action *idealizes* the social values determined by the *definition of the situation*. Goffman's analysis was considered in the context of several other perspectives, those of G.H. Mead, M. Buber, Watzlawick et al., R.D. Laing, and Eric Berne. This discussion concluded that the analysis of CMC must recognize that messages are created by perceptions, that CMC participants create a textual persona based on responses of others, that their actions follow socialized rules of behaviour, that meaning and significance is found in responses, that identities are defined over time and finally, that the presentation of identity is a reciprocal process involving the perception of being perceived.

This thesis poses the question: How can Goffman's concepts be applied to computer-mediated communication and what insights are revealed about the nature of computer communication? More specifically, are identifiable characters present in CMC and how can these characters be identified? These questions are examined in a case study content analysis of interpersonal communication on a bulletin board system called Guys 'N Gals Social Club.

The Technique of Case Study Content Analysis

According to Yin (1989), case studies further understanding of contemporary phenomena by asking "how" or "why" questions and generalizing the results "to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study. . .does not represent a "sample", and the. . .goal is to expand and generalize theories. . .not to enumerate frequencies" (p.21). A case study content analysis method is therefore particularly suited to answering the questions posed in this thesis. This approach allows in-depth, qualitative consideration of a limited sample yet allows findings to be correlated not only with Goffman's theory of self-presentation, but also with the theorists I have used to contextualize Goffman. Placing Goffman's concepts of self-presentation in context of this theoretical work reveals not only whether Goffman's concepts are applicable, but also the process through which online selves are "self-created" or "socialized" into being.

Content analysis techniques have been applied profitably to contexts similar to that selected for this thesis. In all cases, a defined body of communication, or text, is analyzed to discover "hidden" meanings, or meanings that the authors of the communication did not intend to communicate. The first recorded instance of content analysis concluded that "religious, scientific, and literary matters had dropped out of leading New York newspapers between 1881 and 1893 in favor of gossip, sports, and scandals" (Krippendorff, 1980, p.14). The implication of these findings was that newspapers did not convey news (Krippendorff, 1980). Used in other disciplines, content analysis revealed "motivational, psychological, or personality characteristics" (psychology) or the cultural lessons and meanings in myths and historical

documents (anthropology) (Krippendorff, 1980). Krippendorff states that through such analyses, content analysts learned that "content is not an absolute or objective quality", the analyst does not have direct access to content, and that interpretation must take place, or be made meaningful, in context of a model of communication (Krippendorff, 1980, p.17).

Furthermore, analysts discovered that texts do not contain single, fixed meanings and those that are found need not be shared by all audiences (Krippendorff, 1980). Certain cues are made meaningful and others insignificant through the analyst's perceptions. Content analysis is therefore a process of specifying one or several of a multiplicity of possible figures and grounds in a text. In C.S. Peirce's terms the content analyst identifies a specific segment in a text open to "unlimited semiosis".

It is on these grounds that Lindkvist (1981) criticizes Hirsch's Intentional Analysis for making its object establishing "the intentions of the text producer" and stating that texts say "nothing beyond the intentions of the text producer. . .the author has a monopoly on interpretation" (Lindkvist, p.24). Such an analysis supposes that authors have single, unchanging intentions, and that groups or organizations have similar, unitary intentions (Lindkvist, 1981). Nonetheless, the fact remains that texts do reveal something, even if what is revealed is not an author's "true" intentions, whatever they may be. Lindkvist (1981) notes several approaches to content analysis (analytical semantics, structuralism, hermeneutics) which all agree that texts "hide" information or meaning. In this regard, the premise of content analysis is Kenneth Burke's concept of *genius loci*. Burke (1945) states that "[f]rom a motivational point of view, there is implicit in the quality of a scene the quality of the action that is to take place within it" (pp.6-7). In

this way, the "scene is to act as implicit is to explicit. One could not deduce the details of the action from the details of the setting, but one could deduce the quality of the action from the quality of the setting" (Burke, 1945, p.7). Implicit in each scene, therefore, is the quality or kind of action that can take place. The objective of content analysis, therefore, is to identify the relationship between scene and action as manifest in texts.

But content analysis gets into trouble when it uses terms such as "author", "reader" and "narrator". Kendon (1990) emphasizes the importance of context in content analysis, saying that it is important to examine "the behavior of people in interaction in the contexts in which they occur" (Kendon, p.15). Likewise, Ricoeur emphasizes context, but stresses the context that readers themselves bring to texts. Ricoeur's position is that an "asymmetric relation between text and reader" emerges out of the reader's interpretation of meaning, making the text into "a cumulative, holistic *process*" (my emphasis) instead of a pre-determined unit (Lindkvist, 1981, p.32). In other words, an author's intentions cannot be revealed in communication as this neglects the reader's contribution to meaning. This process suggests the transactional approach in light of which Goffman's theory was considered. Content analysis must acknowledge that texts are produced in the context of other communication. While an author's intent pre-figures some content, the text itself gains meaning through reader's reactions.

Therefore, the next step in considering a content analysis of self-presentation is defining the participants in this process and their relationship: author, meaning, and reader. To this end, a brief survey of literary criticism is necessary.

Content Analysis and Literary Criticism

The practice of literary criticism is essentially that of content analysis. Texts are analyzed to reveal "hidden" meanings and relationships and the question of authorial intention is considered in light of contributions made by readers to understanding content. Among other topics, the relationships between texts, authors, characters, narration and scenes has been considered by literary critics. Of particular interest has been the concept of "author". Do texts contain indicators of the actual author? Is the narrator the author's voice or a character? Is it at all possible to detect any attributes in a text that might imply a contextually bound author? Or, as some suggest, is there no such thing as an author and instead, only readers create texts through their interpretations?

Wayne Booth (1961), for example, examines the author's attempt to "impose. . . [a] . . . fictional world upon the reader" and isolates the techniques employed to this end from any social or psychological forces affecting authors or readers (Booth, p.i). Booth thus arrives at the notion of the "implied author". Terry Eagleton (1983), on the other hand, analyses texts from the position of their historical and social attributes and takes issue with Booth's attempt to isolate specific textual features from readers' interpretations. He states that "one can think of literature less as some inherent quality or set of qualities displayed by certain kinds of writing all the way from *Beowulf* to Virginia Woolf, than as a number of ways in which people *relate themselves* to writing. It would not be easy to isolate. . . some constant set of inherent features" (Eagleton, p.9).

The crucial question that content analysis poses for literary criticism concerns the relationship of author, text and reader. Does the reader read an author's statements and positions? Does the reader thereby gain some insight into the author? Or is everyday communication, like a fictional work, composed of a narrator and a set of characters? These are crucial questions because content analysis does generalize from messages to populations, from stated interests and qualities to attributes of those doing the stating. In answering these questions, I draw upon Booth's analysis.

Popularly, the author is understood as the person who writes a work (Hawthorn, 1992). For this reason, books containing socially inappropriate scenes or information are felt to be products of inappropriate authors. According to Wayne Booth (1961), the person sensed "behind" a work is not the "real" physical author, but the implied author. This "sense" is based on the knowledge that somebody created the characters who act in and are acted upon in a work. Knowledge of the implied author is gleaned from a feeling that, "from word to word and line to line. . .the author sees more deeply and judges more profoundly than his presented characters" (Booth, 1961, p.74). The implication of Booth's statement is that the attributes in a text commonly attributed to the author in fact have no relation to the author. Indeed, the author "behind" a work, the implied author, is presented as a person with the correct qualities to be responsible for such a work. This explains the articles about William Gibson which often smugly note that his cyberspace novels were, in fact, written on a manual typewriter when readers might expect him to have the latest in voice-controlled, visually operated computers.

Further, the implied author is not the narrator, whom Booth defines as "the speaker in the work who is. . . only one of the elements created by the implied author and who may be separated from him by large ironies" (1961, p.73). Thus, the agent who relates in a work "cannot be identified with the writer. Rather, the writer withdraws and calls upon a fictitious spokesman, an agent technically known as the narrator" (Bal, 1985, p.8). The narrator is a *function* of the language constituting a work (Hawthorn, 1992) much as Goffman's presented self is a function of a successful scene. The narrator is a device necessary to construct scenes and action. Therefore, the sense of a specific person or author "responsible" for a work is merely the sense of qualities imputed to the narrator. As Booth (1961) suggests, an author's "different works will imply different versions [of the author], different ideal combinations of norms. Just as one's personal letters imply different versions of oneself, depending on the differing relationships with each correspondent and the purpose of each letter, so the writer sets himself out with a different air depending on the needs of particular works" (p.71).

Similarly, the implied author or sense of an agent "responsible" for the text varies according to the text's demands. This agent/implied author is perceived through "the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and suffering of all the characters" (Booth, 1961, p.73). Booth (1961) asserts that cues as small as "natural sequence, proportion, or duration of events" are seen as evidence of the implied author (p.20). The implied author, although disguised, can therefore never completely disappear, being evident, for example, in tone, implicit evaluations, and choice of material and topic. Thus, no matter how retiring, the implied author is always present in a work through the use and interpretation of a "set of CONVENTIONS [sic]

governing systematic transformations" in the work held in common with the reader (Hawthorn, 1992, p.20). This shared code allows readers to interpret textual cues as implying an author. However, by referencing a shared code, a work in some ways "specifies" an *intended* reader. Each of the author's choices "mold[s] the reader into the kind of person suited to appreciate such a character and such a book" (Booth, 1961, p.18). This intended reader is implied by the text's assumptions of attributes and knowledge (Hawthorn, 1992). Participation in the code is necessary, even at a rudimentary level, for understanding. However, meaning must be distinguished from significance. E.D. Hirsch argues that meaning is represented by the use of sequences of signs in a text and thus can be imputed to an implied author. In contrast, significance is the relationship between these signs and a person, concept or situation (Hawthorn, 1992). Thus, if a text is read "symptomatically" cues of which the implied author was unaware are assigned significance or interpreted according to another code. The symptomatic reader foregrounds the text's significance through a code not shared with the implied author. An implied author, therefore, can never be sure that narration is understood in the context it was meant and is unaware of reader's perceptions until after the work is completed.

Analyzing Content

The perspective on the author/text/reader relationship described above agrees with the basic processes of socialization described in the previous chapter. There, selves were described as being created or existing only through social recognition of individual aspects. The various contexts in which selves act allow the development and recognition of different aspects the self. Thus,

there is no "real self" and the only knowledge that can be gained is about the "implied self" or "implied author". Social action implies only the attributes required by a specific situation. Furthermore, the "I" in a situation is the narrator, an agent acting as the implied author's representative and although meaning is the result of a shared code, significance, or the meaning of text to others, is the result of perceptions.

Literature and CMC in particular, therefore reflect Gadamer's hermeneutic injunction that understanding is a creative process based upon an intersubjective language (Giddens, 1976). This relationship is expressed in literary criticism in Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of the Literary Work. According to Hawthorn (1992), Rosenblatt states that a text and reader do not have a linear relation but each encounter is a situation, "an event at a particular time and place in which each element conditions the other" (p.191). Here, the meanings of characters and the implied author are negotiated with the reader throughout the text.

Booth's work suggests presented selves are in fact "implied selves" or characters, just as authors are implied and created through texts. Events in texts imply the attributes of authors just as behaviour implies a character's attributes. A reader's or audience's understanding of these attributes is premised upon a shared code which specifies the attributes of its possessors. However, this sense of an implied author's or character's attributes is not fixed. Audience and reader understanding is affected by perceptions or other codes. In this way, attributes gain significance beyond that specified for intended readers. Thus, all behaviour is considered significant and "one cannot *not* communicate" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p.49). The relationship

between implied author/reader and character/audience is thus negotiated. Implied authors and characters select certain behaviours according to their code and definition of the situation. Readers and audiences negotiate their understanding against an author/character's subsequent actions. The choices of tone, technique or "sequence, proportion, or duration of events" limits the range of possible future gestures or actions. Their repetition creates a pattern of experience upon which readers/audiences base their perception of self and responses. The presented self therefore "conditions" responses in the same manner as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

We can therefore approach the content analysis of self-presentation in CMC messages having gleaned the following insights to messages, their authors, and the role of readers:

- 1) messages are narrative texts, "in which an agent relates a narrative" (Bal, 1985, p.5).
- 2) messages can only be attributed to implied authors who alter according to the context of each communicative situation. There is therefore no point in trying to identify message attributes with a single, unified self.
- 3) although messages are composed for an intended audience and based on assumptions of a shared code, a message has significance beyond that imagined by the implied author.
- 4) readers interpret the significance of messages and perceive characters, placing them within their own frameworks of meaning.
- 5) the character to whom readers respond is in part the result of reader perceptions.
- 6) the exchange of messages over time creates a work or text compiled by different implied authors and based upon the perceptions and attributions. This work reveals actors ("agents who perform actions") enacting a fabula (a "series of logically or chronologically related events. . .caused or experienced by actors") (Bal, 1985, p.5).

- 7) Analysis can therefore occur on the levels of text (the "finite structured whole composed by language signs"), story ("a fabula presented in a certain manner") (Bal, 1985, p.5) or character (how the fabula is enacted and narrated). Implied author or, in Goffman's terminology, performer, are implied through all these levels.

Treating messages as literary texts in which implied selves employ narrators to relate events in which they, as characters act and are acted upon allows us to analyse the behaviour of these characters. Although we cannot understand them from the point of view of the other participants in communication, we can see how characters react to each other through their responses. In the end, these responses are the meanings of the characters. Seeing messages as texts also allows an examination of the fabula and story, or the message content, and method in which content is presented, that is, the message structure. At the content level, characters are individuated through expressions detailing physical characteristics, individual attitudes, and social characteristics which position the character in social networks. At the level of message structure, characters are individuated by impressions revealed through the manner in which they address each other and the way their messages appear. Manner reveals an expected "interaction role" and appearance, a character's "temporary ritual state" (Goffman, 1959, p.24).

Procedure

Krippendorff (1980) states that content analyses are comprised of several steps. First data from a specific population must be obtained, unitized, sampled, and recorded (classified). Second, data is reduced or circumscribed by being considered in a specific context. This involves putting the data in a

format suitable for the analytic technique selected. For example, categories are created into which the data are "inserted". These categories ensure validity by being internally homogeneous, allowing similar data to be grouped together, yet sufficiently heterogeneous to allow data to be clearly assigned to one category or another (Patton, 1990). Third, the analyst must state how assumptions about the data and its environment "partition" the reality of the data. These assumptions are provided by the theory in context of which the data is studied and support inferences connecting a hypothesis or theory with the data. Fourth, the analysis notes patterns of inference which relate the data to the context (Krippendorff, 1980).

Finally, validity must be "the ultimate criteri[on] of success", a criterion necessitating methods that are repeatable and verifiable (Krippendorff, 1980, p.26-27). This analysis then, as Yin suggests, allows the theory to be expanded to include the analyzed context, providing insight into either the theory or the context.

Case History

The Guys 'n gals bulletin board system.

I first became aware of Guys 'N Gals Social Club in the spring of 1992 through a list on another large BBS describing all the Vancouver area BBSs and their subject matter. Guys 'N Gals was described as having membership charges, having an active message base, allowing pseudonyms and being connected to an international mail system. It was listed as having two lines, one of which had a "teen area". Other than that, I did not know anything

about it until I called, other than its name implied it was a sex-chat BBS. As of October 1993, Guys 'N Gals boasts 1,113 registered users.

Upon obtaining a membership, I observed messages in both the private, sex-chat conferences and public conferences. In January 1993, I contacted the three subjects whose messages are used in this study and obtained their permission to examine their postings. I explained that the purpose of the study was to examine how they communicated a sense of self to each other, and that the actual topics they discussed were of secondary importance. All subjects freely gave their permission. One subject even stated that "I don't see a problem with that. . .because these messages ARE marked public. . .be my guest". All messages analyzed in this thesis are publicly available to anyone with a modem.

I downloaded messages the subjects posted to public (non-private) conferences on the BBS. This BBS started in April 1986 and was originally called the Guys 'N Gals Social Line. The name was switched sometime later.¹ The proprietors of the club state that it is not a dating service and describe it as follows:

As the name implies, that's exactly what it is, a Social Club. We plan get together at least once a month and have a great time doing it. We try to avoid Computer Tech Talk, as there are many other systems in the Lower Mainland that are easily accessible for this type of Communications. We just like to have FUN and meet People and hope you will Join in with us when we hold our Dues!

Yet, the information posted for new users in the conference entitled Newuser.Info informs users describes the content of some conferences thusly:

¹ As this information is drawn from Guys 'N Gals' Mission Statement and History posted on the BBS, it is not complete.

- * NOTICE *
- * Adult areas are completely concerned with Sexually explicit *
- * material and coarse language. If this offends you, then *
- * Please do not Apply for access to these Areas. *
- * Adult areas require proof of age (18 or over) to be submitted *
- * along with your membership fee. *

In this manner, the owners resolve the social "club" aspect of the BBS with the more "specialized" sex aspect of this BBS. Despite this attempt to integrate these two social functions, however, all messages must be seen in context of the sexual messages and general orientation of the BBS.

Guys 'N Gals allows three forms of use. The first is designed to allow prospective members to "check out" the BBS. This allows users access to public conferences. The second form costs \$40.00 and allows 60 minutes of access time on each of Guys 'N Gals three telephone access lines to all public access conferences. It also allows one to play games and download files. The third form costs \$50.00 and allows 120 minutes of access per line to public and adult conferences in addition to game and file privileges.

Like all other bulletin board systems, Guys 'N Gals is divided into conferences whose titles reflect the kind of discussion available in the conference. A useful metaphor for conceptualizing the organization of conferences on a BBS is a building with several floors on each of which are several rooms. In the case of Guys 'N Gals, there are 9 floors that are all accessed through the main lobby or main menu. From this menu, BBS users can choose any one of these nine floors or areas, each of which allows different activities. The areas are: Areas Available, Bulletins, File Areas, Message System, Profiles, Match Makers, Sex Makers, Games Area, Members Only.

"Areas Available" lists all the conferences available on Guys 'N Gals and through the Echo Mail network to which it is connected. Echo Mail allows users of this BBS and others across the world to send mail messages to each other and various conferences or topic areas are listed here too. Bulletins lists notices from the operators of the BBS to the members and from members to other members. File Areas contains computer programs and text files for users to download. The Message System gives users access to Guys 'N Gals own public conferences. Profiles lists the self-descriptions of all members. Match Makers is a public access program designed to "match" members according to their answers to an online questionnaire. Sex Makers is a similar, but members-only, program that involves slightly more personal questions. The Games Area provides games for members to play online and Members Only provides access for paid members to sexually oriented conferences.

A brief history of the sample messages.

This analysis concerns the messages sent between two dyads centered around Janet. Janet and Rick begin their online acquaintance with a message from Rick in which he says

Hi there! It's rare to find Chinese people on boards like these. Tell some stuff about yourself and I'll tell you some stuff about me and don't worry, I just want to make friends. . .nothing to lead to a relationship. Hope to hear from you soon.

later...
Rob

Janet responds with a message containing this "stuff", her demographic data, and she and Rick begin exchanging messages. After each has sent two

messages, Janet writes that she, among other interests, is "a harsh bookworm". This message piques the curiosity of another BBS user, Michael, who comments upon this interest and asks what kind of authors Janet likes to read. Janet sends a three sentence reply, to which Michael responds with 11 sentences. When Janet sends back only 13 words, Michael says "That's a short response!" and also asks her if she knows how to play Chinese Chess. Janet responds with a message expressing her frustration and demands "what did you want me to say?" After this, Janet's messages to Michael are shorter and they exchange messages less frequently. Later, Michael comments upon a message in which Janet disclosed a private matter. Janet cautions him that he doesn't know the whole story, so he should refrain from making judgements. Michael's response is extremely cautious and careful, denying all interest in the matter, simply pointing out that he, too, has committed indiscretions publicly on BBSs. Michael's final message to Janet quotes a message she sent to another user stating that they will talk soon and Michael asks "Gee, how come you've not written/typed to me, eh? 8-(" Despite the "sad face" pleading for a response, Janet does not answer. The exchange between Janet and Michael involves 21 messages between January 29 and March 16. Of these, Michael sends 14 and Janet 7.

During this time, Rick and Janet continue to exchange messages. Between January 27 and February 21, they exchange 20 messages of which Janet sends 10 and Rick 11 (of which four could not be found but were implied through references in Janet's messages--they may have been sent privately). They discuss Rick's sports, Janet's driving, Chinese school, Karaoke, and the lack of dates for Valentine's day. Rick is very interested in expanding his Chinese vocabulary and introduces all the topics related to Chinese language

and culture. Shortly after the message describing the date-less Valentine's day, Janet tells Rick: "I don't really care if I get into a relationship [sic] or not at this point. It's not really a big deal" and ends the message with "Chinese is okay, I guess. It's not like I'm obsessed with it or something".

Only one later message exists on the BBS between Rick and Janet. In this message, Janet tells Rick, seemingly in answer to a question, that classical music puts her to sleep, maybe because she's not cultured enough. However, she asks whether he ever calls a group of BBSs called Asianets (Wai's Chinese Connection, Peace and Silence). Janet says that if he does, Rick should leave her a message. Following this message, Rick disappeared from the BBS. He has not posted any messages to the Guys 'N Gals Social Club BBS since February 21. Janet continued to use the BBS as did Michael, although they did not send any messages to each other. As of September 1993, Janet also disappeared from the BBS and Michael found others to chat with.

The messages exchanged between Rick, Janet, and Michael should be contextualized by the messages they sent to and received from other characters on the BBS. Between February 11 and March 23, Janet sent 40 messages to others and received 44; Michael sent 6 and received 5 and Rick sent 1 and received none. Over roughly the same time, Janet developed a personal relationship with another character, and her messages mention that she calls other BBSs. Neither Rick nor Michael mention other BBSs, although Michael does state that at one point, he belonged to "about a score of them...and just drove myself nuts trying to keep up with it all".

The Sample

The sample for this case study is 41 messages composed by and exchanged between two males, "Rick" and "Michael" and one female, "Janet", over three months in two conferences on Guys 'N Gals. These individuals were selected because their relationships began during the time of the study and existed only on the BBS. They therefore provided an opportunity to study self-presentation in context of newly forming relationships conducted solely using the computer.

Two other anonymous samples were obtained to triangulate findings. The total number of messages considered in writing this thesis is 252. Of this number, 36.5% were written by Rick, Michael or Janet. However, this number is slightly inaccurate, as the first sample, of 41 messages, does not contain any of the contextualizing messages. For this reason, numbers and percentages in this thesis provide only relative ideas, not precise indications.

Because communication is computer-mediated, messages are kept for all to read for an unspecified period. Thus, unless deliberately deleted or exchanged privately, it is possible to obtain a perfect record of all computer-mediated communication. The integrity of a sample can be checked by examining the surrounding messages for continuity or discontinuous topics.

Categories

Goffman's analysis of self-presentation was examined for categories useful for analysis. Three main categories were derived: Character, Scene and Role.

These categories are reflected in Goffman's opening statement in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. . . . Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him.

For those present, many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or "sign-vehicles") become available for conveying this information. If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly roughly similar to the one before them, or more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him. (p.1)

Thus, people observe individuals for their actions, appearance and conduct in a particular setting to derive information which allows observers to fit individuals into pre-existing stereotypes. Following Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor, individuals become Characters enacting performances in Scenes which correspond to broadly recognized, although individualized, social Roles. Rather than continue with Goffman's division of Character/Performer, I will only refer to character here as this reflects the understanding reached in my consideration of literary criticism, and earlier in this thesis, that characters are the only means of social action and are individuated versions of stereotyped social roles.

Analyzing character.

The primary category for this research into self-presentation is Character. Following Patton (1990), the analysis of Character was designed to reveal consistencies in the internal homogeneity of actions, as well as differences

between characters (external heterogeneity). These differences and similarities should be evident in the comparison of Physical, Individual and Social Characteristics, and the Manner and Appearance apparent in each character's messages over time. This analysis subsumes Goffman's category of Personal Front into the analysis of Character. Goffman (1959) defines Personal Front as "items of expressive equipment, the items that we most intimately identify with the performer" such as clothing, sex, age and race (p.24). If, as I have argued, a character is created in each instance of communication, part of this creation is individuating the character through elements of personal front. These elements, in CMC, can be the attributes given to the character or the way the character behaves.

The category of Character contains two major subdivisions: Content and Structure. This division reflects Goffman's own division of communication into two categories, expression and impression. Goffman (1959) defines expression as information a character deliberately "gives" and impression as information a character "gives off" unconsciously (p.2). He does recognize that impressions are not completely unconscious, but instead characters often attempt to control the impressions they give. However, Goffman notes that this control is not complete. In evaluating Content, messages are analyzed for Physical Attributes, Individual Attitudes, and Social Characteristics positioning the character in social networks. In evaluating Structure, messages are analyzed for Manner and Appearance.

Character is operationalized in Content and Structure as follows.

Analyzing message content.

The categories constituting the content of messages form the basis of other characters' perceptions of the character, reflections of the character's own self-perception, and the character's perception of others' perceptions. These cues exist in messages because they are perceived as being relevant and their presence allows the character to be located in a matrix of social signs.

Physical Attributes: deliberate descriptions by the character of the body's physical characteristics, age, race, sex, height or another physical (body) description.

Individual Characteristics: "I" statements revealing individual attitudes not open to perception such as likes, abilities, hobbies and qualities.

Social Characteristics: claims or references by the character which place the character in particular social relationships and networks by signifying social status such as jobs, school, family, relationships, possessions.

Analyzing message structure.

The categories constituting Structure provide metamessages dictating how message content is to be understood and revealing characters' perceptions of relationships.

Manner: the character's use of message components such as salutation, opener, comments, questions, answers, invitations, closings.

Appearance: any use of language, lexicon, spelling, punctuation, symbols and topics which individuate the character and indicate her/his "ritual state" or the kind of communication in which he/she wishes to engage.

Goffman describes two other categories in his analysis of self-presentation, Scene and Role. These categories are involved in the analysis of the

presentation of characters as they "condition" how a character is enacted. When characters adopt roles, they adopt certain stereotyped physical, individual or social characteristics and particular kinds of manner and appearance. Thus, role can be analyzed by analyzing Character. And although this action takes place in a Scene (front, back, outside regions) and Setting, the BBS enforces similar scenes on all participants. Scene and Setting are therefore environmental constants.

Although the primary emphasis in this research is testing whether and how individual characters are presented in computer-mediated communication, a brief exploration of Scene provides insight into the relationship between characters and the implied author. As the setting is also an environmental constant, it is examined along with Character as an attribute of Personal Front.

A scene consists of various Regions (front, back, outside) in which action takes place. Goffman defines a Region as "any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception" (Goffman, 1959, p.106). A Front region is the arena in which a performance is given. I have restricted the meaning of Front to setting. "A setting tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those would use a particular setting. . . cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place" (Goffman, 1959, p.22). A Back region is the arena in which "stage props and items of personal front can be stored in a . . . collapsing of whole repertoires of actions and characters" (Goffman, 1959, p.112). Outside is another region, neither front nor back, which is outside the performance area. Regions segregate audiences

(Goffman, 1959). Thus, an aspect of understanding the presentation Character is examining the various Regions and Settings.

Region and Setting can be analyzed structurally, looking at how the BBS communication separates CMC participants. Thus, the kind of BBS, the Conference type and name and how BBS functions separate people sending and receiving messages from other participants.

Theoretical assumptions

The theoretical assumption basic to the methodology of this thesis lies in the relationship between the categories of Content and Structure. A primary goal of content analysis is designing analytic methods in which categories are both internally homogeneous and externally heterogeneous. This means that "the data that belong in a certain category hold together or "dovetail" in a meaningful way" and that "differences among categories are bold and clear" (Patton, 1990, p.403). Thus, all the data can be "used up" or assigned clearly to one category or another. Yet in analyzing messages for clues used to construct characters, one piece of information can be significant in two ways. This is suggested by Watzlawick et al.'s (1967) finding of content and relationship aspects of communication. They state that the

report aspect of a message conveys information and is, therefore, synonymous in human communication with the *content* of the message. . .The command aspect, on the other hand, refers to the sort of a message it is to be take as, and, therefore, ultimately to the relationship between the communicants. . .Thus, for instance, the messages "It is important to release the clutch gradually and smoothly" and "Just let the clutch go, it'll ruin the transmission in no time" have approximately the same information content (report aspect), but the obviously define very different relationships" (pp.51-52).

Therefore, data can fall into two categories simultaneously, depending on whether it is interpreted as content or relationship. For example, a question such as "Do you also drive a BMW?" is structurally a question and the behaviour of the character asking this question could be typified by asking questions, while the other character in the dyad is typified by only providing answers. This question then, is both a question, but also a metamessage implying the relationship (questioner-answerer) between the characters. A major assumption of this study is that such ambiguities in categorization can be tolerated without endangering the overall validity of the study. This is assumed to be the case as the simultaneous presence of content and relationship is an ecological reality for human communication.

Chapter 6

Results

Three samples of messages were collected over the span of three months in two separate conference or topic areas on the BBS. The samples are distinguished by the number of messages exchanged between the dyads. Sample 1 extends from January 13 to February 5 and is taken from a conference entitled "General Chatter". In this sample, Janet sends Rick 6 messages and receives 6 from Rick. Michael sends Janet 6 messages and receives 5 from Janet. No data is available on messages that Janet, Rick or Michael sent to other BBS members.

The second and third samples were anonymous and used as "control groups" against which conclusions reached on the basis of sample 1 were tested. In sample 2, February 11 to March 21, also drawn from "General Chatter", Janet sends Rick 5 messages and receives 3 from Rick, the existence of which must be assumed.¹ Over the same time, Michael sends Janet 3 messages and receives 1 in return. These messages are exchanged in this conference in context of Janet sending 7 messages to other BBS users and receiving 9 from other users. Rick sends 1 message to other users and receives none. Michael neither sends nor receives any messages.

The third sample is taken from a conference entitled "Social Chatter"

¹ All the assumed messages are from Rick to Janet. These messages are assumed because I was unable to find them on the BBS, yet Janet's responses indicated that she had received messages from Rick.

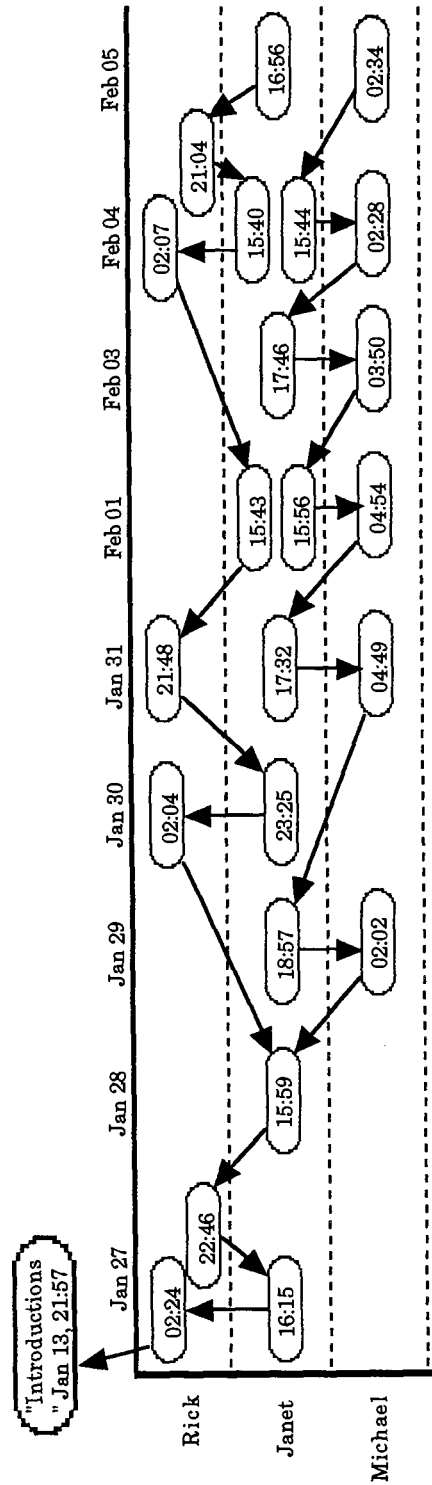
between February 7 and March 23. In this sample, Janet and Rick exchange 0 messages and Janet sends only 1 message to Michael while receiving 5 from Michael. No messages were missed (as in sample 2), as the last message from Michael in sample 3 complains of not receiving any replies. The messages in sample three are exchanged in the conference in context of Janet sending 33 messages to other users and receiving 35. Michael sent 6 and received 5 from other BBS users. Rick sent no messages and received none.

Tabulated, each character sent this number of messages to these recipients:

	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Total
J to R	6	5	0	11
R to J	6	3	0	9
M to J	6	3	5	14
J to M	5	1	1	7
J to others	n/a	7	33	40
Others to J	n/a	9	35	44
R to others	n/a	1	0	1
Others to R	n/a	0	0	0
M to others	n/a	0	6	6
Others to M	n/a	0	5	5

Notably, plotting the flow of these messages² (next page) reveals that the relationship between these three individuals is not triadic. Instead, there are two dyads centered around Janet. Thus, Janet and Rick exchange messages and Janet and Michael exchange messages. Rick and Michael do not exchange messages although in messages to Janet, Michael twice references Rick's comments to Janet.

² This graphing technique is adapted from Levin, Kim and Riel's discussion of Message Flow analysis, Message Mapping and Intermassage References. in Harasim 1990. Intermassage References traces "multiple threads" or "topics that are being pursued in parallel" by determining if messages reference each other. "Sometimes these references are clear: if the message sender used an "Answer" or "Reply" command" (Levin, Kim & Riel, 1990, p.192). Message mapping "makes clear the "multiple thread" nature of electronic message interaction" and Message Flow analysis plots "density of messages per unit time" (Levin, Kim & Riel, 1990, p.195, p.207).



General Chatter Jan 13--Feb 05/93

Figure 1: Message frequency showing dyadic communication

This finding is significant as it suggests that neither Rick nor Michael are interested in "social" or "general" chatter, but in meeting and talking with women. This finding corresponds to the overall connotation of the BBS implied by its name and the information for new users and provides a context in which membership and messages must be understood.

The BBS Scene

The analysis of Region and Setting involved examining the kind of BBS, Conference type and name, and how BBS functions separate message senders and receivers from other BBS participants. The information for new users is pertinent here. Although the BBS is named a Social Club, it emphasizes Guys 'N Gals.³ Together with the warning that adult material is discussed in some conferences and the statement that membership to adult conferences requires a copy of picture identification, this emphasis narrows the range of participants to those interested in dating and sex. Given this connotation, it is interesting that on August 9, only 1 message was listed in the adult conferences. This contrasts 801 messages listed in public access areas. Further, the titles of adult conferences are much less conducive to simply "meeting and talking" than to discussing certain explicit topics. Contrast these two sets of titles:

<u>Members only</u>	<u>Public access</u>
True Confessions	Introductions
Love & Lust	Pen Pals
My First Time	Great Outdoors
Favorite Fantacies ⁴	Music
1001 Sex Positions	Students Rap!

³ I have been told that Guys 'N Gals is particularly explicit.

⁴ This is a direct quotation from the BBS. All indented texts are quoted from the BBS and all mis-spellings have been kept to ensure the data is accurate.

Sexual Devices
Swinging

Buy & Sell
Silent Talk

The titles in the Members only section are much more specific and limiting to explicit discussions of sex than those in Public access. Conference titles thus set the scene by defining certain topics and behaviours as appropriate. Observations of messages in the Members only conferences revealed a willingness to describe acts and intentions in great depth. In these messages, people seemed to co-create or co-narrate a story the purpose of which was to explore certain attitudes and beliefs about sex. In the two conferences I examined, "General Chatter" and "Social Talk", messages are far less specific but often imply dating or sex. For example,

Why are you so sorrowfully single?...⁵Well have you come to the right place--not only am I incredibly good looking, but desperate as hell...It's true! I'll go out with ANYONE".

"Hi, are you a regular user? Do you wanna chat?"

"I know you wrote your description in the intro's but you didn't really used any adjectives...I'm having a hard time trying to visualize you...help?"

These messages facilitate general social contact and conversation, avoiding specific topics and references. This leaves the objective implied and thus deniable. The first example thus approaches the topic of dating humourously and with a high degree of irony. To ensure the reader understands the implication, the writer follows this paragraph with the statements "Nah-just joshin" and "You sound like an all right kinda guy--except for the fact that you're a huge sci-fi junkie-but I promise I won't hold it against you...". The goal, although unstated, is fairly clear. The writer makes an offer, retracts it, and then implies that the offer might be valid after all.

⁵ This is, I grant, an unusual place for a footnote, but I must point out that these ellipses do not indicate material that has been left out. Rather, they are commonly used in these CMC messages as written signs of verbal pauses, spacing between words, or time to think.

BBS Regions

Goffman's division of Region into Front, Back and Outside is evident in communication on this BBS. Messages traded publicly between characters exist in the front region and are open to the examination of all interested BBS characters. The back region exists as the area "behind the screen", the area in which the characters exist as biological beings instead of their textual manifestation on the BBS. In the back region, characters can adjust or scrutinize aspects of their self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) even as it is being created in messages as the computer allows messages to be composed and edited *before* they are posted. The back region is of tremendous importance in CMC as the character's presentation can first be rehearsed or typed and edited in the back region before being presented in the front region. Outside exists as the world not involved in this BBS.

However, the definitions of both Front and Outside regions can be further elaborated. Although all messages exist in the front region and are open to the scrutiny of all, to a dyad sending and receiving messages, the front region is the space between the two characters. This is effected structurally, as the BBS tells its users whether they have mail waiting for them when they sign on to the system. A character in a dyad will see a message from the other character immediately after signing on to the system. Other characters, those not involved in the dyadic exchange, can monitor these messages by "scanning" the list of messages in the appropriate conference and reading the messages. The BBS both directs a message to its addressee and simultaneously posts it publicly. Characters may be unaware that others have access to, or read, messages.

For example, one character writes:

Well...I'd write more but this place is public....I didn't know ppeople actually
READ these messages till today...
How totally, ultimately embarassing.....all that stuff I wrote....

Here, the character's sense of Front is restricted to the dyad. Messages were perceived as private correspondence and the intrusion of "outsiders", those outside the dyad, entails knowledge of private or region specific information and is embarassing. In other examples involving Rick, Michael and Janet, the same feeling of dyad as a private region and observers as outsiders is apparent.

This particular exchange, and indeed, Michael's whole relationship with Janet, begins with a message in which Michael quotes a message between Rick and Janet and asks what kinds of authors Janet likes to read. Unlike Rick, who formally introduced himself, and asked Janet if she'd like to chat, Michael's first message reads:

In a message to R W <01-28-93 15:59> J K wrote:

[... skipping a bit here ...]

JK> Well, I can also be a harsh bookworm, when I'm in the mood,

[... skipping a bit here ...]

What sorts of authors do you like, then? Michael Moorcock and H.P.
Lovecraft
are about my favorites...

In the next message Michael writes to Janet, he describes in detail his attraction to H.P. Lovecraft as a horror writer and Janet responds with "Hey, thanks for the tips! I'll give them a try! Bye for now!". When Michael feels slighted and comments on this response's brevity,

JK>Hey, thanks for the tips! I'll give them a try! Bye for
JK>now!

That's a short response!

Just out of curiosity, you ever play XiangQi (Chinese Chess)?

Janet retorts:

Sorry for replying so short, but what do you want me to say? Well, I don't know how to play Chinese chess, but I know how to play Chinese Checkers! Close enough? I also know how to play regular chess, but not Chinese Chess! Sorry!
Well, I'm pressed for time so I guess I'll go! BYE!

Here, Janet not only expresses her frustration with Michael's unstated expectations ("but what do you want me to say?"), but also through the redundancy of the information she provides, implies that she feels obliged to respond but is not willing to engage in further contact. This is reinforced textually with her emphatic "BYE!". Note a similar tone and technique in her next reply to one of Michael's messages:

Sorry, I'm pressed for time. Yes I know hoew to play backgammon, but it's kind of boring. I have to go, I only have five minuts left! Sorry! Write more next time!

By intruding on the Janet-Rick dyad and quoting part of Rick's message to Janet, Michael indicated that he was observing from outside the dyad. His question on authors and following comment on H.P. Lovecraft was not proceeded by any permission to establish contact or invitation. In contrast to the treatment accorded Michael, another character transgressed the same boundary between outside and front, but due to the manner in which this second character initiated this breach, the response was favorable. This second character began the initial message with a formal salutation and an opening statement apologizing for asking the question: "Hi Janet. I hope you don't mind me asking this, but do Oriental people prefer to be referred as

"Oriental" or "Asian"?". The difference between this intrusion and Michael's is that Michael broke the boundary between the front and outside region without going through what Berne called the appropriate "ritual" (Berne, 1972). The front region exists, therefore, as both the conference in which messages are exchanged, but also as the space between two characters, the space in which characters are presented, negotiated and created. Outside is also the space outside the BBS, but also outside a particular conversational dyad. Space, in the BBS, has a public privateness in which certain space is owned and can only be entered with permission.

Analyzing BBS Characters

Physical attributes of characters

The analysis of physical attributes involved examining texts for deliberate descriptions of the body's physical attributes. Two classes of physical description were revealed: Deliberately revealed characteristics and characteristics which were Alluded to. Deliberate physical attributes are descriptions of age, race, height, eye colour and hair colour or length. Alluded physical attributes are descriptions of events such as sports, running, or stories of skiing which imply physical activity and reference stereotypes. There are 29 Physical Attributes in all the samples, comprising 21 Deliberate and 7 Alluded descriptions. For example, Janet describes herself in this manner in her Introductory message:

Hi everyone, I'm fairly new to modeming and would like to meet people through this BBS. I'm a 16 year old Oriental girl, 5'1 and shoulder length black hair. I love playing sports, reading, and modeming. If you want to find out more about me, leave me a message! I promise to write back.

Later!

Janet describes age,height,hair colour and length, information which is really not relevant to strictly electronic communication, but obviously information which she feels defines her character on the BBS. Interestingly, only Janet provides such detail. Both Rick and Michael limit their messages to age and height. Rick states that he is "18, 5/10: and am Chinese (obviously)" (his surname is Wong). In another Introductory conference, Michael gives two descriptions, in the first he only states he is 29, in the second, he says he is "5 ft 10 in an weigh in at about 200 pounds [not built like a beach ball, but I do have a spare tire I'm trying to get rid of...]. I've got black hair and hazel eyes." Michael also states that he has "a "mutton chops" style beard".

There are three instances of physical description of particular interest. In Instance 1, a character attempts to describe another and states that he is "writing to you telling you how I THINK you look...well, how you look in my mind". This character continues to say:

beautiful, fragile,,um...small pouting lips, [sic] hmmm....eyes sharp as blades, comfortinglyliquid brown....hmmmm...so...am I close? Far? Or about right with some of the parts over exaterated? I know! Everythings wrong but the height? I know you wrote your descrtipion in the intr's but you didn't really used any adjectives...I'm having a hard time trying to visualize you.... help?

In Instance 2, Janet writes:

Well, your description of me can be pretty cølose....I have shoulder length black hair, no glasses, (contacts), a kind of oval face, kindof pale, not too tanned, hardly any zits, small eyes, kind of poutedmouth, short, average weight

In Instance 3, the character writes

I'm either tall...or not, my hair is the following...shave sides, long bangs down my face to the tip of my nose...my face is roundish...I have glasses...zits...and a large frame

These examples of Deliberate physical description reveal that deliberate physical descriptions are made in two ways. Janet's second self-description (Instance 2) and Instance 3 indicate a Pragmatic approach to the self's attributes when contrasted with the Idealized approaches in Janet's introductory message and Instance 1. The idealized approaches reflect stereotypes. There are 12 Pragmatic and 9 Idealized descriptions of physical attributes. Janet's introductory message reflects the stereotype of personal advertisements. Instance 1 reflects, in the character's own words, "my description of what I think is the perfect looking asian girl?".

The pragmatic and idealized approaches to describing physical attributes differ not just in the use of adjectives, but in the perspective from which the body is described. Although both kinds of description illustrated in these examples could describe just about any person, the idealized descriptions focus only on attributes important to the stereotype. Thus, Janet's introductory message incorporates attributes needed for the personal ad, age, height, interests and Instance 1 incorporates the attributes of "the perfect...asian girl". The pragmatic approach involves a self-description which focuses on a list of specific attributes and sees attributes of the body from a functional, rather than a image-oriented, viewpoint.

Age is an important Deliberate physical attribute on this BBS. In the collected samples, age is mentioned 7 times. In four of these occasions, age is mentioned as a denial of any "proper" social or sexual relationship. Thus, characters state: "you may be very young, but this machine said we were a match", "I'm old enough to be her father", "At 18 years of age, you shoudl [sic] be concentrating on your studies insktead [sic] of chasing after girls, like 13

year olds", and "Are you really 15? oops".

The other two examples, drawn from Rick and Janet's first messages seem to fall in the same category, but less obviously. Both Janet and Rick begin their messages with their age, followed by school (a Social characteristic). These two important social characteristics seem to assert membership in a group that could legitimately and legally, engage in a relationship. Thus, Janet states: "Well, stuff about me... I'm 16, 5'1(I know, too short for my age) and I'm in Grade 11 at Churchill Secondary" and Rob writes: "Well to start off, I'm 19, attending Douglas College part time, studying business".

Race is another aspect of the physical self that is also used in an idealized manner. A character says that he'd

"rather be called Asian...sounds tougher.. I mean... think about it "Oreintal Gangbanger" + "Asian Gangster"... Asian Gangster has a nice ring to it..don't you think? So...I think all males form asia are Asian, and all girls from there are..well Oriental. I dunno, the word "oriental" has a fragile ring to it"

Here, the image of the Asian Gangster is applied to the self on the basis of race. At this point, though, physical attributes become part of individual attitudes, as this attempt at infusing the character with "toughness" is clearly an individual interest.

The second class of physical description relies on Allusions to the physical self through descriptions of activities or qualities related to the physical self.

Thus, Rick says:

"I enjoy playing various sports, floor hockey, bicycling, some light weight lifting."
"It's just like swimming for me...I remember the first time I went diving"
"I usually play floor hockey, gonna start swimming soon, basketball and tennis, I totally suck at tennis"

In this example, an image of the physical self is created through the assumed ability of the character to perform these activities at some level. Note that Rick feels it important to qualify weight lifting with "light". This adjective differentiates Rick from "power" lifters, or those weight lifters concerned less with fitness and more with muscle development. Other characters also mention activities such as cutting through somebody's backyard or jumping a fence. Both this activity and Rick's description provide an image or sense of the kind of person. Although the physical self is not directly described, impressions of the kind of body can be gleaned.

Like Deliberate physical attributes, Allusions can also be based on idealized attributes. It is here that Goffman's concept of characters as idealized constructions appears most evident. The Allusion is based upon, and creates, an Idealized image. For example:

You are really blond? and like x country skiing? and just haveing fun? Are you really 15? oops.

Here, both physical attributes and activities invoke a particular response. In this response, the character indicates the important physical attributes and activities for the image: blond, cross-country skiing, having fun. Together these descriptions create the idealized image of the blond nymphet skier. But, as the character acknowledges, this image is negated by age. Yet, the question remains, is this image really negated? Or is the image maintained, and the reality of a physical meeting negated?

Individual characteristics of characters

Messages were also examined for evidence of Individual Characteristics. This category encompasses "I" statements which make features of the character not immediately open to perception available to others. Specifically, this involved statements such as "I like/have/am/ think/feel/know" or statements in which "I" is implied but not has been specifically stated, such as "An early bed-time is a good thing" (where "I think" is implied).

Statements revealing Individual Characteristics were found to fit into three categories: Activities, Attitudes, and Descriptions Implying Attitudes.

Activities are games, hobbies, sports or actions like driving a car or singing Karaoke described by a character. Attitudes are statements in which characters reveal their values, likes and dislikes and display their perceptions. Descriptions are passages in which characters narrate a story to provide or support a particular personal value or point of view. Of the 60 passages providing Individual Characteristics, 25 are Activities, 31 are Attitudes and 4 are Descriptions.

Characters describe their likes, hobbies, abilities and interests by detailing what they have been involved in doing, or are currently doing. Thus, Janet states that

I'm learning how to drive, although I'm not too good yet! I have no siblings, and I like to read, watch TV, chat on the phone, play sports, go shopping, etc.

She describes a current Activity, driving, which remains a theme throughout all her messages in every sample, suggesting its importance to her. Engaging

in this activity is part of her socialization into automobile culture and is part of the self-presentation of an adult. Janet also lists other activities, reading, watching TV, chatting on the phone, sports and shopping. Many of these fall into stereotypical activities for teenage girls and are not referred to in subsequent messages, although it is on the basis of liking to read that Michael sends his first message to Janet.

Her description of her driving also reveals a variation of the Activity category, Activity + Evaluation. Often, characters present an activity, and follow the description with a phrase assigning a value or opinion to the activity such as: driving + "I'm not too good yet!", "learned how to play Mah Jong" + "sort of", or "car nut" + "harsh". These evaluations give an insight into the character's self-perception of the activity. However, evaluations also down-play the accomplishment or significance of the activity. Janet almost always follows a description of her driving with another similar to: "I'm a terrible driver, so just remember to stay off the streets. You don't want to die young".

Rick also describes himself using a similar pattern of descriptions:

I enjoy playing various sports, floor hockey, bicycling, some light weight lifting. Some of my hobbies include, being a harsh car nut...which includes customizing them and installing stereos into them for other people as a second job.

We have already seen how Rick uses "light" to modify "weight lifting" and avoids the perception of weight lifting for body building. The other sports Rick describes also help avoid the label of 'jock'. Floor hockey is not qualitatively the same sport as ice hockey and bicycling similarly avoids this

image. This entire passage, juxtaposing sports and hobbies, provides a broader sense of Rick beyond the implications for Rick's physical attributes. Rick describes his involvement with cars as more than simply being a "car nut" but a hobby, implying that it is a regular, scheduled event, or more frequent than a simple interest. And this hobby is shown to have a practical side, it doubles as "a second job".

Importantly, such extensive lists of Individual Activities occur only in the first messages Janet and Rick exchange. Janet's list of activities follows Rick's invitation to "Tell some stuff about yourself and I'll tell you some stuff about me" and Rick's list follows Janet's reciprocal invitation "Well, reply soon and tell me more about yourself!". Later messages focus on particular activities and do not display such a broad or diverse range of interests.

In their messages, characters thus reveal their selves through activities, evaluations, and the personal beliefs or attitudes they evince. This second category, Attitudes, of Individual Characteristics defines the character by revealing the character's approaches toward self, others and the world. They reveal the character's perceptions and values. For example, Michael contrasts his attitudes toward horror literature with those of Janet in this exchange:

Michael: In a message to Rick W <01-28-93 15:59> Janet K wrote:

[... skipping a bit here ...]

JK> Well, I can also be a harsh bookworm, when I'm in the mood,

[... skipping a bit here ...]

What sorts of authors do you like, then? Michael Moorcock and H.P. Lovecraft are about my favorites...

Janet: Hi! Well, I read mostly mystery, suspense and horror. So my favorite authors are John Saul, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen King, and all other suspense writers. I mostly like bestsellers. See ya!

Michael: If you like horror, you should give Lovecraft a go. His books are kind of hard to find in most mainstream book stores nowadays. But they're interesting....

.....Anyway, I'm a Lovecraft fan through and through and if you like horror there worth a read.

If you like Fantasy novels, Micael Moorcock is good; huge quantities of books to his credit.

That's it for now. See you later...

Here, Michael provides a story emphasizing the superiority of "his" kind of horror over the Hollywood kind. The length and detail of his story suggests his enthusiasm and interest in the topic so that by the end, stating that he's "a Lovecraft fan through and through" is kind of an understatement. This kind of Individual Attitudes information is impossible to know without the character's disclosure.

In other messages, Rick provides the attitude that he is "easy-going, understanding person that's fairly easy to communicate with", that he has "trouble getting [himself] to read (especially textbooks! heh)", and that he like Janet, gets "hyper". But, he states that he only gets hyper when he doesn't get enough sleep. Rick also reveals that

I'm trying to braoden my vocabulary as I watch Chinese Karaoke videos and attempt to match what the singer's saying and perhaps understand what he's saying...oh, and I can also sing one or two Chinese songs...after long hours of practising.

This statement begins a long progression of questions, answers, and self-disclosure concerning Chinese language and Chinese school between Rick and Janet. They exchange information on which dialects they speak (Rick speaks toy san and Janet speaks Cantonese), which Chinese schools they attended

(Strathcona and Chinese Cultural Centre for Rick and Janet respectively),
and why they quit. Janet says that she quit

cause I hated it and I was too busy with piano. So now, I guess I'm not totally illiterate, I can read some, but I can't remember to write anything except simple characters and my name

For his part, Rick explains:

At least you made it up to grade 4. I quit when I was grade 2. I didn't hate it that much, it's just the damn teacher that I hated more than anything

The Individual Attitudes evident in these statements concern overt attitudes toward the school or the teacher and the relative importance of playing piano. Rick implies that there was some extra worth in "making it" to grade 4 instead of grade 2. The worth he assigns this achievement is borne out by attitudes he now holds toward Chinese. He is trying to improve his vocabulary by watching Chinese Karaoke, initiates contact with Janet on the basis of both being Chinese, asks Janet about dialect, mentions Chinese school, asks Janet about singing Karaoke and includes the statement that he is "Chinese (obviously)" in his introductory message to the BBS.

The Individual Attitudes Janet reveals in her messages are not only that she can "be a harsh bookworm" but also that she "can be the noisiest person you know when I get hyper". She states

I also like to have fun and socialize, but then sometimes I like to be alone and be somewhat of a loner. So you see, I have split personalities

Here, she characterizes herself, contrasting quietness and introspection with exuberance and silliness. She presents a balanced view of her self, providing two extremes, and acknowledges these extremes in herself. In her description of herself as "hyper", the statements that "When I'm hyper,; I can

ask the dumbest questions" and "I dont know why I get hyped up so much", together with her self-analysis as "split personality" suggest she perceives a "switch" in self, rather than a continuum of behaviour. She presents herself as two quite different selves.

The final manner in which Individual Attitudes are conveyed to other characters is through Description. Using this process, characters narrate a story or significant event to illustrate a particular point. For example, in discussing horror authors, Michael states his preference for H.P. Lovecraft. And in support of his point, he also says in the same message:

He created what's now commonly called the 'Cthulhu Mythos' with those stories of his. One of the best stories carrying on Lovecraft's stories I've read is "Strange Eons" by Robert Bloch (author of the Psycho novels). I leant it to someone once (and since lost my copy); hew was a smat-a** 15 year old who thought that Friday the 13th and Nightmare on Elmstreet movies were the penultimate in horror. So, he borrows my copy of "Strange Eons" and has the cheek to complain about it too me later on. Seems he had a fortnight worth of nightmares and kept on waking up expecting some of the vile beings in that book to appear in his bedroom.

And in case you're wondering about the title, it came from one of Lovecraft's most famous lines:

"That which is dead may eternal lie
And with strange eons even death may die."

Thus, in addition to describing the novels and his interest, Michael provides a story reinforcing the same point and providing "proof". He contrasts Lovecraft's "scare factor" with Hollywood's and through the agent of the 15 year-old, illustrates the difference. This story also gives Michael a chance to expound upon what seems one of his favourite topics. In his introductory messages to the BBS, posted in 1989, Michael describes himself as having an interest in fantasy and science fiction, and specifically Lovecraft novels.

Using a similar technique, Rick discusses Janet's terrible driving. He states

that she can't be that bad and all she requires is a little confidence. She should believe him, he says, because

I've taught many a driver, and still survived...most of them were pretty nerved up in the beginning, but it got better later on.

Rick thus describes his competence and ability as driver, teacher, and confidence-creator. He acknowledges the danger, but feels casual enough to joke about it, he's "still survived". Rick's casual attitude toward danger is also contained in the statement immediately preceding this, that he's "an ok driver, but have a hard time avoiding the cops here and there". Speeding is portrayed as a game with obstacles, cops, that must be avoided, otherwise one can do as one likes. To further illustrate his implied point that confidence is gained through perseverance, Rick narrates a story:

It's just like swimming for me...I remember the first time I went diving, I was soooo freaked out, but I had a very strict gym teacher and it was a do or die situation...he wouldn't let me go until I could do it right, and that kind of persistence paid off at the end.

Both the story about driving and the story about swimming describe aspects of Rick that are "hidden" and available only to him. In the process of describing the events in the story, Rick reveals information about his self deliberately and other characters can use the story's significance to gain impressions. The swimming story reveals that Rick had a hard time learning to dive, that he needed somebody to force him to do it, but also that he feels persistence pays off "at the end". He implies that good things are gained by taking a risk and pushing oneself.

Individual Characteristics thus reveal information about the character as information the character releases, and through other characters'

interpretation of the significance of that information. These characteristics build a character's self around self-disclosed items. Characters release this information through disclosing Activities and evaluations, Attitudes they adopt, and Descriptions of current or past events.

Social characteristics of characters

The third category of message content, Social Characteristics contrasts physical or individual information, as it is information that characters disclose placing them in particular relationships, or networks, with other people. Thus, Social Characteristics are items like jobs, school, relationships or family. This information ranks characters in a similar fashion to age, making certain activities legitimate and others not. In the context of this BBS therefore, references to parents might be expected to be seldom, as this suggests that characters aren't in complete control over their future. They are thus less legitimate as independent, self-created, social actors.

There are three sub-categories of Social Characteristic information: Educational, Emotional, and Financial. In total, there are 114 passages specifying Social Characteristics. Educational information reveals the character's formal training and suggests current interests, career and future career by triggering stereotypes. There are 25 passages specifying Educational information. Emotional information places the character in context of family and personal relationships. There are 62 passages revealing Emotional information. Presence on this BBS, expectations, and action consequences might be expected to be affected by being in certain relationships, family or personal. Financial information specifies the

character's ability to participate in consumer culture and the acquisition of material status goods. There are 27 passages revealing Financial information.

Obviously, Educational information is pertinent mainly to the student population on the BBS. A large percentage of characters in the samples seem to be students as there are frequent mentions of school, grades, and assignments. Of the total number of messages⁶ in the sample, 8.33% concern these topics. Certainly, educational information is important to both Janet and Rick as their first messages specify their school and grade:

I'm 16, 5'1(I know, too short for my age) and I'm in Grade 11 at Churchill Secondary.

I'm 19, attending Douglas College part time, studying business.

Here, educational information is presented along with the physical attribute of age. Educational information locates the character socially as being in school, and specifies status within school. Thus, one character says, "I'm still in school...even younger than Janet!" and another character asks "Tell me more about yourself first. Are you still in high school? What grade?" Importantly, the educational information Janet and Rick provide occurs within the first four messages they exchange. After that, school is mentioned once in a question: "How about you, besides the school?"

As we have seen above, Janet first mentions school, Rick provides his school

⁶ As I mentioned previously, the total of 252 is inaccurate, as no contextual messages are available for the first sample. However, although these numbers are not statistically generalizable, this is not the purpose of this thesis, nor of providing the numbers. In examining the usefulness of Goffman's theory, the focus is on the theory. Numbers and frequencies thus serve as an indication or illustration of a trend.

status, but in a third message Janet states:

Well, I'm 16, so in two years I'll be graduating. I plan to go to UBC if I can get in, but I don't know what to go into yet.

This message suggests a process of status equalization. After Rick mentions his post-secondary schooling, Janet describes her plans to attend a post-secondary institution. Although her high school graduation is two years away and she doesn't know what program she plans to take, her plans include the most prestigious university in the Lower Mainland. This suggests an interest in equating herself, or asserting similarity, with Rick.

Michael only mentions school once, in discussing another character. He states that he knows this character as he "did go to some classes with him, way back when". Here too, school is used as a social marker of time. In Michael's narration, school is something in the past.

The messages also reveal Emotional information regarding the characters' family or personal relationships. Very little family information is revealed in these messages. Janet mentions that her parents can speak toy san, and her mom "is fluent in a lot of dialects", that she's an only child, that her cousin lives with them, and that her father takes care of the fishtank. Rick only mentions that he has "one bro and one sis". For his part, Michael makes no mention of any family.

Likewise, Janet, Rick and Michael also do not mention personal relationships. At one point, Janet asks Rick what he did on Valentine's Day. Rick states only that he did "nothing much" and notes:

the funny thing is by the time Valentines comes up, I would have girl to share it with...most of the girls I know found other guys to be [with]

In return, Janet states that she "didn't do anything special" on Valentine's Day and that it was "[j]ust another day" for her." One day later, Janet tells Rick that she doesn't care if she gets into a relationship "or not at this point. It's not really a big deal". These are the only incidents where Janet or Rick mention personal or familial relationships in the samples.

Throughout the other samples, parents are only mentioned 3 times. Characters report that their parents disapprove of using BBSs because it interferes with their school work. However, in several cases, they also report using the BBS when they are not supposed to. In these cases, the entire message concerns their illicit use of the modem, and the metamessage seems to be the value or importance of maintaining contact with their friends using the BBS. Thus, Janet says that

I don't know if I can call or not cuz my mom told my cousin to destroy all the modem software, just so I can't use it. She's getting pissed. But since my cousin isn't home now, I spent like about 1/2 an hour figuring out how to use communications on MS Works. It sucks, but I guess it'll have to do for now. Luckily, my cousin forgot about this program.

or, in another context,

I'm not supposed to be on the modem right now, in fact I didn't even modem all night, I was so busy doing a huge project due tuesday that I haven't even started until today.

In this respect, the BBS is used to facilitate friendship relations. That is, much of the discussion centres around what characters have done, will do, or can do in the future, either on the BBS or elsewhere. Thus, one character comments that he likes "the modem friends, and who knows I might even get more". Another asks whether anybody has 'seen' a group of his old friends on

any BBSs and two others use the BBS to announce their presence and solicit messages:

Hello all in Guys & Gals land. My name is Andrew, and I am new to this echo. I would be interested in chatting with anyone here. (as long as no-one will start bashing/flaming me) I have read the previous few messages and realize a wee bit of tension around here, so I figured I'd come on by and give some of you someone else to talk TO, hopefully not ABOUT!

Hi ther - I'm the new kid in this - electronic - town. I've lived in Vancouver almost all of my life, but am new to the BBS circuit. Anyway, I just wanted to say hi and beg for someone to write back to me so we can get some correspondence started.

Hope to be hearinf from you soon

Hi there T, seems that we meet then go away for so long. When was the last time we chatted, must be years now. (how are the grandchildren) :) So what is new? I guess you have been keeping busy with your BBS and school, but that is no excuse to stop mailing to your o'l buddy! How'd you do with your midterms? (such a dirty word eh!) I got me a new job finally! I'm the new assistant head cook at a new restaurant in Surrey. Real nice place, I think it will do well. (I hope so I'm already looking forward to getting a raise) Well time to go and fill my other mail orders. hehe.

These messages not only facilitate friendships but act as public signs of the friendships. Because messages are exchanged publicly, friendships are enacted publicly. Interestingly, characters exchange messages with relatively little comment from others on the BBS. Thus, two characters flirt and in the course of their comments, one mentions being a closet Star Trek fan. This elicits a comment from a completely different character that:

Well, now the whole world knows, or at least the part of the world that calls this BBS. :) Which Trek do you like, the original series or the next generation?

And for the most part, Rick and Janet exchange messages independently from anybody's commentary, although Michael and one other character do interject comments. Notably though, these interventions only create further dyadic relations.

Not only does the sample reveal that characters use the BBS to facilitate friendships, but one argument took place on the BBS. This argument occurred between Janet and another member of the high school characters on the BBS during the time of the sample. The other character states that

If you want to bash me then fine. You don't have to post it privately just for me not to see. That's why you said you were busy. You just don't want to talk me. Ok Ok that will be fine with me then.

And Janet responds

If I did bash you, it was in private. I can do whatever I like in private messages. Whoever told you I did, I don't know. But obviously you have no respect for others. If you wanted to post this message, you could have done it in a private message. But since you wanted to make it public I don't care.

Meanwhile, this argument becomes the subject of observations between other characters. One character, new to the BBS who knows the others, notes

Woah! Something major is happening here! I'm not gonna quote this... way too much stuff to quote, and quite private too (in a public way)... I take it Mr. Au has been acting a "little" bit like a jerk...?

This argument prompts one character to note that:

it does make for a modern soap opera. Always found that whatever goes around comes around, so in the end, everyone ends up involved in something. But, the mail flow is just too much here. If this dispute doesn't settle down here soon, I'm going to have more mail here than even the international penpals echo that I'm supposed to be supporting.

It is following this pattern that messages regarding friendships are exchanged on the BBS. Characters that are already acquainted through other means, school, telephone, or face-to-face, use the BBS to facilitate aspects of their existing relationships. Communication between characters that do not know each other outside the BBS can be described as "chatting". Indeed, characters use this verb in their offers to other characters:

Hello all in Guys & Gals land. My name is Andrew, and I am new to this

echo. I would be interested in chatting with anyone here. (as long as no-one will start bashing/flaming me)

Wanted to answer your messages here instead of in the pen pal message area...It goes international, and messages between local folks is really a no-no. Anyway, we can chat here instead if you want

Lets chat here.... well write messages here anyways.. its so much easier to get on.

One assumes that this kind of chatting would lead to communication similar to that which occurred between Janet and Rick. It would take place as an informal exchange of demographic information in a dyad, information allowing characters to state that they "know" something about the other, and then proceed to attitudes, opinions and feelings about topics emerging out of their transactions. Such communication is monitored by other characters and used to provide "entry points" into dyads of their own. This is the technique demonstrated by Michael and other characters in the sample. Thus, Michael uses Janet's comment about reading to create his own dyad with Janet and another uses a comment about Asians or Orientals to begin a similar style of discussion. Emotional information thus serves to accomplish or facilitate social action, the coordination and negotiation of social roles and meanings. It reveals characters' perceptions of self and other through messages or parts of messages which are used to negotiate, further, or stimulate social roles, relationships and meanings.

The final category of information appearing as a Social Characteristic is Financial Information. Financial information specifies the character's ability to participate in consumer culture and possess or engage in symbolically important activities. Thus, references to jobs, spending, goods or possessions reveal the character's financial ability and trigger stereotypes for other

characters. As might be expected with a large population of students, this sample does not reveal that BBS users hold executive positions. Jobs mentioned are: piano teacher, assistant head cook, taxi driver, sub-manager at newspaper, writer for newspaper, freelance photographer, self-employed desktop publisher. Other characters state that they are students, suggesting either that they have part-time jobs, student loans, or some other financial resources.

Jobs form a basis for judging or placing another character as Janet reveals in her question to Rick. In her third message to Rick she asks,

Do you have a job? I have one ,sort of. It each piano. I've been playing for 11 years now, and I have my diploma.

Rick states that he installs stereos and alarms in cars as "a second job". He never mentions his "first" job, even though Janet asks twice. Perhaps this is simply an oversight. Michael's job is never mentioned to either Janet or Rick, although elsewhere in the samples, he discusses it with another character who states that

It may not be the ultimate career choice, but it keeps you alive. That is the most important thing. If you can do anything well and make a decent buck at it, whose to say there's anything wrong with it?

Financial matters, and spending money are referenced in an interesting manner between Rick and Janet, and Janet and Michael. Rick alludes to his search for a job, and states that he can't find "any one that I'm particularly interested in". His casual attitude toward finding a job that interests seems to fit with his casual approach mentioned elsewhere. Responding to Janet's

it...a few months ago". This answer suggests Michael disapproves of copying software illegally, as Janet had asked if he knew where she could find a Mah Jong program. It also suggests that Michael's interest in computers is sufficient to warrant spending part of his income on computer games. Using this phrase clearly distinguishes those who can afford software from those on the BBS, students generally, who cannot.

But for the most part, jobs themselves are not directly discussed. A photographer mentions that a next assignment is a video catalogue for a lingerie house and this becomes a topic of discussion with another character. They comment on the pay and reflect on their common "interest" in the subject matter using oblique phrases such as "it's a tough job" or "Lucky you... no actually, too bad". As in this example, jobs form the backdrop, or context for other subjects. These characters discuss the subject matter, other characters mention the need to earn more money, get raises, or the comfort of having a steady income.

Self-Presentation Through Message Structure

The structure of messages provides information about the character through the Manner in which characters create messages and the Appearance of those messages. Structure is analyzed through two categories, Manner and Appearance, both of which were derived from Goffman. Manner reveals an expected "interaction role" and Appearance, a character's "temporary ritual state" (Goffman, 1959, p.24). The Manner and Appearance of a message allow characters to individuate themselves through distinctive use of message format and language. Other characters can also interpret these components

of message structure as possessing meanings. Therefore, Manner and Appearance operate as metamessage, framing the content. Furthermore, as a character's "interaction role" is revealed not only by the content, but also the manner in which content is communicated, through questions instead of assertions for example, message Structure and Content interact. Similarly, the appearance of a message, or the unique way in which characters use language, provides a sense of the personality narrating the message. Both Content and Structure provide an interpretive context for the other.

A character's expected "interaction role" is revealed through the organization and appearance of messages. Manner is therefore operationalized as: salutation, opener, comment, question, answer, invitation and closing. These message components structure the way characters communicate and reveal their perceptions of BBS communication. Appearance is operationalized as lexicon, spelling, punctuation and symbol use and topics. These categories reveal a character's perceptions of self and other.

Manner in Messages

The various components of Manner are defined as follows. The first three, Salutation, Opener, and Closing refer to the organization of certain conventional kinds of information in a message.

Salutation: The way the narrator greets the reader. Five kinds: (1) named "Hi Rob", (2) name implied "Hi" (when message is directly addressed to Rob for example), (3) citation, "In a message to X on this date, Y said", (4) generic "Hi everyone", (5) none

Opener: A phrase, sentence with which the message begins, introducing a subject or discussion. Two kinds of openers, either (1) Quotation, or (2) Continuation. As a continuation, the opener

either leads directly into the message and is a comment or answer, or begins with some form of phatic communication such as "Well" or "Yes". Together, the salutation and the opener contextualize the following text regarding time and subject.

- Closing:** A ritual or conventional phrase, sentence, or manner through which the author moves to close the message, bringing this contact to a close, terminating the message and sending it.
- Question:** A question asked.
- Answer:** The direct response to a question asked by another. An answer can be followed by a comment, personal description, or social status indicator elaborating the response or putting it in a context.
- Comment:** A sentence or sentences responding to, elaborating upon or discussing a subject in the other's message. It does not involve asking a question, giving an answer or describing a personal attribute.
- Invitation:** A statement acknowledging current communication between characters and directly inviting the other to further mutual action or contact.

Messages were analyzed as follows.

Salutation

<u>Salutation style</u>	<u>R to J</u>	<u>J to R</u>	<u>J to M</u>	<u>M to J</u>
named	4	5		
name implied	2		2	
none		1	3	5
citation				1

Salutations are Named when the message begins with "Hi Janet!" or "Hi Michael". Name Implied salutations involve only "Hi" or "Hey" and imply the name, as the BBS software requires messages to be addressed to a specific character. When no salutation is used (None), either a Citation is used, or the salutation has been skipped and the character has proceeded directly to the message Opener. A Citation, used in place of a salutation, gives a formal reference to a specific event.

Citations are always followed with opening quotations. For example:

In a message to Rick W <01-28-93 15:59> Janet K wrote:

The only two of Rick's messages in which he uses a Name Implied salutation are his first two to Janet. Following those messages, and Michael's first message to Janet, he addresses all his messages with "Hi Janet!" or "Hi Jan!" But it is difficult to know whether Michael's message stimulates this change. However, following that intervention, like Michael, Rick begins to use quotations from Janet's messages in the Openers of his messages. Thus, the kinds and styles of Openers can be charted in this fashion:

Opener

<u>Opener style</u>	<u>R to J</u>	<u>J to R</u>	<u>J to M</u>	<u>M to J</u>
quotation	4			5
continuation:				
comment	1	2	3	
answer	1	4	1	

Michael always uses the Quotation style of opener in all his messages. This involves quoting a pertinent section of Janet's message as a preface. For example, Michael's first message involves a Citation salutation and a Quotation opener:

```
Date: 29-Jan-93 02:02
From: Michael M
To: Janet K
Subj: hi
Previous Reply is Message #2716. Next Reply is Message #2741
```

In a message to Rick W <01-28-93 15:59> Janet K wrote:

[... skipping a bit here ...]

JK> Well, I can also be a harsh bookworm, when I'm in the mood,

[... skipping a bit here ...]

In contrast, Janet always uses the Continuation style, either commenting directly on a section of Michael's or Rick's messages, or answering a question they posed. This style suggest that characters conceive of messages in a seamless series, that the current message flows from the previous message despite the time-lag. A Continuation message style can involve using a salutation, but the message itself is not prefaced with any ritualized introductory material. Thus, instead of starting a message with "Hi Rick, have a good day? I did", Janet writes:

Date: 29-Jan-93 18:57
From: Janet K
To: Michael M
Subj: hi
Previous Reply is Message #2720. Next Reply is Message #2744

Hi! Well, I read mostly mystery, suspence and horror. So my favorite authors are John Saul, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen King, and all other suspence writers. I mostly like bestsellers.

In this message, the salutation is Name Implied and Janet begins immediately with an answer to Michael's question.

Closing

Closings provide information information about a character's perceptions of a relationship with another character. Although the messages reveal three broad types of closings, the various kinds of closings can not easily be categorized. Except in one case, Invitations, most closings reveal a high degree of ambiguity and their interpretation is subject to the interpretation of message content. For example, consider the increasing level of ambiguity about further action evident in these closings:

Hope to hear from you soon
Well, talk to you soon
Well, gotta go...later!
See ya!
Well, I'm pressed for time so I guess I'll go! BYE!

Thus, two more broad classes of closings can be identified, Topic Change and Non-Committal. A Topic Change signifies the end of the message by radically shifting the topic of discussion to a conventional topic such as the weather. This signals to the character reading the message that the end of the message is approaching and serves to "lighten" the tone of the message. Thus, in a message to Janet, Rick quotes Janet's mention of her driving lessons, makes a comment on the cost of lessons and then states:

Such nice weather we're having these days, eh?
later,
Rick

Later, Janet responds to Rick's comment, placing her comment about the weather as her closing. In a response to Janet's message chastising him for his expectations, Michael closes his four sentence message with a Topic Change closing. He explains that there is "[n]o real problem with the short reply. I just felt kind of jipped; I mean, writing up a couple of paragraphs and getting a one sentence reply" and closes with a question: "So, you don't know Chinese Chess, eh? How's about Backgammon?" Here, the question abruptly changes the topic from his feelings and moves to end the explanation or apology sequence, defuse the conflict and allow further contact by shifting the topic. It appears important to Michael to preserve the contact.

Non-Committal closings comprise most of those seen in the sample. Although a non-committal closing appears, in a literal interpretation, to commit a character to further action, such closings can also be seen in messages where

the content does not reflect an interest in further contact. Thus, non-committal closings can be extremely ambiguous and can require the recipient to disregard their overt meaning and interpret their intent. In contrast to non-committal closings, Invitations make clear, direct statements about desire for further contact. Contrast these two closings, an Invitation and a Non-committal:

Well, reply soon and tell me more about yourself!

Bye for now!

In the first example, an Invitation, the desire for further information is clear. This closing encourages the character to write back and makes clear a certain degree of interest. The second example, a Non-committal closing, does not reveal the same level of interest. On a literal level, it suggests that, in contrast to the communication which has ended "now", there will be "later" contact. However, this is not the only possible interpretation and the rest of the message text does not much help. In context, the closing is juxtaposed with:

Hey, thanks for the tips! I'll give them a try! Bye for now!

Non-committal closings can also be "Well, gotta go...later!", "Well, talk to you soon", "Well, gotta go...get back to you soon" or even "Michael Moorcock and H.P. Lovecraft are about my favorites..." This final sentence has previously been identified as an indication of Michael's Individual Attitudes. However, the sentence ends with ellipses. Michael also uses this technique in his next message to Janet, which he closes with "That's it for now. See you later..." In this instance, "That's it for now" signals the end of the message, he also uses ellipses. In both instances, ellipses provide the equivalent of a pause at the

end of a spoken sentence. The ellipses signal the end of the conversation "turn" and provide space for a response.

These closings are non-committal because their content does not necessarily commit the character to further contact. They are the kind of statement commonly used in daily conversation and, in contrast to the Invitations, function more as end-markers than actual promises.

Questions

The questions characters ask develop and specify areas of particular interest. Questions specify the questioner's interests and generally, the questions are very short, averaging only 7.77 words . The longest question is 21 words while the shortest is 3 words. In Sample 1, out of 23 messages, 21 questions are asked. Rick asks Janet 5 questions, Janet asks Rick 5, Janet asks Michael 9 and Michael asks Janet 3.

The questions asked indicate that messages are scanned for topics of particular interest. These topics are Individual Attitudes or Social Characteristics, rather than the Physical Attributes one might expect in a BBS of this nature. Thus, characters ask:

I speak Cantonese, aand you? Can you speak it fluently?

Can you drive?

So you don't know Chinese Chess, eh? How's about Backgammon?

You actually go to driving school? Isn't it expensive?

However, Rick and Janet's questions reveal an interest in the character

generally. Their questions concern matters of Individual Attitudes (likes, dislikes and events). Thus, Rick asks what dialect Janet speaks, which Chinese school she attended, what she thinks of the weather, or if she owns a Karaoke machine. Many of his questions stem from his Opener in his first message, "It's rare to find Chinese people on boards like these", and concern Chinese culture or language. In contrast, Michael's questions are much more specific. He asks about Janet's specific interests, such as which authors she likes and whether she plays specific kinds of Chinese games (XiangQi) or even Backgammon.

Plotting each character's questions for each message reveals that questions occur in all but the first pair of messages exchanged between Janet and Rick, whereas the message exchange between Michael and Janet begins with a question.

<u>Message No.</u>	<u>Rick asks J</u>	<u>Janet asks R</u>	<u>Mike asks J</u>	<u>Janet asks M</u>
1	0	0	1	0
2	0	1	0	0
3	2	3	1	2
4	1	1	2	0
5	4	1	0	8
6	2	0	0	no reply

This anomaly reveals that for these characters, questions about physical characteristics are not posed. Perhaps such questions are unnecessary due to the nature of Janet's first and Rick's second message. In responding to requests for more information, Janet presents herself physically in more detail than Rick. However, both provide information concerning their schooling, interests and self-perceptions without being prompted. Such self-disclosure obviates many questions concerning individual or social characters. Michael neither provides this information, nor requests any

further information about Janet.

Of course, this is probably unnecessary, as Michael most likely monitored the exchange between Janet and Rick from the beginning. Thus, such a step would not seem needed as Michael knows all Janet's presented information. However, not engaging in this ritual information exchange further reinforces the break in region Michael created in his first message.

Two instances important to the analysis of questions are the messages Janet sends Michael on February 4, and the one she sends Rick on February 17. In the message to Michael she says:

Hi, you know how to play Mahjong? What program is it? Where did you get it? I just absolutely love playing mahjong, except I don't play with money. Do you play with money? I don't know how. I wish I could get a computer program for it, but I don't know where. Is there somewhere where I can download it? Well, do you know any other gambling games? Do you know how to play Big 2? Well, it's not exactly called Big 2, but that's the literal translation from Chinese. I play it every lunchtime. Anyways, long enough? See ya!

Most of the questions Janet actually asks Michael derive from this message. Two interesting things occur with the questions here. First, the questions indicate some enthusiasm or intense interest in the Mahjong computer program. This is evidenced through the question Janet asks, nestled among the rest: "I wish a could get a computer program for it, but I don't know where. Is there somewhere where I can download it?" Second, Janet asks at the end of her message, "Anyways, long enough?"

The first question concerning the Mahjong game is a valid question, considering that many games programs are unofficially "exchanged" on many BBSs. However, Michael's response indicates his feelings about this

exchange. He states, "Well, I've got Electronic Art's "Hong Kong Mah Jong Pro." I spent money for it at Egghead Software in Richmond a few months ago". Here, Michael reveals that not only can he afford to buy computer games, but that stating that he bought it is important. The second question negates the interest that the previous questions might imply regarding exchanging messages with Michael. Not only does Janet refer back to conflict between she and Michael, but she sets up all the previous messages as "filler" or padding to make the message "long enough". In this action, she almost plays what Eric Berne (1972) calls a game, where one character is hooked (by the length of the messages and the questions), a switch is performed ("long enough?") and the other character experiences a gain (in this case, being "one up").

The next important set of questions can be seen in the message Janet sends Rick on February 17. In this message, Janet asks:

Sorry about that, Rob. Okay well, what did you ask me last time? Hmm. I don't remember. But oh well, how is school? I have a lot of tests coming up, that's why I have been writing short messages. See, I have to ace this term or else
I am dead....
And plus, I have to practice my driving....which sucks so bad....well...what did you do for Valentine's day? Go out with your girlfriend? Me, I didn't do anything special. Just another regular day for me....
So what sports do you like? What about books?
So, how is life in general?
Do you have any siblings? any pets?

This message marks the first time that either Janet or Rick has mentioned a relationship. Janet responds to the obvious question from Rick, stating that she didn't do anything in particular. Nonetheless, in a later response, Janet also states that she "doesn't really care" whether she gets "into a relationship [sic] or not at this point. It's not really a big deal". This implies

that Rick did further discuss this topic with Janet sometime later, and this negative response indicates a certain coolness, at least toward Rick. This coolness must be seen in context of a developing relationship between Janet and another character.

The other important feature of this message is the series of questions Janet asks at the end. In a series of five questions, she asks about sports, books, life in general, siblings, and pets. This barrage of questions seems to be an attempt to stimulate the exchanges between Janet and Rick by increasing the amount of individual information, thereby broadening the topic base for discussion. This interpretation is supported by the discussion of Comments in the next section, in which the message structure Rick chose is discussed. However, Rick answers all these questions dutifully in his next message.

Answers

The analysis of Answers is, necessarily, tied to the analysis of Questions. Characters answer such questions as they are asked, but their answers often lead them to provide more information than requested. Answers therefore allow new topics to enter the exchange and further present information about the characters.

In answering Janet's questions, Rick reveals:

- "For me, I was born here and with one of the more common dialects, it's called 'toy san' or something like that and it's similar to Cantonese. I used to go to Chinese school when I was a kid so I can sort of speak Cantonese better and as for writing, I only remember some characters, but I'm trying to broaden my vocabulary as I watch Chinese Karaoke videos and attempt to match what the singer's saying and perhaps understand what he's saying...oh, and I can also sing one or two Chinese songs...after

long hours of practising."''

- "Yeah, I'm an ok driver but have a hard time avoiding the cops here and there. Naww, you can't be that bad...all you need is a little confidence...believe me, I've taught many a driver and still survived...most of them were pretty nerved up in the beginning, but it got better later on. It's just like swimming for me..."
- Chinese school was "The one near Strathcona Elementary, in Chinatown"
- "Me, nothing much, the funny thing is by the time Valentines comes up, I would have a girl to share it with...most of the girls I know found other guys to be [with]"
- "Sports? Depends on the weather but I usually play floor hockey, gonna start swimming soon, basketball and tennis... I totally suck when it comes to tennis"
- "As for books, I can't find any time for them, but I do read magazines and the newspaper every day."
- "[Life] sucks at this point...I feel like hanging myself (jj). I've been looking for a job these past couple weeks and there just isn't any one that I'm particularly interested in."
- "I have one bro and one sis and as far as I go for pets is just probably raising goldfish, which eventually self-destruct just because I haven't cleaned the tank for over half a year."

The last four answers are from the single message available outside the first sample. In sample one, the first three answers, Rick answers only three of Janet's five questions. The questions he doesn't answer are the ones asking whether he has a job, and whether he also sings Karaoke.

For her part, Janet reveals that:

- is learning how to drive, but is not too good
- "I speak Cantonese. . . I can [speak it fluently] sort of, but I am illiterate in Chinese"
- "Sure, let's have a hyper contest. I think I'll win, but who knows?"
- "Yes, well, I was born here, in Canada. In Toronto more specifically. I came to Vancouver when I was 3"
- "I went to Chinese Cultural Centre"
- "I don't usually sing Chinese songs on Karaoke, I usually sing English, but when I do sing Chinese, I just floop everyone else. Sometimes I'll remember some lyrics or I'll know how to read some."
- "Yeah, I go to Youngg Drivers, but I'm only taking road lessons, not classroom. If I took the classroom also, it would cost over 600 bucks! I can't afford that much!"
- "Yeah, great weather! Hope it stays like this! Nice driving weather for me!"
- "An only child? It's pretty lonely, sometimes, but it can be peaceful too. My cousin lives with us, but he doesn't bother me."
- "I don't really care if I get into a relationship or not at this point. It's not really a big deal."
- "Oh well, I got into modeming cuz I was bored over Christmas and I remembered I had a modem, so I just started calling all boards."
- "Music? Well, all kinds except heavy metal and country."
- "Chinese is okay, I guess. It's not like I'm obsessed with it or something."
- "I don't listen to a lot of classical music, believe or not. The stuff pputs [sic] me to sleep. Like I don't like operas, symphonies and stuff. Maybe I'm not cultured enough [sic]."

Janet's replies to Michael's questions discuss:

- "I read mostly mystery, suspense and horror. So my favorite authors are John Saul, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen King, and all other suspense writers. I mostly like bestsellers."
- "Well, I don't know how to play Chinese chess, but I know how to play Chinese Checkers! Close enough? I also know how to play regular chess, but not Chinese Chess!"
- "Yes, I know how [sic] to play backgammon, but it's kind of boring. I have to go, I only have five minutes left!"

And Michael reveals that:

- "I just felt kind of jipped; I mean, writing up a couple of paragraphs and getting a one sentence reply."
- "I've got Electronic Art's 'Hong Kong Mah Jong Pro.' I spent money for it at Egghead Software in Richmond a few months ago."
- "Backgammon's the only other gambling game I familiar [sic] with"
- "Never heard of Big 2, to be honest"
- "And, yes, the length of your eudite [sic] response has been quite satisfactory."

Many of these answers amplify topics. Questions, therefore, expand the number of topics and depth of personal self-disclosure. Answers reveal the themes of conversation. Between Rick and Janet, conversation centers around things pertaining to Chinese and driving. Between Michael and Janet, few answers exist because few questions are asked. As can be seen, however, answers are direct, containing little of the elaboration seen in the Rick-Janet dyad's answers, and Janet's responses to Michael reveal a high degree of negatives. Negative answers cut off debate, signalling the end of the topic, and possibly, as with Janet's responses to Michael, the desired end of contact. A change can also be seen in Janet's responses after her statement about not wanting a relationship. After this, her answers become vague, she got into modeming because she was "bored", Chinese is "okay, I guess", she doesn't listen to classical music because it puts her to sleep, and she likes all kinds of music. These answers do not respond in the detail of previous answers.

Invitations

An invitation is an overt statement from one character to the next which encourages further contact. It is a manifestation of a metamessage that one character perceives the other as important enough to talk to, at least temporarily.

Invitations appear only in Rick's first two messages to Janet, and in her first three messages in reply. None appear in Michael's messages or in Janet's replies to Michael. The last invitation Janet issues to Rick is a "weak" invitation, in contrast to other issued. She says, "Sure let's have a hyper contest. I think I'll win, but who knows?". Although this does imply an offer that would require physical presence, it is also the kind of offer easy to make over the computer. There is little likelihood of actually having to fulfill the promise.

Contrast this weak invitation with some "stronger" ones in earlier messages:

Hope to hear from you soon.

Well, reply soon and tell me more about yourself!

hope to know more about you.

These invitations request more information on the other character. That this request is overtly stated distinguishes an Invitation from a Closing, which may simply state "See ya later!" Although this closing literally implies some future contact, this is more of a metaphoric statement which brings the message to a ritualized end. Invitations therefore encourage and further a forming relationship by explicitly expressing metamessages that could be missed or misinterpreted due to the lack of voice tone, inflection, or body

posture.

However, Invitations are only made in the first few messages of Janet and Rick's exchange. In these messages, both Rick and Janet exchange self-characterizations of Physical, Individual, and Social demographic data. In response to Rick's invitation to "Tell some stuff about yourself and I'll tell you some stuff about me", Janet states:

Glad you answered. Well, stuff about me... I'm 16, 5'1(I know, too short for my age) and I'm in Grade 11 at Churchill Secondary. I'm learning how to drive, although I'm not too good yet! I have no siblings, and I like to read, watch TV, chat on the phone, play sports, go shopping, etc. Well, reply soon and tell me more about yourself!

and Rick answers Janet's Invitation in the final line of her message with

Hi! Well to start off, I'm 19, attending Douglas College part time, studying business. I enjoy playing various sports, floor hockey, bicycling, some light weight lifting. Some of my hobbies include, being a harsh car nut...which includes customizing them and installing stereos into them for other people as a second job. When you get to know me, I'm pretty much an easy-going, understanding person that's fairly easy to communicate with. Well, my time's running out, hope to know more about you.

This process allows characters to present themselves as they wish to be seen. After this, asking Questions allows the characters to explore specific pieces of information while expressing metamessages. Invitations allow characters to start a relationship with an unknown other, both physically and otherwise, without asking specific questions. Such questions would be difficult without any information about the other. Questions therefore seem to replace Invitations when a sufficient "store" of basic information has accumulated. Once again, this may explain Michael's inability to establish a relationship with Janet, as he did not provide basic information which would allow Janet to respond with any questions and expand the conversation beyond simply

answering questions.

Comments

Comments are not answers to questions, but instead are observations based upon the other character's message. A comment provides a personal opinion or position that the other could not know, and extends or personalizes an event or belief. Often, a comment will follow a quotation opener, as the quotation provides the context for the observation. In Sample 1, there are 18 comments in 23 messages. Michael makes 7 comments in 6 messages, Rick makes 8 comments in 4 messages and Janet makes only 3 comments in 9 messages (5 to Michael and 6 to Rick)⁷.

Comments are important to self-presentation because they involve characters in a reactive and passive relationship with other characters, especially when comments comprise a large proportion of messages. Rick, for example, makes 8 comments in 4 messages. Of the 935 words he types, 329 are quotations from Janet's messages which he uses as a basis for comments. This high number of comments stems from the pattern in which Rick organizes the various message elements comprising Manner. Rick's messages are organized as Quotation/ Comment/ Quotation/ Comment. Comments, therefore, while efficient for responding to specific points in messages, depend upon the other character to create new topics for discussion.

⁷ Both Rick and Janet actually send 6 and 11 messages respectively, but no comments are made in the first 2 messages for each, as these messages respond to Invitations and are concerned with presenting self.

For example,

JK>into yet. Do you have a job? I have one , sort of. I teach
 JK>piano. I've been playing for 11 years now, and I have my
 JK>diploma. It's really easy money. All you do is sit there
 JK>and tell the kid what to do. Well, I can also be a harsh
 wow, that is easy money. At least you know how to play an instrument. The
 only instrument that I knew how to play was back in elementary and it was
 something flute-like and I wasn't that great, then there was the guitar back
 when I was in grade 9.
 JK>bookworm, when I'm in the mood, but other times I can be
 JK>the noisiest person you know when I get hyper. Trust me, I
 JK>can
 JK>get real hyper. But I also like to have fun and socialize,
 At least you're inclined in picking up a book...I've always know to have
 trouble getting myself to read (especially textbooks! heh) If you think
 you're hyper, you should see me when I don't get enough sleep. You know, we
 should try having a hyper contest one day.
 JK>but then sometimes
 JK>I like tto be alone and be somewhat of a loner. So you see,
 JK>I have split personalities. Well, talk to you soon.
 so do I...don't you think it's neat to be unpredictable?
 Oh, I was just wondering...what dialect do you speak? Well, gotta go, chat
 with you later...

Here, Rick quotes a section, makes a comment, relates some Individual Attitudes, quotes another section, makes a comment, provides more information, makes an Invitation, quotes again, then asks two questions before closing. Although many of his comments expand the amount of information available about him as a character, they are assertions and as such, are not easy to discuss. Janet does not comment upon his musical abilities or interest in reading, instead, the only points she picks upon are the Invitation to the "hyper contest" and Question about dialect.

Michael's communication also demonstrates a similar use of comments. This pattern is more pronounced in Michael's messages as they are generally much shorter than Rick's. Further, Michael asks only 4 questions compared to Rick's 9 questions. An example of Michael's use of Comments is:

JK>Hey, thanks for the tips! I'll give them a try! Bye for
JK>now!

That's a short response!

Just out of curiosity, you ever play XiangQi (Chinese Chess)?

Or, his first message, Michael writes:

In a message to Rob Wong <01-28-93 15:59> Janet Kan wrote:

[... skipping a bit here ...]

JK> Well, I can also be a harsh bookworm, when I'm in the mood,

[... skipping a bit here ...]

What sorts of authors do you like, then? Michael Moorcock and H.P.
Lovecraft
are about my favorites...

In the first example, Michael comments upon Janet's short message and then moves on to change the subject. As we have seen, this begins a short conflict. The second example reveals a closed question and comment based upon a specific aspect of Janet's message. This pattern characterizes Michael's messages. Like Rick, in choosing this pattern, Michael distances himself from other characters. This pattern creates for him a role of "outside commentator" in which he makes observations but offers up little information.

Janet responds to Rick's use of comments in her eighth message to Rick. In this message, Janet asks 8 short, quick questions, exploring Rick's other interests. Thus, she asks:

And plus, I have to practice my driving....which sucks so bad....well...what did you do for Valentine's day? Go out with your girlfriend? Me, I didn't do anything special. Just another regular day for me....
So what sports do you like? What about books?
So, how is life in general?
Do you have any siblings? any pets?

In response, Rick quotes her questions and answers them one-by-one. These questions attempt to break through the role of commentator by forcing Rick, in one step, to expand the amount of information he presents. Such a break would increase the dyad's topic flexibility and increase the level of self-disclosure as both characters would be participating instead of one being reactive.

Appearance of Messages

Goffman defines Appearance as "stimuli which function at the time to tell us of the performer's social statuses. These stimuli also tell us of the individual's temporary ritual state, that is, whether he is engaging in formal social activity, work, or informal recreation, whether or not he is celebrating a new phase in the season cycle or in his life-cycle" (Goffman, 1959, p.24)

Message appearance allows characters to individuate themselves by creating a unique image. This is done by using language, topics, punctuation, and symbols in ways expressing the character's self-perception. Other characters use these expressions to create impressions which become evident in their reactions or responses. Message appearance, therefore, provides an encapsulated or summarized image of a character in much the same process that dress, situation, words, and behaviour provide a "first-impression" of an individual face-to-face.

Michael's messages, for example, reflect a certain structure and language style that cooperate to create an impression of him. As we saw, Michael's messages are characterized by comments. When he uses a salutation it is a

citation and his openers always consist of a quotation. His message bodies are comments, contextualized by the preceding quotation. The topics he presents, therefore, are offshoots or responses to those in other messages. Thus, he begins discussing horror fiction because Janet mentions she is a "harsh bookworm". His topic change to Chinese Chess builds upon Rick and Janet's discussion of Chinese school and reflects personal interests, but provides a topic change diminishing the impact of his criticism of Janet's short message. The topics he presents are discussed as "alternative". He is interested in horror you can't find in "mainstream bookstores", and expresses a non-North American interest in Chinese games, even using their Chinese names (XiangQi, and Mahjong). He asks Janet only questions elaborating on these interests, topics and questions customized for her as audience.

Aside from the role of commentator created by his message structure, Michael's language is a distinctive part of his messages' Appearance. Michael's uses formal code, antiquated expressions and semi-British expressions which most obviously differentiate his messages from the rest on the BBS. These expressions or words appear in his messages: "do you like, then?", "give [it] a go", "penultimate", "has the cheek", "fortnight worth", "vile beings", "through and through", "spiffy", "honest to God stakes", "just baffles me", "eudite"[sic], "contrifibularities", "antidisestablishmentarianism", "posted private like", "a score of them", "tidily", "clutches", "Gee". These expressions, used in conversation, and applied in comments such as "I therefore extend all the proper contrifibularities (English can be such a fun language)..." differentiate Michael from other characters. For Michael, language seems a game, a toy to manipulate and play with. Other characters take a more pragmatic view, using language to talk with, and none comment

upon how "fun" English can be.

Michael also uses ellipses frequently, in 4 of his 6 messages in the first sample and 4 times in his messages in the other samples. Most frequently, he uses ellipses in closings, as in this example:

I've also sort of learned how to play Mah Jong using a spiffy little program for it. Playing the game I more or less understand. Scoring after a winning hand seems to be something past my comprehension so far, though...

```

+-----+
| <<< MBM >>> |
+-----+
| Like, g'day, eh? |
| It's a beauty way to go! |
+-----+

```

The ellipses at the end of the message signal the end of the conversational turn. They indicate, physically, the space in which a return comment can be made, and are typographical manifestations of a vocal "tailing off" or quietening in voice tone. Significantly, they also lead to the logo with which Michael always ends his messages. As with his language, Michael is the only character on the BBS to use such a closing logo. Others may have modified the footer lines of their messages⁸, but only Michael's message show this closing design. This logo is an important feature of the Appearance of Michael's messages. Not only does its presence individuate him, but its design also expresses something about him. The first section, a monogram of initials surrounded by chevrons suggests some formality, a formality contrasted by the quasi-Australian statements of the second half of the message. Together with the language Michael uses, these statements suggest an alternative, off-beat character.

⁸ For example, one character's footer line says: "... Skip...Skip....Skip...Skip....Blue Wave Reaches Australia!"

Rick's language is extremely casual, and the topics he presents and discusses are the matter of social, or casual, conversation. Yet, at the same time, he uses a formal message format. He always includes a Salutation, some kind of message Opener, a message body, and a Closing of some kind. Both the topics he discusses and the language he employs reveal information about his character in a controlled manner. For example, Rick's approach is summarized in this sentence from the first message he sends to Janet:

Tell some stuff about yourself and I'll tell you some stuff about me and don't worry, I just want to make friends...nothing to lead to a relationship.

Here, Rick introduces his approach and lexicon. His casual approach to "stuff" about the self is congruent with his later language: "flute-like", "harsh car-nut", "Naww", "sucks", "gonna", "soooo", "damn teacher", "avoiding cops", "wow", "eh" (used 3 times), "later" (used 4 times as closer) "ciao", "heh", "neat", "alot", "gotta go", "bro and sis". And although he offers a reciprocal exchange of information, this exchange must begin with Janet. The reason for this one-sided offer, requiring Janet to take the initial risk, is clarified in the second half of the sentence in which Rick offers guarantees against being interested in a relationship. This tired cliché, "just want to be friends", addresses an assumed concern Janet might have, and attempts to forestall any hesitation about people on "boards like these", as Rick says. The assumption revealed here is that the purpose of the Guys 'N Gals BBS is forming relationships and less about general chatter (the conference title).

Rick also uses language in a ritual manner to attribute values to himself. He states, "When you get to know me, I'm pretty much an easy-going,

understanding person that's fairly easy to communicate with." In this sentence, he uses certain ritual key-words, "easy-going", "understanding" and "easy to communicate with". These expressions parallel those found in Bolig (1984) and Steinfirt and Moran's (1989) examination of personal ads. Part of Rick's ritual use of language is ascribing social status to himself, through revealing in his second message that he is taking Business at Douglas College, part-time.

Other topics that Rick regards casually are driving and family. In treating these subjects, a different kind of casual approach is revealed. He regards himself as an "ok driver" who has a "hard time avoiding the cops here and there" and expresses surprise, "You actually go to driving school?", that Janet would require lessons. He supports his surprise with the assertion that he has "taught many a driver and still survived" even though "most of them were pretty nerved up in the beginning". Rick advises Janet that she simply needs "a little confidence". In contrast, Rick's family receives only one mention, when he describes that he has "one bro and one sis", using diminutive forms to describe them. Driving and family contrast in the attention they receive. Rick gives driving a large proportion of his time, and asks Janet often about her driving lessons. Family, however, receives only this one mention. Both topics are important as indicators of independence, driving giving independence, and family, perhaps, revealing dependence.

Throughout the exchange, Rick maintains this casual use of language and approach to topics. His salutation in the first message is Name Implied, a technique revealing uncertainty, although he must know Janet's name to

send the message. It is not until the period of self-presentation ends in the third message, that Rick uses Janet's full name. Until this point, both he and Janet have been describing themselves, and in the third message, Rick begins to ask questions. In the fifth message, Rick shortens the salutation to "Jan", expressing some informality. Janet's name in the salutation is also always preceded by "Hi!". Rick always uses an exclamation point in his salutations. He only uses exclamation points three times elsewhere, two of which are in closings ("later!"). These exclamation points express the metamessage of excitement or interest in the salutation.

Only once does Rick use an "emotikon" or symbol composed of alphanumeric characters designed to express emotion. Like the exclamation points, this emotikon is used in the message salutation. He says, "Hi Janet! :) ". In this case, the emotikon is a "smiley", two eyes and a smiling mouth. However, Rick's messages are characterized by an extensive use of ellipses.

Throughout his messages, Rick separates phrases with ellipses in this fashion:

being a harsh car nut...which includes customizing them

so do I...don't you think it's neat to be unpredictable?

Oh, I was just wondering...what dialect do you speak?

It's just like swimming for me...I remember the first time I went diving, I was soooo freaked out, but I had a very strict gym teacher and it was a do or die situation...he wouldn't let me go until I could do it right,

In the 6 messages of Sample 1 and the only other partial message available, Rick uses ellipses in this way 17 times. Another character uses ellipses in a similar fashion, and totalled 35 uses in 6 messages. Ellipses seem to act as visual replacements for pauses in speech, and act as signs to other readers of

a space, pause or a slight change in thought.

Janet's use of language to customize her Appearance follows the same pattern as Rick's. Indeed, in many instances, she mirrors Rick's language. When Rick describes himself as a "harsh car-nut", she describes herself as a "harsh bookworm". When Rick, responding to one of Janet's questions, uses the phrase "bro and sis", Janet uses the same phrase in reply. And in her retort to Michael's admonition "That's a short reply!", she states "Sorry for replying so short". Janet seems to pick up and reflect words from others' messages. However, other characters also do this and mirroring may be necessary to discuss a topic as it creates congruence between language and metaphors.

This coordination also extends to message structure and topics. In her second message to Rick, she parallels the information he provided. Where Rick describes his age, school, job, and personality, Janet responds with

Well, I'm 16, so in two years I'll be graduating. I plan to go to UBC if I can get in, but I don't know what to go into yet. Do you have a job? I have one, sort of. I teach piano. I've been playing for 11 years now, and I have my diploma. It's really easy money. All you do is sit there and tell the kid what to do. Well, I can also be a harsh bookworm, when I'm in the mood, but other times I can be the noisiest person you know when I get hyper. Trust me, I can get real hyper. But I also like to have fun and socialize, but then sometimes I like to be alone and be somewhat of a loner. So you see, I have split personalities. Well, talk to you soon.

In this message, she reflects the same topic structure, even to the point of echoing Rick's closing, which also began with "Well". Even though she is not yet out of high school, Janet presents her plan for post-secondary education, a move that seems to equalize status between herself and Rick. And similar to

Rick, she describes her personality. However, here Janet differs from Rick. Instead of presenting herself as Rick did, a stable, unified person, Janet portrays herself as possessing two alternate sides, one noisy, the other introspective.

Janet's messages are characterized by this kind of qualification. Whenever she mentions a subject, she qualifies her position somehow. Thus, although she is a noisy, hyper person who likes "to have fun and socialize", she is also a "loner". Similarly, she states that she has a job, "sort of"; that her driving "sucks so bad"; that she is illiterate in Chinese, but not totally; that being an only child can be lonely, but peaceful; that although she reads books, she's not an intellectual; that Chinese is okay, but she's not obsessed. This pattern of statement followed by evaluation is consistent throughout Janet's messages.

Like Rick, Janet also uses a formal letter structure to her messages in Sample 1. Thus, she always uses a salutation and a closing. Janet uses exclamation points in her salutations, but only in the first two messages. However, she uses them more throughout the message body (9 instances), especially in the closings. But the feature distinguishing Janet's language use is the frequency with which she uses "Well". In the first sample, Janet uses this expression 12 times (in 6 messages) and throughout the other samples, Janet uses "Well" 39 times in 44 messages to Rick, Michael and other characters. For example,

Hey Rick,

Yes, well, I was born here, in Canada. In Toronto more specifically. I came

to Vancouver when I was 3. I think my parents know how to speak toy san but

I don't. My mom is fluent in a lot of dialects, so I'm kind of ashamed that I know only one. I used to go to Chinese school too, and I used to do well, in

fact, I was always top of my class, but that was so long ago. I quit when I was in Grade 4, cause I hated it and I was too busy wwith piano. So now, I guess I'm not totally illiterate, I can read some, but I can't remember to write anything except simple characters and my name. You sing Karaoke too?

I

love Karaoke!

Well, I think my driving has improved. Even my instructor says so.

Well, see ya later!.....Jan

As this example shows, Janet uses this expression to mark topic shifts or changes, or points where she might be thinking, much as ellipses are used by other characters. Thus, "Well" occurs in the opening, giving her time to think and introduce the answer, and appears in the closing to signify the topic change and end of the message. Its presence in the opener may be due to the way the BBS presents mail to characters when the sign-on. Having read the message, Janet composes a reply, and thus "Well" becomes a "phatic" expression, signalling the beginning and end of the message.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

The introduction to this thesis discussed the connection between the physical body and the creation of self. The amount of information available on the physical self when using the telephone was contrasted with letter writing. We saw that the telephone provides a physical presence defining the self in terms of sex, age, ethnicity, class and social status. Letters, on the other hand, remove much of this physical presence, reducing the writer's presence to the topics chosen, their sequence, and the language used. To the information available to a reader in a written work, our consideration of literary criticism added the manner in which the actions of the narrator, the agent, imply attributes about the person who wrote the letter or work, the implied author (Booth, 1961).

This study demonstrated that characters on the BBS disclose little information about their physical selves. The physical attributes that were disclosed were either deliberately stated or alluded to through descriptions of activities. The physical self, therefore, is not present in computer communication unless purposely included. And even when activities or physical attributes are part of characters' messages, there is no evidence that these descriptions are in any way related to physical reality. CMC requires either trust that the other characters are who they claim to be, or agreement that anyone is free not to be the character they "really" are. In this respect, CMC is similar to letter writing: both are monologues in which the narrator/

character controls the selection and presentation of information deemed relevant. The narrator thus controls the presence of the physical self.

In both a letter and CMC message, the narrator cannot completely control the reader's understanding. As Watzlawick et al. (1967) point out, all information is significant. Although the texts of CMC and letters specify the attributes of the intended reader and a certain degree of meaning (Booth, 1961), the reader provides frames of reference which give the text significance. This applies equally to the events described and the attributes of the narrator or other characters revealed in the text. The final meaning of a text (a letter or CMC message), therefore, is the reader's response (Mead, 1934).

However, narrators know that the information they reveal has an effect of some sort upon the reader. It is with a reader in mind that information is selected or rejected. Together, the narrator and reader collude to create the narrator's self.

The selves seen in Bolig's (1984) and in Steinfurst and Moran's (1989) studies of personal ads perform precisely this task. Personal ads create, through the agency of the character/narrator in the ad, an implied author possessing the attributes described in the ad. Thus, males wrote themselves emphasizing physical attributes and activities, and described themselves in broad, general terms as honest, intelligent, affectionate and easy-going. Their intended audience was specified as being the same age or younger (Bolig, 1984).

Females created implied authors emphasizing education, career, personality traits, and described interests in "passive" activities such as music, movies,

dinner, and reading (Bolig, 1984, p.591). Their intended audience was the same age or older (Bolig, 1984).

Like those advertising for mates, the characters in BBS communication also customize themselves for an intended audience. They portray themselves in possession of prized social symbols--ability to drive, Karaoke, ability to customize and install stereos in cars, alternative horror, or Chinese games--according to their perception of the audience. These characters, like letter writers and personal ad-writers create monologues the significance of which is determined by the responses. In each response, the characters are further defined and their options narrowed. And like the characters in the personal ads, those studied here in BBS communication emphasized their activities. Michael described his passion for reading and gambling games. He dislikes the "pass-the-time-because-the-TV-died sort of. . . game[s]". Rick describes his participation in a wide variety of sports and narrates stories illustrating his perseverance and ability as a driving instructor. Rick even describes himself as "easy-going".

Janet's self-presentation also corresponds to the role specified in the studies of personal advertisements. She presents her current job, her current education, and specifies her plans for future education. She is also interested in reading and watching TV and is younger than either Rick or Michael.

The initial messages between Rick and Janet bear the closest resemblance to the personal advertisements described by Bolig (1984). In their first messages, Janet and Rick describe their "selves" and encourage each other to provide more information through open Invitations to "tell. . . more about

yourself". Enacting this role of Presenting Information to Strangers is based upon an idiom or code (Goffman, 1959). The idiom and message structure Janet and Rick use is that of personal ads and their messages reveal information in a manner similar to personal ads. They reveal age, height, education, and describe personality traits (in that order). This role is stereotypical self-presentation, a role socialized in the "Me" described by Mead and forms the basis for the individuating descriptions Janet and Rick create.

Stereotyped self-presentation in initial messages gives Rick and Janet a set of rituals which easily accomplish the primary social task of establishing a relationship. Both Rick and Janet provide demographic data, a ritual establishing contact and allowing more detailed self-presentation later. Through these opening messages two selves are disclosed and created in the social space of the BBS. The information Rick and Janet provide functions simultaneously as message and metamessage, specifying content and relationship (Watzlawick, 1967). It reveals information to the other, signifies each character's perception of important qualities, and symbolizes to each character's self the importance of the revealed attributes while indicating interest in the relationship.

As their messages progress, Rick and Janet move away from the formality of the ritual role. Rick begins to use quotations as openers and use the same comment message structure as Michael, and Janet adopts continuation openers. This change signals the end of ritual introductions and the adoption of a new role similar to other, established members of the BBS. This change also contradicts Kiesler et al. (1984) who stated that social standards become

"less important. . . because. . . [of]. . . the lack of social feedback" in CMC (Kiesler et al., p.1126). Experience on the BBS allows characters to adopt different social standards or a different social "key" (Bellman, 1989), one which views the BBS as an open, public forum.

According to the the theory of deindividuation used in much CMC research, inner restraints are reduced, making the individual feel less identifiable (Jessup and Connolly, 1991). Matheson and Zanna's private self-awareness study explains that inner restraints are not reduced, but that CMC allows participants to focus on inner beliefs which then overcome inner restraints. This study reveals no deindividuated behaviour. The premise of the deindividuation thesis that deficits in social cues create anonymous characters is also not proven. As Janet's, Michael's and Rick's messages reveal, physical, individual, and social information is present. We know that Rick is interested in certain sports, we know his age and height and that he has Chinese heritage. Micheal is more explicit in providing physical details, although notably, he does not provide any in his messages. In his Introductory message, Michael evokes a definite physical image by describing his height to weight ratio as 5'9" and 200 lbs. He states that although he's not built like a beach ball, he does have "a spare tire" he's trying to get rid of. Janet's physical self-disclosure is the most detailed. She describes her age, height, hair colour and length. This final piece of information, hair length seems more appropriate to Bolig's personal ads.

Furthermore, characters convey nonverbal cues by deliberately using elements of message structure to create a Manner of interacting with the reader. Invitations such as "Hope to hear more about you" or "Remember to

call me tomorrow. If you don't, I will call you, cuz I really want to know what this is all about", or openers, numbers of questions, use of punctuation, ellipses, or symbols make explicit how other components in the message are to be understood.

The private self-awareness thesis also states that internal beliefs and values are emphasized, leading to deindividuated behaviour. This study did not find evidence of overt clashes of position. However, messages do reveal personal beliefs, values and interests. Characters express personal actions and values and through questions, seem to compare their positions with those of other characters. Questions ask if other characters share similar interests: "What sorts of authors do you like, then? Michael Moorcock and H.P. Lovecraft are about my favorites...", "Oh, I was just wondering...what dialect do you speak?", or "Do you drive?" Answers also reveal comparisons: "I speak Cantonese, aand [sic] you? Can you speak it fluently?", "Anyway, Backgammon can be exciting; if you're using the doubling cube and real honest to God stakes like money". The answers are used as a basis for further questions and discussion. Here, however, nonverbal cues can be misread, and the discussion continue until Rick is finally told that Janet is "not obsessed" with Chinese or Janet simply does not write to Michael and he asks "Gee, how come you've not written/typed to me? 8-(".

As the self-awareness thesis states, questions and answers reveal that characters are aware of their positions and beliefs. But they also suggest that in seeking similarity, like the people described by Bolig (1984), characters present their selves in a fashion anticipating the interests of the intended reader. Just as the men in Steinfirst and Moran's (1989) study

suggested their interest in children to a female audience, Rick suggests his interest in Chinese to a Chinese woman and Michael suggests interest in books to a "harsh bookworm". Both Michael and Rick anticipate the reader (Janet) in their messages, an anticipation helped by the attributes listed in Janet's Introductory message.

The personal beliefs and positions revealed in messages are mitigated by social norms. Despite the increases in honesty noted by CMC researchers (Kiesler et al., 1984; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991), characters still resort to the norms of face-to-face communication in voicing negative opinions. Although Janet tells Michael that backgammon is boring, she still closes her message with "Write more next time". And rather than tell Rick she doesn't want to talk about Chinese stuff anymore, she says that "Chinese is okay, I guess. It's not like I'm obsessed with it or something". The content of this statement allows Janet to appear ambiguous on the topic, yet expresses the metamessage that she doesn't want to discuss Chinese and talk to Rick.

The presence of normative behaviour in these messages, contrary to the expectations of the deindividuation thesis, is due to the social setting. Unlike task-oriented studies conducted in a laboratory, these characters' goals are social. They are not using the BBS to develop a better business plan or define a concept collaboratively. Thus, the "key" (Bellman, 1989) to this social space is partially borrowed from the standards of face-to-face social groups. It is only partially borrowed because, as the conflict between Janet and Michael reveals, annoyance and anger is more easily expressed. Janet's outburst, however, compensates for the lack of certain nonverbal metamessages by making them more explicit.

But the messages studied do not reflect the degree of private self-awareness that might be expected. Avoiding direct conflict until necessary suggests the social nature of communication affects the messages. Matheson and Zanna (1990) express this "affect" as public self-awareness, an awareness of "one's self from the perspective of others. . . expressed by motives involving self-presentation and social comparison" (Matheson and Zanna, 1990, p.2).

Mead's (1934) insights into the development of self suggest that public self-awareness is unavoidable in communication. As he describes, socialization, or the development of a self, entails the development of an "I" and a "Me". Whenever we act in a unique, individual manner, this is the behaviour of the "I". Yet the "I" cannot act without referencing the "Me" as the adopted set of conventions for action (Mead, 1934). Thus, all unique action is based upon collective, conventional roles and the spontaneous actions characters narrate to individuate themselves are, in fact, permutations of social stereotypes. Social standards such as those reflected by Janet can never be ignored, they can only, as Matheson and Zanna (1990) suggest, be suppressed by stronger *intrapersonal* communication. But even in this case, Goffman notes that normative behaviour is necessary for even non-normative actions, as it tells violators how to perform non-normative acts and later, how to appear as a non-criminal or citizen (Goffman, 1982).

The CMC characters in this study reflect social norms and conventions in their messages. For example, physical information is presented in the messages in either idealized or pragmatic ways. Idealized physical information accords with stereotypes of beauty and uses adjectives describing the "quality" of an attribute, rather than its specifications, which is the

technique of pragmatic physical self-presentation. Convention demands that the self be described in a pragmatic manner, and allows others to use the idealized form. However, CMC characters also correspond to Goffman's definition of a character. Their self presentation creates a figure "whose spirit, strength, and other striking qualities" idealize social values (Goffman, 1959, p.252). Although their self-presentation may be pragmatic, compared to the views of others, such descriptions are always positive and accord with appropriate social stereotypes.

The study does support Kiesler et al.'s (1984) observation that CMC characters are "more responsive to immediate textual cues" (Kiesler et al., p.1130). This can be seen in Janet's perceptions of Michael's comments "That's a short response!" and "Too late! Should've posted private like! Don't feel too bad, I've done worse with messages too..." In response to the first comment, Janet confronts Michael's unwritten expectations, causing him to apologize and in the second, Janet warns him that he doesn't know the whole story. Her responses in both situations are much more forthright than her subtle hints in her closings that she's not too interested in talking with him. For example, Janet's later messages to Michael contain many apologies, her closings are extremely ambiguous and her messages are very short. In response to these two comments however, Janet's messages respond directly to her perception of the message's significance. In Goffman's terms, Janet distinguished expression and impression. Martin Buber's insight of "Two living beings and six ghostly appearances" suggests that in their communication, Rick, Janet, and Michael's perceptions "create" the others.

These perceptions objectivate (Bellman, 1989) the messages, or turn them

into specific sources of significance. Thus, Janet must interpret Michael's comments. Exactly what does "That's a short response!" mean? It could simply be an objective observation, but Janet interprets it as a rebuke. Correctly, too, as Michael explains later that there's "No real problem with the short reply. I just felt kind of jipped; I mean, writing up a couple of paragraphs and getting a one sentence reply". Janet's interpretation must be based upon context, the length of Michael's message, the comparative length of her response, and the directness with which Michael's comment addresses these factors. Sometimes, the connotation of messages is easier to see, as in another of Michael's responses: "Well, I guess I forgive you. BUT DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN!". Here, Michael uses the textual cue of capitalization to express the seriousness of the statement. Capitalization is often used to indicate a "shout" or raised voice, and as in this case, is used to contradict seriousness. Over-emphasizing the relationship aspect of the content allows Michael to partially hide the seriousness of the statement with humour and soften the content while emphasizing the metamessage. But objectivation also means that characters carefully customize their messages to reveal an intended meaning. And it is through customizing their messages that characters reveal the truth of Mead's dictum that attributes must be recognized to exist by others for them to become part of the character's self. As characters know, they only exist in BBS social space if they actually post messages and messages are composed to reflect a desired self. The information Rick or Janet discloses, and the information Michael does not disclose, has both meaning and significance for readers.

These observations reveal that CMC is a socializing system, or means of creating selfhood. Like face-to-face society, CMC communication is organized

and patterned according to rules. Conflict is avoided, unless warranted, a point that may arise sooner than in face-to-face, questions about physique are avoided and for those seeing BBS messages as private dyadic communications, apologies and introductions precede conversation. CMC also accords with the pattern of face-to-face society that individual characters are developed over time and characters control this process through self-disclosure. For this reason, Invitations to self-disclosure are preceded by self-disclosure. Each of the three characters control their self-disclosure to different extents. Michael controls information closely, describing himself deliberately only in his Introductory message, and revealing individual information only after receiving a reply to an initial question. Likewise, Rick's first message to Janet proposes a social relationship only if Janet is willing to self-disclose first. Rick's use of the commentator message structure also limits his self-disclosure to topics upon which Janet has first revealed her personal feelings. As I have noted, this technique places active responsibility for the conversation upon Janet. For this reason, the amount of information Janet discloses is greater than either Rick or Michael. (See Appendix 1 for details.)

This thesis posed two specific questions: How can Goffman's concepts of self presentation be applied to computer-mediated communication and what insights are revealed about the nature of computer communication? Are identifiable characters present in CMC and how can these characters be identified?

I will consider these questions in reverse order.

Are Identifiable Characters Present and How Can They be Identified?

I believe the answer to this question is "Yes". As we have seen, each of the characters examined in this study used different linguistic strategies (Manner and Appearance), and disclosed different amounts of personal information (Physical, Individual, Social Characteristics). Even though messages are addressed to a specific name, initially this name is empty. Only through communication does this name fill and become a label upon which are hung the character's attributes.

For example, the label "Michael" describes to Janet, somebody who asks about Chinese games, likes horror, supplied some new authors, reads her messages to other characters, and "pissed her off" by expecting long messages when, in contrast to Rick and other characters, he hadn't even introduced himself. "Michael" also describes somebody who uses a multiplicity of large words, some of which are stereotypically British, and signs his name with a logo consisting of a monogram and two stereotypically Australian phrases.

To us, as content analysts, "Michael" also describes expressive techniques which create various impressions. He never uses a Salutation in his messages, instead using either a Citation or Quotation, always comments on somebody else's messages or asks a question derived from something they said, and always closes his messages with ellipses and his log. He also reveals very little, almost no, personal information. But, his messages are unique and identifiable.

Through these techniques, "Michael" enacts a part, the individuating aspect

of a role. This role is that of Commentator. As Commentator, "Michael" regards the various conferences as free public spaces and all conversations as open to participation. He forms relationships by commenting on an interesting topic, searching all messages for topics. This role is based upon creating a number of acquaintances with whom he can exchange comments.

The label "Janet" identifies a 16 year-old Chinese girl who is learning how to drive, likes watching TV, shopping, talking on the phone, reading horror novels and teaches piano. She speaks Cantonese and is not totally illiterate in Chinese. "Janet" is popular on the BBS, Rick and Michael both send her messages, but she receives 44 messages from other characters. "Janet" uses the BBS to augment other communication media, other BBSs and facilitate existing friendships. Outside of Rick and one other male (who becomes a personal relationship), "Janet" does not maintain an ongoing discussion with people not her friends. Thus, "Janet" is individuated by her popularity. Her language is characterized by her repeated use of "Well". Her messages to Michael are extremely brief and ambiguous.

"Janet" always opens her messages with a continuation opener, picking up directly on a topic in a previous messages. She always closes her messages with a topic change or ritual closing and always signs her name.

The best description for "Janet's" role is Socialite. Due to her popularity and the presence of existing friends on the BBS, she does not need to establish relationships on the BBS. She can easily respond neutrally to Michael after their conflict and she can drop Rick after he raises the issue of relationship, especially after she develops a new, multi-media (BBS, phone, physical)

relationship with another character on the BBS.

"Rick" describes somebody who is interested in Chinese culture and language, after what is implied as a relatively long period of indifference. He attempts to discuss his interest with another Chinese character, "Janet", on the BBS.

"Rick" is characterized by casual language and attitude. He uses ellipses to indicate spaces, nonverbal pauses or topic changes, in his messages, and initiates the relationship with "Janet". However, he maintains a tight control over his self-disclosure. His initial Invitation to Janet rests on her disclosing first, and subsequent messages from him use the Comment structure. Thus, his self-disclosure, or self-presentation, is reciprocal only after Janet has brought up or discussed a topic.

"Rick" always uses a message structure that is seemingly drawn from formal letter writing. He uses a salutation, opener, a closing and always signs his name. His first two salutations are name implied until the Invitation phase ends, whereupon he uses Named salutations, and then switches from "Hi Janet!" to "Hi Jan!", the informal, short-form.

The role played by "Rick" is Relationship. Although his initial message denies his interest in a relationship ("just friends...nothing to lead to a relationship"), this is a cliché move. Not only has "Rick" approached "Janet" with this statement but their conversation ends one message after he asks "Janet" about her interest in a relationship. His behaviour and language is stereotypically casual or "cool". Nothing, in Rick's messages, is too difficult,

bad, or negative. Driving is a game of avoiding cops, and somehow, for some reason, all the girls he knows found other guys to be with on Valentine's day.

These characters are identifiable through their unique use of language, topics, and message structure. As their message history grows, patterns become evident, such as the commenting structure Rick uses, the Commentator role Michael adopts, and Janet's Socialite role. Contrary to the hypotheses of the Deindividuation thesis, characters can be individuated not only by the personal information they provide, but by the patterns of language use and message structure. And if, as Hiltz and Turoff (1978) observe, CMC messages are "somewhat better organized and more fully thought out than comparable statements recorded from a face-to-face conversation", this is less a function of the computer than of the implied author's consciousness in any written work that information creates a self (p.82). Thus, all written communication receives some editorial consideration, and recognizes the presence of self-presentation.

How Can Goffman's Concepts be Applied to CMC?

Goffman defines self-presentation as a conventional technique of customizing self-disclosure for specific audiences. Self-presentation is therefore a universal technique referencing an idiom or code of dramatic expressions. This code, however, does not specify specific moves or parts, simply broad roles. Characters individuate themselves through their parts, or unique application of roles. Goffman's concepts can be applied to CMC if two considerations are taken into account. First, a dualistic interpretation, based

upon strictly applying the theatrical metaphor, must be applied. Such an application denies Goffman's own analysis. Second, Goffman's content analysis methodology has been criticized for its imprecision, arbitrariness, and its lack of rigor (Drew and Wootton, 1988; Williams, 1988; Schegloff, 1988). For this reason, as I have done, Goffman's concepts must be operationalized in some way. The theorist wishing to apply Goffman's concepts must decide how they will specify certain bits of data and not others.

Goffman uses the metaphor of the theatre in constructing his analysis. His language is therefore loaded with terms like Performers, Characters, Audiences, Roles and Parts, Impression, Expression, Front, Back, or Outside Regions, and Scenes. In some ways, this metaphor distorts the reality of the communication Goffman analyses by suggesting that selves are dualistic--that individuals "put on" characters that fulfill the demands of a situation, but obscure the individual's true self (performer). It is this aspect of Goffman's work that has drawn the attention of Impression Management (IM) theorists. IM studies, concerned with the effects of status, class, and race (to name a few) upon social action, explore mechanisms by which people are influenced by social forces. However, IM's understanding of the dramaturgical model and its general application to social life is flawed by adopting this dualistic view of the self.

Rather than implying that performances conceal, Goffman states that masks are ideals and quotes Park:

In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves--the role we are striving to live up to--this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature, and an integral part

of our personality. We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons (Goffman, 1959, pp.19-20).

The different "masks" or "selves" we adopt for different situations therefore, result from our ability to recognize the demands a situation places upon us and act accordingly. This is the reason that people can be iconoclasts or eccentric; they do not act in accordance with the rules of the situation. Of course, that a situation demands certain things does not mean that everyone, always, follows those demands. Not following these demands is how the spontaneous "I" or our part is differentiated from the conventional "Me" or role.

But, masks and selves, or in the terms of literary criticism, characters, do not necessarily manifest current aspects of our selves. That is, self-presentation can be a process of "trying out" or experimenting with certain behaviours.

Thus, Goffman states that:

Whatever it is that generates the human want for social contact and companionship, the effect seems to take two forms: a need for an audience before which to try out one's vaunted selves, and a need for teammates with whom to enter into collusive intimacies and backstage relaxation. (Goffman, 1959, p.206)

From the perspective of literary criticism, this process is followed by narrators. A narrator tells a story involving other characters in which the narrator also acts. The narrator thus has a perspective on the self allowing new aspects of self to be tried out and responses of others assessed. As the work progresses, the narrators self is more fully created by the narrator's actions and the responses they generate. CMC self-presentation fulfills these same conditions. The messages in the study reveal a progression in which characters reveal and develop their selves. Initially, for Janet and Rick, this

expression is accomplished through a role of self-conscious self-presentation, a role that could be called Introduction. This phase ends after the exchange of a certain amount of information, a point marked structurally by the absence of Invitations and the start of Questions. These questions allow each character to self-consciously compare his or her self with others' perceptions and discover how presented characteristics have been received.

Thus, adopting masks or presenting selves customized for a situation does not imply a dualistic self. As Goffman has shown, and this study reveals, characters are created inevitably by communication. Patterns of behaviour in situations are perceived by others as intrinsic to the character, yet these patterns recognize only the necessity of that situation. Analyzing CMC with Goffman's concepts requires this realization. This perspective allows messages to become a process of negotiation, in which aspects of self are presented, perceived, evaluated, responses are perceived, and so on. On the computer, this process can even encompass aspects of the self not open to negotiation in face-to-face communication such as the physical self.

Insights into CMC through Goffman

Goffman's concepts and his theatrical metaphor, when properly applied, allow communication to be examined as a set of moves and attributes. Through Goffman, self-presentation is a means of creating and sustaining a self. In computer-mediated communication, this process is especially crucial given the lack of specific nonverbal sources of information about a character's physical, individual, and social characteristics. Unless specified, these aspects are implied through communication. But, as Goffman cautions us, a

character's expressions are also presented. His perspective, and that of the other theorists considered in this thesis, is that communication is a negotiation, a process in which behaviour has both meaning and significance due to perceptions.

Communication and perception, or expression and impression, are crucial to CMC self-presentation. CMC allows characters to be created out of expression without the check or balance of physical or unmeant behavioural impressions. Without the involvement of the body, knowledge of the other is based on their self-disclosures and trust that they are who they claim to be. CMC seems to redress social power, allowing users to exercise power over the degree, depth, type, and speed of social involvement. Hiltz and Turoff (1978) note the tentativeness of CMC participants to believe these textual personae. They found that a "great deal about personality and degree of literacy and intelligence are also conveyed by the language chosen. What seems to happen is that participants pick up these areas but are not able to have confidence in them, at least at first, because they are missing the confirmation of additional kinds of cues" (p.88).

I suggest that participants lack confidence because they are aware that as the physical body is removed from communication, the capacity for managing public self-presentation grows. Different media allow different tools for expression of the physical self. The telephone provides the voice and its associated nonverbal signals. Letters offer a connection--a pre-existing connection between two people as letters are not sent to strangers.¹ CMC

¹ Since letters usually are addressed to a particular person, some aspects of this person usually are already known. The address will have been obtained from somewhere and the

offers a method to rapidly exchange numerous letters with strangers in a public forum. But as Hiltz and Turoff document, little is obvious about these strangers. Unlike other kinds of strangers, electronic strangers must be taken completely on trust. Although impressions about these people can be inferred, none of these perceptions can be confirmed.

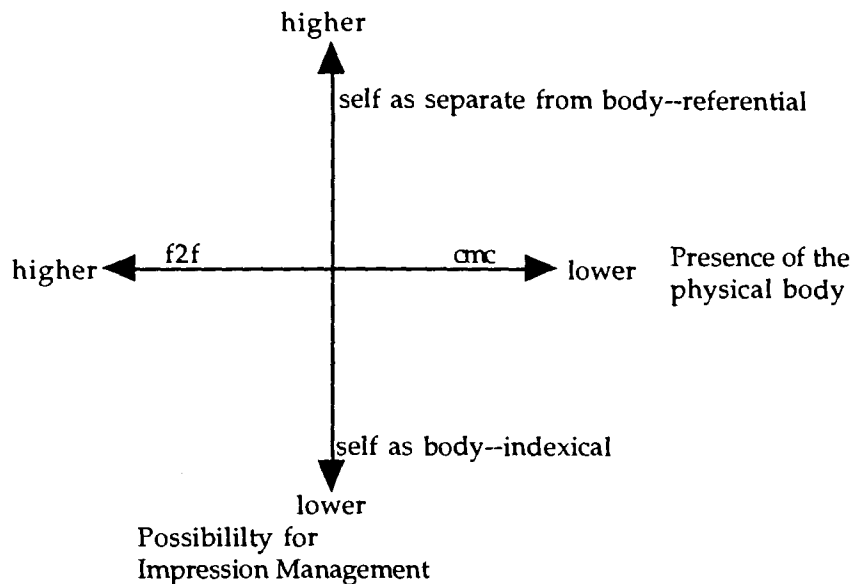
The graph on the following page plots this relationship between physical contact and managed presentation.² It shows a continuum of self-presentational possibilities for different media (exemplified by CMC and F2F) and different concepts of the self (exemplified by indexical or referential). As the self becomes more distant from the physical body, it becomes a manageable character in a referential social space which allows it to claim any desired attributes rather than a physical self in an indexical social space where claims are limited by the "proof" of the body.

author will have had a reason to write the letter, two types of information which would have some effect on the contents. In BBS CMC, messages are sent only to names that appear on a screen and say something interesting or possess significant attributes, such as being male or female. Letters and BBS messages therefore differ in the amount of preparation that an author would normally make. The initial letters to a Pen Pal, until pictures are exchanged, would be similar to initial self-presentations on BBS CMC.

² This adapts Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham's "Johari Window" which shows four kinds of information about the self that are presented in communication: (1) information that you are aware of and share with others and thus is "open", (2) information that others know about you but you don't know, information you are "blind" to, (3) information you know about yourself but don't want others to know which you keep "hidden". (4) Information about yourself that nobody knows and is thus "unknown". The Johari Window looks like this:

	Information known to self	Information Not known to self
Information Known to Others	open	blind
Information Not known to others	hidden	unknown

(Stewart, 1988:258)



A referential self is an autonomous, morally responsible actor "defined by its distinctiveness and separateness from the natural and social world" and is in primary control of actions (Landrine, 1992, p.404). For a referential self, all relationships are associations of single selves, not of people bound up in socially constructed nets of class, gender, race, and power. The referential self allows changes to the self more easily as the self is not fixed by its surrounding context. In contrast, the indexical self exists only in relationship and context. It "is not discrete, bounded, fully separate, or unique. . .this self is seen as constituted by social interactions, contexts and relationships" (Landrine, 1992, p.406).³

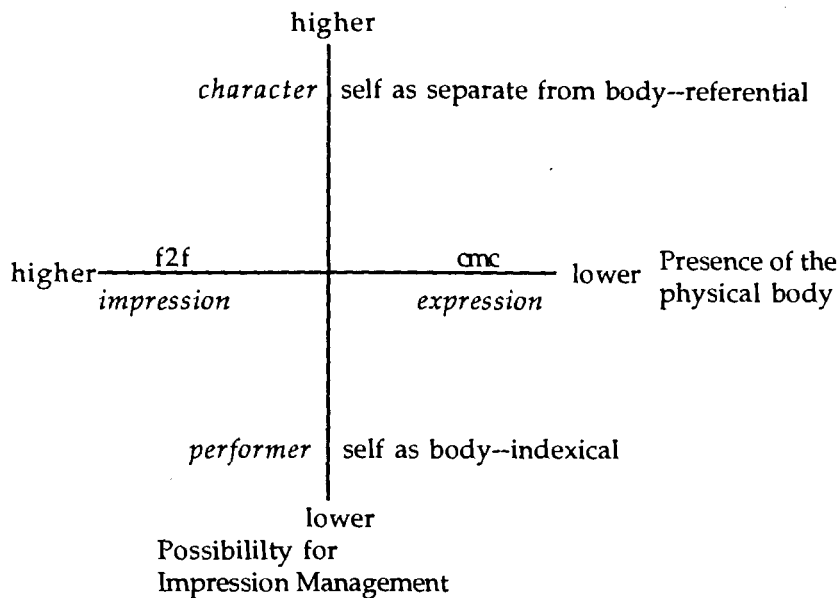
The CMC-self, following Landrine's definition, is more easily made referential as it is isolated from context and changeable for each new relationship.

³ The indexical self is often reflected as "self as social role" in which the social roles occupied are synonymous with the self. Thus, "mother", "son", "small-business owner" are the person, and "the failure to perform one's role...is a failure to be a person at all". (Landrine, 1992:408) However, this relationship between self and role places the indexical self in secondary control, where actions are not the self's responsibility.

Although I have shown that selves present characters for every social situation, these selves have conventionally been grounded in the physical body. Cross-dressers excepted, it is difficult to enact the other sex, and even cross-dressers may be discovered by their vocal tones. Thus, the indexical self found in face-to-face communication carries a more or less permanent set of social cues that limit its range of self-presentation and allow it to be instantly recognized by a socially conferred identity. The referential self seen in CMC does not possess these cues and can thus easily be altered. When the self and body are connected, the body forces the its attributes into communication.

A second graph (next page) expands on this concept. Adding Goffman's concepts of character, performer, expression and impression to the first graph brings out certain emphases.⁴ When a self is disassociated from the body, it becomes more of a character. A performer is thus separated from a body and audiences no longer are able to check the truth of the character against the physical truth of the performer. Likewise when communication is divorced from a physical performer, the truth of expressions deliberately given cannot be check against impressions given off.

⁴ Character is defined as "a figure, typically a fine one, whose spirit, strength, and other sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke". A Performer is the term for the individual performing the character seen as a composite of personal wishes, desires, dreams, needs for friends, ability to feel pleasure, anxiety, shame and tact. These attributes of the performer "are not merely a depicted effect of particular performances; they are psychobiological in nature, and yet they seem to arise out of intimate interaction with the contingencies of staging performances". (Goffman, 1959:253-254)



Goffman defines self-presentation as the use of a dramatic idiom through which people dramatically present individual definitions of what has happened, what is happening, and what should happen. In every communicative instance, each person projects their own definition of the situation, asserting matters they find important in a way they feel others will find "at least temporarily acceptable" (Goffman, 1959, p.9). These matters are the "rationalizations and justifications" making their past actions socially acceptable (Goffman, 1959, p.9). A single definition, or working consensus emerges when all those present agree on whose "claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honoured" (Goffman, 1959, p.10). Self-presentation is the work of making these claims be, or at least appear to be, the most appropriate and valid for the circumstance. This work is effected through clothing, hairstyle, lexical choices, grammar, manner of treating the audience and appeal to the norms of the situation, to name several ways. But, aware that these dramatic attributes can be manipulative, audiences divide an actor into a part which is easily manipulated--information "given"--and that which

is not--information "given off" (Goffman, 1959, p.7). For the audience, this division entails splitting verbal communication, which can easily be controlled, from nonverbal communication, which is more difficult to control.

The information audiences glean from this examination "helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him" (Goffman, 1959, p.1). Self-presentation is therefore a behavioral and linguistic process in which favourable aspects of the self are highlighted to place a preferred definition of the situation in a similarly favourable light.

This thesis therefore suggests a new approach to analyzing computer-mediated communication. This approach involves seeing messages as media of socialization through self-presentation and CMC participants as narrators creating themselves through text. Each message, or text, is constructed in response to a previous presentation and responses make the perceptions of others open to observation. Similar to clothing, these messages are constructed to create a certain effect. They contain physical, individual, and social information, which is, for readers, significant. Although the character creates the message with a certain meaning in mind, based on an assumed audience and shared code, reader perceptions ensure that meaning is not linear. Thus, characters exist as implied authors and narrators, enacting characters who display attributes suitable to their definition of the situation, the role the character has adopted, and the way (the part) it is being enacted. Characters thus put certain information into messages deliberately, and the self-awareness thesis tells us that characters are indeed aware of the kind and type of information they communicate. The roles characters adopt

correspond to stereotypical social roles (adoption/socialization/"Me") and the part (adaptation/individuation/"I") corresponds to the deviation from a role. Self-presentation in CMC, therefore follows socialized rules of behaviour and as in other forms of communication, messages assert truth, truthfulness, and morality or acceptability through inferences of future action contained in them. The identities that characters adopt are created in the social reality of the BBS through self-perception, perception of responses to self's communication, perception of other selves and perception of the definition of the situation. In this reciprocal process, the self is defined as it perceives others defining themselves. Identities are "narrowed" or further defined through subsequent messages and responses and over time, the kinds of physical, individual and social information contained in messages changes to suit perceptions of a changed relationship.

Appendix 1: Character Self-Disclosure

Janet provides this information about herself:

- 16
- 5'1" (too short for my age)
- grade 11 at Churchill Secondary
- learning how to drive (but not too good yet)
- like to read, watch TV, chat on the phone, play sports and go shopping
- graduating in 2 years
- plan to go to UBC--not what I'll go into yet
- can be noisiest person when hyper
- I teach piano--it's really easy money
- harsh bookworm when in the mood
- can get real hyper
- likes to have fun and socialize but also to be alone and be a loner
- I have a split personality
- asks dumbest questions when hyper, why my friends think I'm dumb
- speak Cantonese sort of fluently, not completely illiterate in Chinese
- is terrible driver
- born in Canada, in Toronto more specifically, moved to Vancouver when 3
- mom is fluent in many dialects
- ashamed to know only one dialect
- used to go to Chinese school, was at top of class, quit when in Grade 4 because too busy with piano
- hated Chinese school, not just the teachers but the people too
- can only write simple Chinese characters and own name
- loves Karaoke!
- thinks driving has improved--even my instructor says so!
- doesn't usually sing Chinese Karaoke, usually English
- only taking road lessons, classroom too would be too expensive!
- doesn't have Karaoke, but must go as going to party tonight
- writes short messages because has many tests, and must practice driving
- didn't do anything special for Valentine's Day, another regular day
- likes to read every day, but not newspaper, she's not that intellectual
- doesn't have a boyfriend
- lonely as only child, but also peaceful, cousin lives with them
- dad takes care of fishtank, she doesn't care whether they live
- would like a dog or cat, but is allergic, likes animals especially cute ones
- likes all music except heavy metal and country
- Chinese is okay, I'm not obsessed with it
- doesn't like classical music, symphonies or operas, puts her to sleep

and to Michael, she revealed

- favorite authors are John Saul, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen King and all other suspense [sic] authors
- likes mostly bestsellers
- knows how to play Chinese Checkers, not Chinese Chess!
- knows how to play regular Chess, but not Chinese Chess
- knows how to play backgammon but it's kind of boring
- loves playing mahjong
- plays Big 2 every lunchtime

Rick reveals this information about himself:

- easy-going, understanding and easy to communicate with
- attends Douglas College part-time, studying business
- 19
- enjoys sports--floor hockey, bicycling, light weight lifting
- harsh car nut, includes customizing cars and installing stereos into them as second job
- have trouble getting myself to read, especially textbooks, heh!
- hyper when I don't get enough sleep
- think it's neat to be unpredictable (references split personality)
- trying to expand Chinese vocabulary by watching Karaoke
- played something flute-like in elementary, and there was the guitar in grade 9
- born here
- dialect is toisan
- went to Chinese school when kid, therefore can sort of speak Cantonese
- okay driver, has hard time avoiding the cops here and there
- quit Chinese school when in grade 2
- hated damn teacher
- can't find date for Valentine's, all girls he knows found other guys to be with
- can't find a job he's particularly interested in
- one bro and one sis
- pets self-destruct due to not cleaning tank for half a year

Michael reveals this information:

- H.P Lovecraft and Michael Moorcock are good
- is Lovecraft fan through and through and Michael Moorcock is good
- felt kind of jipped with short reply after writing a couple paragraphs
- Backgammon can be exciting, if using doubling cube and honest to God stakes like money
- guess I forgive you
- has spiffy little program for Mah Jong,
- has learned how to play Mah Jong, but scoring is past comprehension
- spent money for Electronic Art's Hong Kong Mah Jong Pro a couple months ago at Egghead Software in Richmond
- Never heard of Big 2, to be honest, backgammon only other gambling game familiar with
- thinks Philipinos and Orientals don't look the same
- harder to tell Philipinos from Indonesians and Malays
- English has silly expressions
- done worse with messages--has also posted them public when should have posted private
- rest assured I'm not going to get in the middle of conflict, has happened before
- drove self nuts trying to keep with with too many boards

Appendix 2: Message Count

Messages Sent Between:

Sample 1: V & R

R to V	V to R
2569 Jan 27 2: 24	2682 Jan 27 16:15 WC 67
2687 Jan 27 22:46 WC 84	2716 Jan 28 15:59 WC 144
2744 Jan 30 2:04 WC 127 Qt 114	2756 Jan 30 23:25 WC 95
2763 Jan 31 21:48 WC 228 Qt 49	2775 Feb 1 15:43 WC 51
2797 Feb 4 2:07 WC 71 Qt 89	2811 Feb 4 15:40 WC 114
2823 Feb 4 21:04 WC 48 Qt 77	3124 Feb 5 16:56 WC 24

Sample 1: M & V

M to V	V to M
2720 Jan 29 2:02 WC 35 Qt 13 (cites 2716 V to R)	2741 Jan 29 18:57 WC 31
2759 Jan 31 4:49 WC 216 Qt 31	2766 Jan 31 17:32 WC 13
2772 Feb 1 4:54 WC 14 Qt 13	2777 Feb 1 15:56 WC 56
2794 Feb 3 3:50 WC 37 Qt 45	2802 Feb 3 17:46 WC 32
2807 Feb 4 2:28 WC 93 Qt 32	2812 Feb 4 15:44 WC 100
3119 Feb 5 2:34 WC 103 Qt 100	

Sample 2: V & R

R to V	V to R
	1308 Feb 13 18:56 WC 21
? Feb 17	1504 Feb 17 14:38 WC 110
? Feb 17-18	1578 Feb 18 16:32 WC 136 Qt 88
? Feb 18-19	1636 Feb 19 16:56 WC 73
? Feb 19-21	1699 Feb 21 11:59 WC 60

Sample 2: M & V

M to V	V to M
1277 Feb 11 22:01 WC 16 Qt 40	1288 Feb 12 16:58 WC 6
1421 Feb 15 22:31 WC 30 Qt 6	
1660 Feb 20 5:36 WC 23 Qt 14 (cites V to M 1636)	

Sample 2: V, R, M to Others, and Others to V, R, M

V to other	7
Other to V	9
M to other	0
Other to M	0
R to other	1
Other to R	0

Sample 3: V & R = 0

Sample 3: M & V

M to V	V to M
1506 Feb 17 19:10 WC 30 Qt 9	1575 Feb 18 16:21 WC 16
1600 Feb 19 4:33 WC 96 Qt 16	
2061 Mar 5 11:36 WC 50 Qt 26	
2062 Mar 5 11:39 WC 55 Qt 70	
2210 Mar 16 1:57 WC 24 Qt 13 (references V to other, asks why no msg. to M)	

Sample 3: V, R, M to Others, and Others to V, R, M

V to others	33
Others to V	35
M to others	6
Others to M	5
R to others	0
Others to R	0

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Self-Presented Information

Physical Attributes: deliberate descriptions by the character of the body's physical characteristics, age, race, sex, height or another physical (body) description.

2569-Chinese (by name and implication)

2682- 5'1" (I know, to short for my age)

2687- I'm 19

-implication of physical ability through list of sports

2716-I'm 16

2763-implication of physical ability in swimming & diving story

-doesn't matter whether called oriental or asian

-I cut through someone's yard the other day and ripped my jeans..I hate those wire mesh fences (Implies physical)

-I don't care to see your bald head and beady eyes anymore either!

-Being asian myself (korean)...I think I'd rather be called Asian..sounds tougher.. I mean...think about it "Oreintal Gangbanger" + "Asian Gangster"...Asian Gangster has a nice ring to it..don't you think? So...I think all males form asia are Asian, and all girls from there are..well Oriental. I dunno, the word "oriental" has a fragile ring to it.

(note: the following msgs. between V and Other are augmented by telephone calls--referenced in text of msgs.)

Other to J-"writing to you telling you how I THINK you look..well, how you look in my mind..but since this isn't private...and since the sys-op reads all ourmail on SimSoft....I guess I can't....to bad....well, I'll just sum it up then, beautiful, fragile,, um...small pouting lips, hmmm....eyes sharp as blads, comforting liquid brown.... hmmmmm...so... am I close? Far? Or about right with some of the parts over exaterated? I know! Everythings wrong but the height? I know you wrote your descriptipion in the intr's but you didn't really used any adjectives...I'm having a hard time trying to visualize you.... help?

J to Other-"Well, your description of me can be pretty cclose....I have shoulder length black hair, no glasses, (contacts), a kind of oval face, kind of pale, not too tanned, hardly any zits, small eyes, kind of poutedmouth, short, average weight"

Other to J- you must be beautiful

-did you know my description of you was also my description of what I think is the perfect looking asian girl? I didn't really expect it to match your description.

J to Other-did I really sound that ravishing with my description? You like short girls or something?

-What about you? Are you also my ideal Asian male?

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Self-Presented Information

Other to J-I'm either tall...or not, my hair is the following...shaved sides, long bangs down my face to the tip of my nose...my face is roundish...I have glasses...zits... and a large frame

J to Other-What do you mean by large frame? Does that mean you're fat?

Other to J--FAT????!!!!HOW DARE YOU.....no, but really yeah, I'm fat...so I weigh just over 300....big deal right? C'mon V, Get real...Me Fat? That's welllllll maybe a little.... not really...by large frame I mean I have...we, a large frame?

J to Other--300? Hmmm.... that's a bit tooo heavy.....but I don't mind! Nah, I didn't think you were fat anyways, just wondering.

Other to J- did I say 3000? I meant 30000! :)

-You may be very young but this machine said we were a match. Just thought I should say something.

-you probably still have her to yourself. First off I'm old enough to be her father so nothing to fear

-Heh...I'm still in school...even younger than Jan!

J to another--"Shorties are cool!"

-she's good looking from what I hear.

J to another--At 18 years of age, you should be concentrating on your studies instead of chasing after girls, like 13 year olds.

-Hi. You are really a blond? and like x country skiing? and just having fun? Are you really 15? oops.

-Uh...nope. I'm Chinese

-Well, have you come to the right place--not only am I incredibly good looking, but desperate as hell

-I didn't think a guy named Gordon Smith was ALLOWED (enforced by law) to have long hair

Individual Characteristics: likes, hobbies, abilities, qualities. These and other "personal descriptors" are individual attributes not immediately open to perception. This involves "I" statements, such as "I like/have/am/ think/feel/know" or statements in which "I" is implied but not has been specifically stated, such as "An early bed-time is a good thing". These statements make relevant (to situation) features of self available to the other person (Stewart 1993).

2682-I like to read, watch TV, chat on the phone, play sports, go shopping, etc.

2687-"I enjoy playing various sports, floor hockey, bicycling, some light weight lifting. Some of my hobbies include, being a harsh car nut...which includes customizing them and installing stereos into them for other people as a second job

-When you get to know me, I'm pretty much an easy-going, understanding person that's fairly easy to communicate with.

2716-I've been playing for 11 years now, and I have my diploma. It's really easy money. All you do is sit there and tell the kid what to do.

-Well, I can also be a harsh bookworm, when I'm in the mood, but other times I can be the noisiest person you know when I get hyper. Trust me, I can get real hyper. But I also like to have fun and socialize, but then sometimes I like to be alone and be somewhat of a loner. So you see, I have split personalities.

2720-Michael Moorcock and H.P. Lovecraft are about my favorites...

2741-I read mostly mystery, suspense and horror. So my favorite authors are John Saul, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen King, and all other suspense writers. I mostly like bestsellers.

2744-The only instrument that I knew how to play was back in elementary and it was something flute-like and I wasn't that great, then there was the guitar back when I was in grade 9.

-I've always know to have trouble getting myself to read (especially textbooks! heh)

-If you think you're hyper, you should see me when I don't get enough sleep. You know, we should try having a hyper contest one day.

-so do I...don't you think it's neat to be unpredictable?

2756- When I'm hyper,;I can ask the dumbest questions.

-I dont know why I get hyped up so much. Sure, let's have a hyper contest. I think I'll win, but who knows?

-I'm a terrible driver, so just remember to stay off the streets.

2759-His books are kind of hard to find in most mainstream book stores nowadays. But they're interesting. He created what's now commonly called the 'Cthulhu Mythos' with those stories of his. One of the best stories carrying on Lovecraft's stories I've read is "Strange

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Self-Presented Information

lost my copy); he was a smart-a** 15 year old who thought that Friday the 13th and Nightmare on Elmstreet movies were the penultimate in horror. So, he borrows my copy of "Strange Eons" and has the cheek to complain about it to me later on. Seems he had a fortnight worth of nightmares and kept on waking up expecting some of the vile beings in that book to appear in his bedroom.

And in case you're wondering about the title, it came from one of Lovecraft's most famous lines:

"That which is dead may eternal lie
And with strange eons even death may die."

- Anyway, I'm a Lovecraft fan through and through and if you like horror there worth a read. If you like Fantasy novels, Micael Moorcock is good; huge quantities of books to his credit.

2763-I'm trying to broaden my vocabulary as I watch Chinese Karaoke videos and attempt to match what the singer's saying and perhaps understand what he's saying...oh, and I can also sing one or two Chinese songs...after long hours of practising.

-Yeah, I'm an ok driver, but have a hard time avoiding the cops here and there.

-It's just like swimming for me...I remember the first time I went diving, I was soooo freaked out, but I had a very strict gym teacher and it was a do or die situation...he wouldn't let me go until I could do it right, and that kind of persistence paid off at the end.

2775--I quit when I was in Grade 4, cause I hated it and I was too busy wwith piano. So now, I guess I'm not totally illiterate, I can read some, but I can't remember to write anything except simple characters and my name.

-You sing Karaoke too? I love Karaoke!

-Well, I think my driving has improved. Even my instructor says so.

2777-Well, I don't know how to play Chinese chess, but I know how to play Chinese Checkers! Close enough? I also know how to play regular chess, but not Chinese Chess!

2794- I just felt kind of jipped; I mean, writing up a couple of paragraphs and getting a one sentence reply.

2797-At least you made it up to grade 4. I quit when I was grade 2. I didn't hate it that much, it's just the damn teacher that I hated more than anything

2802-Yes I know hoew to play backgammon, but it's kind of boring.

2807-Anyway, Backgammon can be exciting; if you're using the doubling cube and real honest to God stakes like money. That is, using it as a gambling game as opposed to a pass-the-time-because-the-TV-died sort of a game.

-I've also sort of learned how to play Mah Jong using a spiffy little program for it. Playing the game I more or less understand. Scoring after a Kwinning hand seems to be something past my comprehension so far, though...

2811-I didn't just hate the teachers at Chinese school, I hated the people too. They all

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thought they were so great.

-Well, I don't usually sing Chinese songs on Karaoke, I usually sing English, but when I do sing Chinese, I just follow everyone else. Sometimes I'll remember some lyrics or I'll know how to read some.

2812-I just absolutely love playing mahjong, except I don't play with money. (Do you play with money?) I don't know how. I wish I could get a computer program for it, but I don't know where. Is there somewhere where I can download it?

- Well, it's not exactly called Big 2, but that's the literal translation from Chinese. I play it every lunchtime.

3119-Thanks to that, I know HOW to play it. I'm far from being good at it though. As I said before the scoring of hands is something that just baffles me.

3124-I don't have a Karaoke, just wish I did.

J to other-I don't think I'd call a Phillipino an Oriental. Don't know why. Would you?

1277- M to J-Well, to me, Philipinos & Orientals (as in Chinese, Japanese & Koreans) don't look the same.

1288 J to M--I think so too.

1289-There's a difference between Chinese Phillipinos and fillipinos. See, I have a friend who was born in the Phillipines, but she is Chinese, so she is Oriental. But if you're fillipino, like with no Chinese blood in you, you tend to look darker. Orientals are usually more pale.

1421-Yeah, Filipinos do look different from most 'orientals'. Telling them apart from Indonesians or Malays is a differnt story, though.

-Being asian myself (korean)...I think I'd rather be called Asian..sounds tougher.. I mean...think about it "Oreintal Gangbanger" + "Asian Gangster"...Asian Gangster has a nice ring to it..don't you think? So...I think all males form asia are Asian, and all girls from there are..well Oriental. I dunno, the word "oriental" has a fragile ring to it. (also attempt to use physical attribute as image)

1504 J to R- I have a lot of tests coming up, that's why I have been writing short messages. See I have to ace this term or else I am dead.

-And plus, I have to practice my driving....which sucks so bad...

1578-cites R to J (missing) I usually play floor hockey, gonna start swimming soon, basketball, and tennis

-I totally suck when it comes to tennis.

-As for books, I can't find any time for them, but I do read magazines and the newspaper every day

-(J asks: how is life in general?) it really sucks at this point...I feel like hanging myself (jj).

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-as far as I go for pets is just probably raising goldfish, which eventually self-destruct just because I haven't cleaned the tank for over half a year, so I don't have any pets at this

1578 J to R-I like to read almost every day, although I don't read the newspaper. I'm not that intellectual! :)

-I have fish too, although I do not take care of them. So as far as I am concerned, they do not exist because I barely look at them.

-I wish I could have a dog or cat but I am somewhat allergic, which sucks, because I really like animals, especially cute ones.

1636 J to R-I got into modeming cuz I was bored over Christmas and I remembered I had a modem, so I just started calling all boards.

-Music? Well, all kinds except heavy metal and country.

-Chinese is okay, I guess. It's not like I'm obsessed with it or something.

1660 M to J (cites J to R 1636)-English has its moments too. Silly and almost utterly useless words, like "antidisestablishmentarianism"

-I think i will begin construction work on building the WonderBox scrambling technology. It appears that It is necessary, since even the private areas are public! This time around I think I will build dynamic algorithms into the main section, to make it better.

1699 J to R-I don't listen to a lot of classical music, believe or not. The stuff pputs me to sleep. Like I don't like operas, symphonies and stuff. Maybe I'm not cultured enough.

-I had meatloaf for the very first time in my life for dinner last night....YUCK!!! It tasted....well, I wanted to retch my insides out....get the idea?

-you must be beautiful.....holy smokes....I don't believe this...now I have to see you face to face...but I don't want to risk losing you as a pen pal...

1506 M to J-Don't feel too bad, I've done worse with messages too...

2061 M to J-I was trying to keep up with about a score of them at one point and just drove myself nuts trying to keep up with them all...

2210 M to J-Gee, how come you've not written/typed to me, eh? 8-(

I'd tell you a little more about me, but I'm almost out of time; I've got a few introductions to All that you can read. 'Til next time (I log on every day), bye!

Social Characteristics: Attributes of the individual relating the individual to others, locating in a network of social relations.

Three categories of social characteristics:

- 1) education
- 2) emotional
- 3) financial

Each of these categories provides contextual information for the character, specifying the kinds of networks with which the character is involved, and setting the character's interests and abilities while a member of that network.

Education reveals the character's training, and suggests a relationship between the kind of training and the character's current interests and career. This reveals the character's ideals, but also triggers audience stereotypes.

Emotional reveals the character's Family, the number of siblings for example, and serves as a context for the character's current behaviour. Another aspect of the character's emotional life is Relationships. The character's online behaviour (and one might assume, expectations) is contextualized by being in a relationship or not. Both Family and Relationship reveal the character's attitudes. Much information on friendships

Financial information specifies the character's involvement in consumer culture. References to jobs, spending money, goods and possessions reveal the character's financial "ability" and trigger stereotypes or expectations on the part of the audience as to the character's behaviour and perceptions in the online environment and others.

Actional information is revealed in the character's ongoing attempts to negotiate social roles and meanings. These statements inform the other, or audience, of the character's perceptions of self and others.

Education

Cause if I write to you using a pen, it won't take up so much of my time.... and I won't be failing school..

2682-I'm in Grade 11 at Churchill Secondary. I'm learning how to drive, although I'm not too good yet!

2687-attending Douglas College part time, studying business.

2716-in two years I'll be graduating. I plan to go to UBC if I can get in, but I don't know what to go into yet.

But oh well, how is school? I have a lot of tests coming up, that's why I have been writing short messages. See, I have to ace this term or else I am dead....

-I used to go to Chinese school when I was a kid so I can sort of speak Cantonese better and as for writing, I only remember some characters

-I used to go to Chinese school too, and I used to do well, in fact, I was always top of my class, but that was so long ago.

2797-Which one did you go to, anyways?

2811-I went to Chinese Cultural Centre.

-Yeah, I go to Young Drivers,

Hmmmm.... the MODEM... curse this diabolical machine... my grades seem to be dropping because of it too. I set you a message on Simsoft.... THAT'S why I wanted you to help me study...

-Heh.. I'm still in school... even younger than Jan!

Does anybody know(any of you people that go to UBC) about a IBM model 95/xp. How old is this model, how long has it been on the market?

Does anybody from Tupper still know if Mr K. is still there? I have a message to send to him but I have to pass it in person.

hmm are you still around here?, can you call me soon.- I need you to contact someone in your school.

on animation cuz there's no point. What did you do today? Did you know I've only had 2.5 days of school this week? Same thing next week too!!! Lucky me. :)

There is one snag; it's not a decent buck now. Well, mostly a seasonal thing, but this recession that we keep hearing has been over for the third year running isn't helping any either...

LG-> Why do you think there's a smile after it? We all know
LG->that Thomas is far from normal.
I know that; I did go to some classes with him, way back when...

Yo, my picture? Sorry, don't have any left. Well, tell me more about yourself first. Are you still in high school? If so, what grade?

Is that SFU by any chance?

Hey Gordon- are you asking if I attend SFU? Own SFU? Enslaved at SFU? Hmmmm.... You didn't really clarify what you wanted... Looking from a communications student's point o' view- that is a no-no! Just a teasin' ya...

Now that we got that cleared outta the way- what do you do?

SFU is my current school, but I can proudly state that "I was -- I was -- I was an Engineer!" at UBC for all of four months. Most people stay at least a year, but it felt soooo much more comfortable to go back to Capilanus (oops, Freudian slip) College, and then when I wanted to venture forth beyond second year courses once more, there wasn't much choice (I'll just say that I passed SOME of my courses at UBC).

So I'm -- well, two ways to say this: "motivationally challenged", or, more simply, "floundering" -- while I try to find a line of study that I think I'll get some satisfaction out of. Last semester it was Russian;

but that is no excuse to stop mailing to your o'l buddy! How'd you do with your midterms? (such a dirty word eh!)

I have a friend who is doing a project for a statistics class in college and he needs to find 40 people to fill out the survey below. I will not give him any names of people who filled out the questions.

oIn a meessage to All <03-07-93g-/wojf>; 12:30> Johan Cyprich wrote:

JC>

JC> JC> 1. What was your GPA or average mark in high school? 2.5

JC> 2. What is your GPA in college or university now?

Do you mean yearly or overall? Yearly the range has been from ~1.9-3.9

Currently I'd say about 2.7 Overall ? I don't know.

JC> 3. Are you a male or a female?

Male. No uncertainty there.

JC> 4. How many hours a day do you study?

Maybe 1. Tend to binge. Don't study for weeks and then do 16 hours non-stop.

I'm a bad role model for scholas.`w6s

I am yet? I know who you are, but you might not know who I am. I'm in Grade 11 I.B. at Churchill. Ask some Grade11s near your locker and you might find out who I am.

I know a lot of people who have given up on the UBC engineer program- good thing you didn't waste any longer than 4 months.

Emotional

-I have no siblings

2744-Oh, I was just wondering...what dialect do you speak?

2756-Hi Rick, I speak Cantonese, aand you? Can you speak it fluently? I can] sort of, but I am illiterate in Chinese, but not totally.

2763-I assume you're either born here or arrived here at an early, eh? For me I was born here and with one of the more common dialects, it's called 'toy san' or something like that and it's similar to Cantonese.

-I've taught many a driver, and still survived...most of them were pretty nerved up in the beginning, but it got better later on.

2775-I was born here, in Canada. In Toronto more specifically. I came to Vancouver when I was 3.

- I think my parents know how to speak toy san butI don't. My mom is fluent in a lot of dialects, so I'm kind of ashamed that I know only one.

-I think my parents were trying to use the phone...at the same time... >sigh<I gotta get my own line.....:(

1504 J to R--(discussing Valentines Day) Me, I didn't do anything special. Just another day for me....

1578- (cites missing msg R to J) "did "nothing much" for Valentines Day "the funny thing is by the time Valentines comes up, I would have girl to share it with...most of the girls I know found other guys to be"

-"I have one bro one sis "

-"An only child? It's pretty lonely, sometimes, but it can be peaceful too. My cousin lives with us, but he doesn't bother me."

-(I have fish too) although I do not take care of them. My dad does.

-"so ya didn't do anything for Valentine's....well neither did I, I don't have a boyfriend...so don't feel too bad!

-Ha, breakup is what -ex took the 486 and had the phone cut, just to show me she cared. . .

-sorry to hear that...sounds like she really cared alright, that wasn't necessary by any means

1636-"I don't really care if I get into a relationship or not at this point. It's not really a big deal.

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call me and I'll give you my address.....

I didn't know ppeople actually READ these messages till today...How totally, ultimately embarrassing.... all that stuff I wrote....Well talk to you Wednesday was it? Yeah Wednesday. Well talk to you about your pen pal idea then 'kay?

At least you didn't write anything embarrassing in here, like swear your undying love for me....

As for pledging my undying love.... we'll see, maybe sometime in the future.... you're gonna call me? Uh-oh, better get the line free then..well, bye now!

SUNDAY! That wouldn't be a good day for me as I have previous engagements, and as far as tomorrow night (Saturday) I have just been asked out - by an old girlfriend, and I accepted, so tomorrow is out. Its nice to be popular, but sure takes a toll on my time.

Did you losed your head again? I really don't understand. You really messed up my brain. now I'm the one who lost it. You're saying different things on each message. Please try to explain to me what's going on between us. Remember to call me tommorrow. If you don't, I will call you, cuz I really want to know what this is all about. Well, talk to you later.

If you want to bash me then fine. You don't have to post it privately just for me not to see. That's why you said you were busy. You just don't want to talk me. Ok Ok that will be fine with me then. Anyways I don't expect to go the next chinese new Year festivaties next year with me. I was nice enough to give a small present although it isn't much. I should of not given it then if I wasn't that nice would I? Since it has passed, I won't go back the way I am. If feel like bashing me sure go ahead since I'm not stopping you. You can even post it publicly .

If I did bash you, it was in private. I can do whatever I like in private messages. Whoever told you I did, I don't know. But obviosly you have no respect for others. If you wanted to post this message, you could have done it in a private message.But since you wanted to make it public I don't care.

Woah! Something major is happening here! I'm not gonna quote this... way too much stuff to quote, and quite private too (in a public way)... I take it Mr. Au has been acting a "little" bit like a jerk...?

it does make for a modem soap opera. Always found that whatever goes around comes around, so in the end, everyone ends up involved in something. But, the mail flow is just too much here. If this dispute doesn't settle down here soon, I'm going to have more mail here than even the international penpals echo that I'm supposed to be supporting.

Anyways... if you want, I'll get her to write you... unless you insulted her in any way? Made a pass at her? Well.. anyways, what's up? Nothing on this end...

Anyway I like the modem friends, and who knows I might even get more. I don't think I insulted your friend... I know she is young and I think from my own point of view that it would do me some good to get some ethnic shots in a portfolio. This is a topic all its own though.

So no wonder you lose your friends. You tell them all this crap, and then when they spaz at

you, you ask them not to take it seriously? You want to know what you did to deserve this treatment? Well, ask yourself. You must certainly know. I'm sorry, but I don't think I want to debate over this issue anymore. So don't write to me again. I've had enough, and I won't bash you no

Perhaps you could give out just to selected people(mike, and your other friends) . that way. HA couldn't read your messages in the BBS!

Ya sorry about that IT would be nice to shoot her; and I did get you mixed up with some one else sorry! I take it you have not really met Jan? Just E-Mail? I have watched some of your messages go by. I guess if either of you is interested call!!

Myself, I just like to steer clear of those disputes. Having one side mad at you for not taking sides is easier to take than both sides being mad at you for taking sides.

It's been a long time but I'd like to get in touch with some of my old friends. Hopefully they're still involved in the ol' message game. Anyone know of: Charlie Paisley, Ric Brown, Carol Neuman, Rhonda Wilson, Carol Watson and last but definately not least, Dawn Fox? Perhaps you could put the word out that Scott's looking for them

Mmmmm.. trouble.. doesn't sound good. Hope you didn't get into TOO much trouble. Yeah.. talk to you on Byron's.. well, nurse the cold Jan, and take care.

Well, you're right. I shouldn't care what you write to him about, cuz you can have different tastes in friends. The modem world is such a mystery. Byron's telling me stories about HA, and the sysop on Karaoke has offered to tell me stories of both HA and Byron! What is it with these sysops, they know so many stories. Oh well, it should be fun to listn to them.

So, did you miss the modem world? And me, in particular? What? No? Fine!

I read your messages you wrote to other people....just thought you'd like to know.....I thought I saw my name being mentioned? Well, go ahead and mention me all you like. You have my permission! (Not like you asked me in the first place!) But oh well, who cares anyway, these people don't know me personally.

I think it is... but then I have the personal bias of being a sysop as well... but, shucks, it makes us feel so important to know the public's gossip. We have the right to be omnipotent... <grin>

Oh, and he says I'm lucky I found you.... what do you think... am I cursed with you or blessed? I'm not sure but I'd have to say.... cursed. NOT!!! Take care Jan.

Hello all in Guys & Gals land. My name is Andrew, and I am new to this echo. I would be interested in chatting with anyone here. (as long as no-one will start bashing/flaming me) I have read the previous few messages and realize a wee bit of tension around here, so I figured I'd come on by and give some of you someone else to talk TO, hopefully not ABOUT!

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well chris i am alive ... ooohooohoooh i i m still alive... mm a little pearl jam there] mmm well i have been very busy i am planning a trip to europe in the summer and i have a lot of planning to do but i will send you more messages soon as you reply!!

Oh, no wonder I couldn't get through. Well, see ya then. I don't know if I can call or not cuz my mom told my cousin to destroy all the modem software, just so I can't use it. She's getting pissed. But since my cousin isn't home now, I spent like about 1/2 an hour figuring out how to use communications on MS Works. It sucks, but I guess it'll have to do for now. Luckily, my cousin forgot about this program.

Hi ther - I'm the new kid in this - electronic - town. I've lived in Vancouver almost all of my life, but am new to the BBS circuit. Anyway, I just wanted to say hi and beg for someone to write back to me so we can get some correspondence started.
Hope to be hearinf from you soon

Sounds like your mom's something of a spoil sport; you should learn how to

Well have you come to the right place- not only am I incredibly good looking, but desperate as hell... It's true! I'll go out with ANYONE! All your problems are solved! Here I am- alone on yet another Saturday night- and we could be together. We could spend hours comparing hair lengths and split ends... My kinda man... (followed my nah-just joshin')

Well, now the whole world knows, or at least the part of the world that calls this BBS. :) Which Trek do you like, the original series or the next generation?

1600 M to V-I wasn't judging anything at all; I couldn't tell what it was all about. (It just looked like something you'd inteded to have as a personal message and accidentally made it public) Something I've done on occaision, I might add.

-if it is something personal, you can rest assured I'm ***NOT*** going to stick my nose in it!

-I'd write more but this place is public....I didn't know ppeople actually READ these messages till today...How totally, ultimately embarassing....all that stuff I wrote...

-At least you didn't write anything embarrassing in here, like swear your undying love for me..... Well, I guess I'll call you.

discussion of whether Phillipinos look Chinese or to call chinese people Asian or Oriental

Mike, I'm not supposed to be on the modem right now, in fact I didn't even modem all night, I was so busy doing a huge project due ttuesday that I haven't even started until today.

-just talked to you tonight, so have nothing more to say. Talk to you tomorrow. (on the modem, I mean)

-have a good time at the party, tell me if anything interesting happens

-Please try to explain to me what's going on between us. Remember to call me tommorrow. If you don't, I will call you, cuz I really want to know what this is all about.

own words, "I was caught by my mom at 1:00AM modeming in my underwear, and therefore she has taken away my modem for a month" He was doing this on a school night, so his mom got mad. He wants to say that he's sorry but that he'll have to write back to you in a month. He hopes you will understand! Oh, and don't forget him either! :)

- Miss me? Well...I'm back! Not for long though....I'm not supposed to be modeming right now.

V to other-I'm not supposed to be on the modem right now, in fact I didn't even modem all night, I was so busy doing a huge project due ttuesday that I haven't even started until today.

-I've found that, in a dispute, if I step in the middle to help sort things out I suddenly find myself as the target for both sides. Not exactly my idea of a good time...

No... but, it does make for a modem soap opera. Always found that whatever goes around comes around, so in the end, everyone ends up involved in something. But, the mail flow is just too much here. If this dispute doesn't settle down here soon, I'm going to have more mail here than even the international penpals echo that I'm supposed to be supporting.

.He's ok, but really you are the only one who can form an impression of what you think of him by talking to him. I would rather try to get to know a person through that person, not by what other's say about him/her.

Financial:

-Do you have a job? I have one ,sort of. I teach piano. I've been playing for 11 years now, and I have my diploma.

Some of my hobbies include, being a harsh car nut...which includes customizing them and installing stereos into them for other people as a second job.

but I'm only taking road lessons, not classroom. If I took the classroom also, it would cost over 600 bucks! I can't afford that much!

-"I've been looking for a job these past couple of weeks and there just isn't any one that I'm particularly interested in"

1578-I have a job, sort of, did I already tell you?

3119-I spent money for it at Egghead Software in Richmond a few months ago.

1308 V to R-I haaaveto go earn some money now.

I got me a new job finally! I'm the new assistant head cook at a new restaurant in Surrey. Real nice place, I think it will do well. (I hope so I'm already looking forward to getting a raise) Well time to go and fill my other mail orders. hehe.

MM> Still in the taxi business, I am. Unfortunately...

It may not be the ultimate carreer choice but it keeps you alive.That is the most important thing. If you can do anything well and make a decent buck at it, whose to say there's anything wrong with it?

MM> It sure is hard getting back to the habit of work after a
MM>holiday, that's for sure!

Trying staying home for a year and then trying to get back into the swing of working. Its

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really tough.

the mean old ex hits our hero's bank account but good, cleaning him out for 600 hard earned bucks - as our bumbling hero is informed this evening by netmail.

LC>Hello Patty, I was just wondering if you were doing Karaoke
LC>any other nights at other places on a Saturday night as it
LC>is hard for me to make to the Sheriton on Thursdays because
LC>of work obligations, but would love to come down and meet
LC>the gang...

Too bad you can't play... ah well... I guess some of us have to work right?

Photography is a hobby eh.

What are you doing? Scenery, people? I would be willing to help you out if you want or need it. I have been a pro for 12 years and have taught basic courses.

I had to mail an agenda for a general meeting of the BC Association of the Deaf-Blind (BCADB).

I decided since I didn't have a lot around to eat in my place, that I would just go over to the Pizza Hut to eat at least a salad...ordered greek salad and spaghetti. Not bad. Oh, at the CNIB, I met up with someone I know from Kelowna who was down here on business with CNIB and we had a visit together in the cafeteria. It was nice to see him again. We used to know each other as kids.

MS>moo-la... spent the last of it buying a carnation. What's
MS>wrong with Animotion? Why is it shutting down? I never
Yeah, I have spent a fair bit of \$\$ too...need to watch my budget!!!

Not for a while now although I have several lined up. A catalogue on vi video for a lingerie house is one. I will also be putting together a catalogue.

Lucky you... no actually, too bad.. you can look but you can't touch. :)
No, but seriously.. how much are you getting paid for this?

This time it will be big bucks as it will take all day to shoot. shucks eh! And yes it i (s a tough job.... no touchy... but some one has to make them look that good and the camera WILL only lie so much.

Yeah.. I suppose so... too bad though.. but you're right.. someones gotta do it.. oh well, least it beats sitting behind a desk all day!

You're not the same Damien Sam I used to see working with the Province (paper) when I was a sub-manager for them are you?

this semester it's work, and, though the pay is not great, it's nice to have some \$\$\$\$ coming in instead of always going out (does that sound suggestive, or am I just tired?).

Nah- just joshin'... I'm trying desperately to finish an article I'm writing- just another dumb profile- before I venture out into the murky dank

I was just came across your profile and noticed that your self-employed at home with your DT publishing.

I also an trying to enter into the business. Maybe we can share some knowledge or s#&%^

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something. Drop me a line or two if you like, like to here from you, bye for now. see you.

Hey. Gordon- sorry it's taken a long time to answer back, but the newspaper I'm working on is really busy right now...

Well- have another article to write- municipal council- how exciting, eh?

So, I better let you go- I'll try to leave another one on Wed or Thurs if I don't have to cover school board...

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Salutations:

generic "Hi everyone"
 name implied "Hi there"
 named "Hey R"
 citation

none--used in a message structure that is informal, the opener is a continuation or a quotation which allows the message to continue the thread of conversation despite the time lag.

<u>Salutation</u>	<u>Opener</u>	<u>Closing</u>
Hi there!	It's rare to find Chinese people on boards like these.	Hope to hear from you soon. later... Rick
Hey Rick!	Glad you answered.	Well, reply soon and tell me more about yourself!
Hi!	Well to start off,	Well, my time's running out, hope to know more about you. ciao, Rick
Hey Rick!	Well,	Well, talk to you soon.
In a message to Rick W <01-28-93 15:59> Janet K wrote:	[... skipping a bit here ...] JK> Well, I can also be a harsh bookworm, when I'm in the mood, [... skipping a bit here ...]	(are about my favorites)... +-----+ <<< MBM >>> +-----+ Like, g'day, eh? It's a beauty way to go! +-----+
Hi! v-m	Well,	See ya!
Hi Janet! :)	JK>into yet.Do you have a job? I have one ,sort of. I teach VK>piano. I've been playing for 11 years now, and I have my JK>diploma. It's really easy money. All you do is sit there JK>and tell the kid what to do. Well, I can also be a harsh	Well, gotta go, chat with you later...
Hi Rick,	I speak Cantonese, aand you?	Well, see ya!Jan
none	JK>Hi! Well, I read mostly mystery, suspence and horror. So my JK>favorite authors are John Saul, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen JK>King, and all other suspence writers. I mostly like JK>bestsellers. See ya!	That's it for now. See you later...

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Hi Janet!	JK>Hi Rick, I speak Cantonese, aand you? Can you speak it JK>fluently? I can] sort of, but I am illiterate in Chinese,	Well, gotta go...later!
none j-m	Hey, thanks for the tips!	Bye for now!
none m-j	JK>Hey, thanks for the tips! I'll give them a try! Bye for VK>now!	logo
Hey Rick,	Yes, well,	Well, see ya later!.....Jan
none j-m	Sorry for replying so short,	Well, I'm pressed for time so I guess I'll go! BYE!
none m0j	JK>Sorry for replying so short, but what do you want me to JK>say? Well, I don't know how to play Chinese chess, but I JK>know how to play Chinese Checkers! Close enough? I also VK>know how to play regular chess, but not Chinese Chess! JK>Sorry!	So, you don't know Chinese Chess, eh? How's about Backgammon? and logo
Hi Jan!	JK>of ashamed that I know only one. I used to go to Chinese JK>school too, and I used to do well, in fact, I was always JK>top of my class, but that was so long ago. I quit when I JK>was in Grade 4, cause I hated it and I was too busy wwith JK>piano. So now, I guess I'm not totally illiterate, I can	Such nice weather we're having these days, eh? later, Rick
none j-m	Sorry, I'm pressed for time.	I have to go, I only have five minuts left! Sorry! Write more next time!
none m-j	JK>Sorry, I'm pressed for time. Yes I know hoew to play JK>backgammon, but it's kind of boring. I have to go, I only JK>have five minuts left! Sorry! Write more next JK>time!	so far, though...
Hi Rick,	I didn't just hate the teachers at Chinese school, I hated the people too.	Yeah, great weather! Hope it stays like this! Nice driving weather for me! Bye!
Hi, j-m	you know how to play Mahjong?	See ya!
Hi Jan!	JK>Anywasys, I went to Chinese Cultural Centre. How about you?	Well, gotta go...get back to you soon! Rick

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Self-Presented Information

none m-j	JK>Hi, you know how to play Mahjong? What program is it? Where JK>did you get it? I just absolutely love playing mahjong, JK>except I don't play with money. Do you play with money? I JK>don't know how. I wish I could get a computer program for JK>it, but I don't know where. Is there somewhere where I can JK>download it? Well, do you know any other gambling games? Do	I therefore extend all the proper contrifbularities (English can be such a fun language)...
none j-r	Nope, I don't have a Karaoke, just wish I did. (doubles role as opener and answer)	Well, got to run, sorry so short, have a party to go to tonight. (whole msg)

Question, Answer

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
Do you have a job? j-r	
What sorts of authors do you like, then? m-j	I read mostly mystery, suspense and horror. So my favorite authors are John Saul, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen King, and all other suspense writers. I mostly like bestsellers.
Oh, I was just wondering...what dialect do you speak? r-j	I speak Cantonese,
and you? Can you speak it fluently? I can] sort of, but I am illiterate in Chinese, but not totally. j-r (same msg as answer above)	For me I was born here and with one of the more common dialects, it's called 'toy san' or something like that and it's similar to Cantonese.
Well, can you drive? j-r (same msg as above)	Yeah, I'm an ok driver, but have a hard time avoiding the cops here and there.
I assume you're either born here or arrived here at an early, eh? r-j	Yes, well, I was born here, in Canada. In Toronto more specifically. I came
Just out of curiosity, you ever play XiangQi (Chinese Chess)? m-j	Well, I don't know how to play Chinese chess
You sing Karaoke too? I love Karaoke! j-r (question responds to comment by r)	
but what do you want me to say? j-m	No real problem with the short reply.
So, you don't know Chinese Chess, eh? How's about Backgammon? m-j (same msg as previous m answer to j)	Yes I know hoew to play backgammon, but it's kind of boring.
Really? What do you, or what can you sing? r-j	Well, I don't usually sing Chinese songs on Karaoke, I usually sing English, but when I do sing Chinese, I just follow everyone else. Sometimes I'll remember some lyrics or I'll know how to read some.

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Self-Presented Information

You actually go to driving school? Isn't it expensive? r-j(same msg as above)	Yeah, I go to Youngg Drivers, but I'm only taking road lessons, not classroom. If I took the classroom also, it would cost over 600 bucks! I can't afford that much!
Anyways, long enough? j-m	And, yes, the length of your eudite response has been quite satisfactory.
Anywasys, I went to Chinese Cultural Centre. How about you? jr	The one near Strathcona Elementary, in Chinatown.
you know how to play Mahjong? What program is it? Where did you get it? j-m	Well, I've got Electronic Art's "Hong Kong Mah Jong Pro." I spent money for it at Egghead Software in Richmond a few months ago. Good software for learning the game.
Do you play with money? I don't know how j-m (as above)	Backgammon's the only other gambling game I familiar with.
Is there somewhere where I can download it? j-m (as above)	(from above also answers this) I spent money for it at Egghead Software in Richmond a few months ago.
Well, do you know any other gambling games? Do you know how to play Big 2? j-m (as above)	Never heard of Big 2, to be honest.
do you usually go outside to sing or do you have one, or do you go to your friend's to sing? r-j	I don't have a Karaoke, just wish I did.

Comment, Invitation: A comment is a response or elaboration upon some information in the other's message. It doesn't ask a direct question, although it can be in the form of a comment. An invitation is a phrase or sentence which acknowledges current contact and actively encourages further contact.

<u>Comment</u>	<u>Invitation</u>
	Tell some stuff about yourself and I'll tell you some stuff about me. r-j
	Well, reply soon and tell me more about yourself. jr
	Well, my time's running out, hope to know more about you. r-j
Michael Moorcock and H.P. Lovecraft are about my favorites... m-j	
wow, that is easy money r-j	
at least you're inclined to pick up a book. r-j	
If you think you're hyper, you should see me when I don't get enough sleep r-j	You know, we should try having a hyper contest one day... r-j
so do I...don't you think it's neat to be unpredictable? r-j	
	Sure, let's have a hyper contest. I think I'll win, but who knows? jr
If you like horror you should give Lovecraft a go. m-j	
If you like Fantasy novels, Micael Moorcock is good; huge quantities of books to his credit. m-j (same msg as above)	
Naww, you can't be that bad...all you need is a little confidence...believe me. r-j	
thanks for the tips! I'll give them a try! j-m	

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Self-Presented Information

That's a short response! m-j	
I think my parents know how to speak toy san but I don't. j-r	
I used to go to Chinese school too, j-r	
I just felt kind of jipped; I mean, writing up a couple of paragraphs and getting a one sentence reply. m-j	
At least you made it to grade 4. r-j	
I didn't hate it that much, r-v	
Well, I guess I forgive you. BUT DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN! m-j	
Anyway, Backgammon can be exciting; if you're using the doubling cube and real honest to God stakes like money. m-j	
They all thought they were so great. j-r	
Even the driving lessons alone cost alot already, eh? r-j	

Appendix 3: Breakdown of Self-Presented Information

Appearance: topics, lexicon, spelling, punctuation, symbols, Individual use of Language.

Rick

always uses Hi! exclamation as salutation

lots of casual language: stuff, harsh, car nut, wow, flute-like, heh, neat, gottao go (3x), Naww, sooooo, damn eh? (2x as closing, 1x in text), later (4x in closing), ciao, alot, bro one sis, gonna, sucks

format of messages is formal, always salutation, opener of some kind, contrasts continuation messages from J.

17 instances of using ellipses in text, only one message without in all samples.

Janet

uses "Well" as phatic communication to mark change in topic 19 times

no distinctive language use

qualifies all statements, has job sort of, fun and socialize but loner, terrible driver it sucks so bad, illiterate in Chinese but not totally, being only child is lonely but peaceful, reads but not intellectual, doesn't like classical maybe not cultured enough

mirrors words in messages, R uses harsh and J uses harsh, R= bro and sis J=bro and sis

mentions sports and asks R about sports alot, but never describes sports she plays

Michael

do you like hten, give it a go, penultimate, has the cheek, fortnight worth, vile beings, through and through, spiffy, honest ot God stakes, just baffles me, eudite [sic] contrifularities, antidisestablishmentarianism, posted private like, a score of them, tidily, said disk, clutches, Gee

alwayas uses citation and quotation or simply quotation

logo/monogram always used

alternative topics, non-mainstream horror, Chinese Chess, Mah Jong, Backgammon, distinguishing Oriental races from each other

commentator role, all messages are comments on other people's messages/topics.

own messages list interests but not personal info

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